



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a **Llywodraeth Leol** **The Communities, Equality and Local Government** **Committee**

Dydd Iau, 20 Chwefror 2014
Thursday, 20 February 2014

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Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir
trawsgripiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Peter Black | Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats |
| Christine Chapman | Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair) |
| Jocelyn Davies | Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales |
| Mike Hedges | Llafur Labour |
| Mark Isherwood | Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives |
| Gwyn R. Price | Llafur Labour |
| Jenny Rathbone | Llafur Labour |
| Rhodri Glyn Thomas | Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales |

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Ceri Cryer | Cynghorwr Polisi, Age Cymru Policy Advisor, Age Cymru |
| Rhian Davies | Prif Weithredwr, Anabledd Cymru Chief Executive, Disability Wales |
| Graeme Francis | Pennaeth Polisi a Materion Cyhoeddus, Age Cymru Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Age Cymru |
| Lynne Hill | Cyfarwyddwr Polisi, Plant yng Nghymru Policy Director, Children in Wales |
| Cathryn Marcus | Cyfarwyddwr Prosiect Cymunedau, Anabledd Cymru Project Director of Communities, Disability Wales |
| Catriona Williams | Prif Weithredwr, Plant yng Nghymru Chief Executive, Children in Wales |

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Sarah Beasley | Clerc Clerk |
| Leanne Hatcher | Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk |
| Robin Wilkinson | Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service |

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:15.
The meeting began at 09:15.

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Good morning and welcome to the National Assembly's Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee. May I remind Members before we start, if they have any mobile phones, to ensure that they are switched off as they affect the transmission? We have had an apology this morning from Leighton Andrews.

**Ymchwiliad i Lyfrgelloedd Cyhoeddus yng Nghymru: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 3—
Anabled Cymru
Inquiry into Public Libraries in Wales: Evidence Session 3—Disability Wales**

[2] **Christine Chapman:** This is our third evidence session, and I am very pleased today to welcome Disability Wales. I welcome Rhian Davies, the chief executive of Disability Wales, and Cathryn Marcus, who is the project director of Communities 2.0—is that right, Cathryn?

[3] **Ms Marcus:** That is correct.

[4] **Christine Chapman:** That is great. Okay, so there are two of you today. You sent a paper in advance, so, if you are happy, we will just go straight to questions and find out your thoughts on this inquiry. I will start off. We know that there has been an increase in visitors to public libraries over the past 10 years. Can you tell me whether you know whether this has included a proportionate increase in visits by disabled people?

[5] **Ms Davies:** In doing some background research for this session, I could not find any—. I found aggregated figures of attendance, but I could not find anything disaggregated, looking at different groups in the community, whether that is disabled people or on the basis of gender or age or whatever. So, although I was not able to find anything, I know that, just from talking to our own members, they use the library service quite regularly for a range of things. They take out books, of course, but they use it for digital inclusion, training, taking their kids to visit, et cetera. So, my understanding is that there are certainly reasonable levels of attendance on the part of disabled people.

[6] **Christine Chapman:** However, you are not aware of whether the visits have increased, because, obviously, the visits overall have gone up.

[7] **Ms Davies:** No.

[8] **Christine Chapman:** If that is the case—and obviously we are not aware of that—but, if we are not aware of the data, do you think that the Welsh Government should collect these data on disabled people?

[9] **Ms Davies:** Yes. I would have thought—. For example, under the Equality Act 2010 and the public sector equality duty in Wales, there is a requirement on public bodies to collect data on needs and the extent to which various services are used by different people, regardless of their having protected characteristics. Certainly, in terms of making key policy decisions around the closure or rationing of services, my expectation would be that that information would be available to be part of an informed decision-making process.

[10] **Christine Chapman:** Cathryn, do you have anything to add on that?

[11] **Ms Marcus:** I think that the point that I would make is that it is indeed difficult to disaggregate these figures but that, certainly anecdotally, in terms of running a national digital

inclusion programme, what we see on the ground—and I should point out that the majority of the work that we do is library-based—is that disabled people, and particularly disabled people wishing to access work, are increasingly using the libraries because the ICT is available there, as is assistance, and it is available locally, which is important. We know that Jobcentre Plus, for example, is bringing in new equipment, but the libraries provide something at a very local level, which does not necessitate further transport.

[12] **Christine Chapman:** Jenny, do you want to come in?

[13] **Jenny Rathbone:** If we were to try to collect these data, how would we do it? I could see that we could ask people whether they consider themselves to be disabled when they request their library card in the first place, but it would be many years before those data became properly representative of library users. When people go into the library, they do not necessarily want to declare that they have a disability, so unless you have any other thoughts on how we could do that—

[14] **Ms Davies:** Often, it is about how things are presented. If the approach to collecting the data is about saying, ‘This is your service. We are providing it in the community. We want to know about you. We want to know how we can support you and ensure that you get the best experience out of the library service’—or whatever service it happens to be—then I think that people will more readily engage, rather than thinking that it is some intrusive, bureaucratic exercise where they might have to say, ‘There’s something wrong with me’. So, how it is approached is always the critical factor.

[15] **Jenny Rathbone:** Cathryn, you mentioned that disabled people are using libraries a lot so that they can access the ICT. How well are things like e-books promoted to those who have poor eyesight or those who are losing their sight? It is a way of enabling people to continue to be able to see the written word.

[16] **Ms Marcus:** That is true, and increasingly libraries are investing where they can in those kinds of facilities. However, I think that there is a stage before that that libraries assist with, which is the switching on of the computer in the first place, which is actually quite terrifying. The reason that I cannot disaggregate our figures in terms of disabled people is because disability is so broad when it comes to ICT. The majority of people who are not online are older people, and whereas they may not be registered disabled people, they have issues with eyesight, hearing and mobility. We are dealing with a much broader range of people for whom disability is an issue, and where there is assistance in the library. It is more of a complex picture; it is not simply about the promotion of e-books, perhaps.

[17] **Jenny Rathbone:** There is no doubt that libraries are changing enormously in the way that they deliver information. Whether those changes are keeping pace with the needs of different users is really what I am trying to explore here.

[18] **Ms Marcus:** I think that libraries struggle with equipment issues from time to time. Certainly, as Communities 2.0, we will take equipment into the libraries. It is a six-year Welsh Government programme, which finishes next year, and it is certainly our intention to leave much of that equipment in community venues so that people can continue to use it. Equipment moves on as well and it becomes cheaper. You have the e-readers that you can download and so on. So, you are right that we have to keep up, but things get cheaper, too.

[19] **Jenny Rathbone:** Are there sufficient ways of getting to people to enable them to know that libraries are a good place to access information if they are struggling with a change in their circumstances?

[20] **Ms Marcus:** You make a very good point. We think of libraries as providing one

service, and the message needs to get out to the wider public more broadly that libraries do a lot of other things these days, and ICT is fundamental to what they do. That has probably not got out to everyone. Certainly, from what we have seen, our experience would be that the libraries and their ICT become fundamental when people cannot access ICT at home. I am sure that we have all heard of children who desperately need their local library in order to do their homework when they get home from school, because they do not have equipment at home. Certainly, universal jobmatch has been a game changer, because you have to register, and you have to search for jobs online. If you have recently been made redundant, whether you are a disabled person or an older person—whoever you are—you need to be able to access a computer in order to use universal jobmatch or you lose access to your benefits. The library provides that service these days. You are right—we have not done enough to promote the library service in that way.

[21] **Ms Davies:** I notice that there is a marketing strategy for the public library service in Wales, and I know that it has an aim of targeting what is termed ‘hard-to-reach groups’. Obviously, there is a role for it to engage with us in the third sector, because we have huge networks of individuals and member organisations with whom we could be publicising, or helping to publicise, the library—the services it offers and the support it could offer. Through Communities 2.0 we have our Digital Lives project where we are providing direct support and training to disabled people in how to use IT. We could then be encouraging people to use their library, even helping with knowing where the accessible libraries are as well, and where the equipment is—where you can find the appropriate equipment that you might need. So, more could be done to raise the profile of libraries, what they have to offer and what facilities they have available as well.

[22] **Jenny Rathbone:** What about professionals in the health service? Do you think that they are aware that the libraries are a good place to access information that patients may need?

[23] **Ms Davies:** Probably not enough. I was reading that there was a prescribed book; doctors can give you a prescription or something for books, particularly on things like dementia. That sounds like a really interesting initiative, but there is huge scope to broaden that. Once people get through the door, you can see what is there, but it is about taking that step.

[24] **Christine Chapman:** I think that Gwyn Price has some questions next.

[25] **Gwyn R. Price:** To what extent do you feel that the Welsh Government’s libraries strategy, Libraries Inspire, takes adequate account of the specific needs of disabled people?

[26] **Ms Davies:** I have had a look through the strategy, and it references access in terms of the building but also access in terms of the equipment and facilities such as talking books et cetera, and the need to reach hard-to-reach groups. I was quite interested to look at the annual reports of each local authority in terms of their library service and to what extent they have achieved the targets in the standard. I felt that there was a lack of detail. They talk about the fact that they have maintained what they call their specialist provision, which is basically accessible provision, but if you do not know what the baseline is, you do not know how good that service is or is not. One local authority referred to its ‘impressive services’, but who is the judge of that? So, it is about knowing what the baseline is, what the minimum requirements are and what should libraries be aspiring to achieve. I think that they could be more aspirational.

[27] **Christine Chapman:** Cathryn, do you want to add anything on that?

[28] **Ms Marcus:** I do not think that I have anything to add to that.

[29] **Gwyn R. Price:** Do you feel that there is—

[30] **Christine Chapman:** Sorry, Gwyn, before you go on.

[31] **Jocelyn Davies:** So, are you saying that we do not know what ‘impressive’ looks like?

[32] **Ms Davies:** I guess that it is subjective, because what some might think is impressive, such as ‘There is a ramp’, we would think ‘Well, yeah, okay, but are there lifts? Can you get to the computers? Is there a digital board? What level of training have librarians had to assist disabled people?’ I am sure that Disability Wales and our members could paint a picture of what we think ‘impressive’ looks like. It is one thing to say that something is impressive, but what is that based on?

[33] **Gwyn R. Price:** Do you feel that there are sufficient connections between the Welsh Government’s framework for action on independent living and its Libraries Inspire strategy?

[34] **Ms Davies:** I have brought the framework with me. [*Laughter.*]

[35] **Gwyn R. Price:** Hold it to the camera.

[36] **Ms Davies:** There is probably a gap in here. There is reference to the work that CyMAL—Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales—does. I had to look on CyMAL’s website, and it has collected a huge number of links to resources, fact sheets and sources of support. I thought, ‘Gosh, this is fantastic’, but when I looked at it in a bit more detail, I could see that it was very dated. For example, the resources that it references refer to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, but that has been superseded by the Equality Act 2010. It listed Disability Wales, and I thought ‘Oh, great’, but it was our previous address, which we moved out of seven years ago. This is the whole thing about resourcing and technology—you have to constantly keep on top of it and keep it up-to-date, otherwise it becomes obsolete.

09:30

[37] **Gwyn R. Price:** So, it is a case of, ‘We were here’, but actually we are not.

[38] **Ms Davies:** Yes.

[39] **Christine Chapman:** Peter, I think, wanted to come in.

[40] **Peter Black:** Yes. The Welsh public library standards are issued under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Do you think that that Act is still fit for purpose and, if not, how would you amend it?

[41] **Ms Davies:** I do not have a detailed knowledge of the Act. I have read the standards that, I suppose, provide the basis for the guidance for what libraries are supposed to achieve and those appear much more contemporary. Obviously, having 1964 attached to anything probably suggests that it needs revisiting, because the world has changed so much in terms of technology—things like computers were barely invented then—and equality; any kind of equality legislation was 10 years off. So, I would imagine that it is due a revisit. I thought that the standards were reflective of current understanding, but I think that there could be more done in terms of which specific target should be achieved—

[42] **Peter Black:** I understand—

[43] **Christine Chapman:** Sorry, before you continue, Cathryn, do you want to add anything?

[44] **Ms Marcus:** No, not at all.

[45] **Peter Black:** I understand that they are reviewing the standards and may well issue an updated version of them. Are the current standards a suitable tool for ensuring the quality of services and how much would you like to see the standards amended to reflect your particular concerns about access for disabled people?

[46] **Ms Davies:** I think that they are. When I looked at the local authority reports, where an authority reports on its progress against the standards, I felt that they were saying, 'Oh, yes we're continuing to meet the standards around access to our services and access to our facilities,' but there was no detail to that. There was no information as to whether they had witnessed an increase in take-up among disabled people, or in usage of those particular services, or more people taking out e-books, or even how much money they had spent refurbishing libraries—there has been a huge capital investment in the refurbishment of libraries—or what services had been created as a result of that. So, it looks good, but you then want to know what is behind that.

[47] **Christine Chapman:** Rhodri, do you want to come in?

[48] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd. Fel rydym i gyd yn gwybod, mae awdurdodau lleol yn wynebu penderfyniadau anodd iawn ynglŷn â'u cyllidebau. Mae gostyngiad o 3.5% ar gyfartaledd yn eu cyllidebau ar draws Cymru, ac un o'r pethau sy'n cael eu hystyried yw llyfrgelloedd. A ydych yn teimlo bod anghenion a hawliau pobl ag anabledd yn cael eu hystyried yn ddigonol pan mae'r penderfyniadau hyn yn cael eu gwneud?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you, Chair. As we all know, local authorities are facing very difficult decisions about their budgets. There is a reduction of 3.5% on average in their budgets across Wales, and one of the things that are being considered is libraries. Do you feel that the needs and rights of disabled people are being given sufficient consideration when these decisions are being made?

[49] **Christine Chapman:** Cathryn, would you like to start?

[50] **Ms Marcus:** Certainly. It is difficult, is it not? Local authorities have to make cuts somewhere. I suppose that the case that I would make for libraries, and I feel quite passionately about this, is that we need people to use public services online; it saves us money. However, for many disabled people, the way that they are starting to access public services online is via their libraries. There is a bit of a dichotomy here. The service that helps people to understand how to use public services online, as we develop them, is the one that is falling beneath the hammer. I am sure that there are lots of other public service areas that would say the same thing, but libraries are the way in to public services online for many people, particularly people who are less well off in our communities; often, they do not have a bank account in order to be able to have a direct debit to have broadband. Sometimes, it is as simple as that. The library is always open—not always open, but open a lot of the time—and there is assistance to show people how to do this. We could be missing a trick here in cutting back on the very public service that enables us to save money in delivering public services. That is the point that I would make.

[51] **Ms Davies:** Under the Equality Act 2010, and the public sector equality duties in Wales, local authorities should be carrying out equality impact assessments to find out how much use is made of particular services in their area and what the need is. That does not necessarily stop services being cut, but it can lead to mitigating action. If we cannot keep a

particular library or mobile library service open and running all day or all week or whatever, then what else will we put in place to ensure that people who have absolutely no other option and have a need to use the library service are able to have access to it? That is about a more creative and imaginative use of the way in which facilities are used, or different public bodies sharing facilities and services. To put an axe to services— Cathryn has been talking about job searching; in two years' time, it looks likely that universal credit is going to come in, which will be completely online. It is digital by default. We will have thousands of people in Wales needing to access universal credit online and the very people needing to do that are going to be the ones who do not have home computers and do not have the skills and have not had the training to be able to use it. Where are they going to go? We need provision. Collectively, between UK public bodies and public bodies in Wales, we have to find a solution to this, or we will leave people without any support at all and they will then be penalised through the benefits systems as a result.

[52] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yn sicr, rydych wedi pwysleisio pa mor bwysig yw llyfrgelloedd fel adnodd ar gyfer pobl ag anableddau. Rydym yn ymwybodol y byddai torri'n ôl ar y gwasanaeth yn effeithio ar bawb drwy'r gymdeithas. Ond, mae'n deg dweud bod y ddadl y byddai'r effaith yn fwy ar bobl ag anabledd, sy'n dibynnu'n fwy ar rai o'r gwasanaethau hyn, yn eithaf amlwg. A oes unrhyw asesiad wedi'i wneud o effaith cau llyfrgelloedd ar bobl ag anabledd?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You have certainly emphasised how important libraries are as a resource for disabled people. We are aware that cuts to those services would have an impact on people throughout society. However, it is fair to say that the argument that the impact would be greater on disabled people, who are more dependent on some of these services, is quite clear. Has an assessment been made of the impact of cutting library services on disabled people?

[53] **Ms Davies:** Local authorities should have undertaken equality impact assessments. They are required to publish them. It would probably be a useful exercise to look at how the decision-making process has been carried out and how local authorities reached their decisions. In terms of independent research, I am not aware of anything. It sounds like it would be a fruitful area of research to look at the impact in more detail.

[54] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rwy'n awgrymu, felly, Gadeirydd, ein bod yn ysgrifennu at awdurdodau lleol yng Nghymru i ofyn a ydynt wedi ymgymryd â'r asesiad hwnnw cyn gwneud eu penderfyniadau, os ydynt wedi penderfynu felly, i dorri'n ôl ar wasanaeth lyfrgelloedd neu gau llyfrgelloedd yn eu hardaloedd.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I suggest, therefore, Chair, that we write to local authorities in Wales to ask whether they have undertaken that assessment before making their decisions, if they have made such decisions, to cut back on library services or to close libraries in their areas

[55] **Christine Chapman:** Is the committee happy with that? Yes. Mark, did you want to come in with your questions?

[56] **Mark Isherwood:** To what extent have local authorities consulted with you, your member organisations or partner organisations regarding the impact of reconfigured or reduced library services on the services that disabled people need and use?

[57] **Ms Davies:** I am not aware of any consultation that has come to us at Disability Wales. We are a national organisation, so it could be that local authorities have consulted locally. Talking to some of our members yesterday, people who live in various areas across Wales are very much aware of what is happening in their local areas. In terms of library cutbacks, some are actively involved in trying to keep services open or are involved in new initiatives. For example, I have heard about community hubs where there is a combined library service, with Citizens Advice providing advice and the police providing what, I think,

are called ‘crime surgeries’, which is about how to tackle crime rather than anything else. [*Laughter.*] Certainly, the members I spoke to seem to be quite clued up with what is going on, but to what extent they have been engaged by the local authority in finding that mitigating action and solutions is not clear. I suspect that more needs to be done and there needs to be more engagement. Again, under the public sector equality duties in Wales, engagement is supposed to be at the heart of that, and there is generally always more that can be done.

[58] **Mark Isherwood:** In taking this forward, do you think that disabled people and representative groups should be engaged in co-designing the systems, and if so, co-delivering them?

[59] **Ms Davies:** Yes. As you will know from the framework for action on independent living, it was developed in co-production between the Welsh Government and disability organisations—nationally and locally—and it very much promotes co-production, co-design and co-delivery as a way of delivering services. Where the people who use those services are involved in decision making and design, those services are much more likely to more closely meet people’s needs and be the kinds of services that people feel comfortable using and will use more.

[60] **Mark Isherwood:** You made reference earlier to some of the accessible services that you would seek libraries to provide. What concerns do you have about the impact that cuts might have on the provision of accessible services for disabled people across the piste?

[61] **Ms Davies:** There has been quite a major programme of refurbishment and rebuilding of a lot of libraries in Wales, so the library is now probably one of the most accessible venues in a community. In terms of the best use of public resources, to be closing a library or limiting its hours of opening seems extraordinary, let alone the impact that that will have on the people who use it. If ways can be found, like this community hub, for example, of getting other public or other voluntary services to use library venues more—I do not know what the income generation possibilities are like there—there could be ways of maintaining them.

[62] **Mark Isherwood:** Finally, given that expenditure on libraries is below 1% of total local government expenditure, do you believe that it should be a protected area, or to what extent do you feel that library services should be sharing in reduced budgets?

[63] **Christine Chapman:** I will ask Cathryn to come in first on this one, and then Rhian afterwards.

[64] **Ms Marcus:** As I said earlier, I appreciate that there are difficulties, but as I also referred to earlier, we have to look at the broader picture here and at what is happening in the world with so much going online. We are at a critical tipping point at the moment. We still have 24% of citizens in Wales who are not online. What we know about those citizens is that they are far more likely to be disabled, older people, unemployed people and people living in social housing. What we also know about these people, from the Wales national survey, is that they depend on their libraries to deliver services. This might be a four, five or six-year issue that we are tackling at the moment. However, from all of the anecdotal evidence that I have seen—we have worked with more than 35,000 people during the course of the last five years and I have some case studies that we will send out to Members afterwards; unfortunately we have not been able to show them today—is that this is not the time to cut that particular service, which is providing a vital service for people, particularly disabled people, in accessing ICT.

09:45

[65] **Christine Chapman:** Rhian, do you want to add anything?

[66] **Ms Davies:** I was just going to say that I can see, perhaps from a local authority point of view, why cutting library services might be attractive when you have to maintain your social care budget, for example. However, as we know from the framework for action on independent living, which takes a cross-cutting approach and looks at all aspects of what enables people to live independently, whether that is housing, information and advice, transport, or access to person-centred technology, all are needed. If you take one plank away, you are in danger of losing the whole thing. When decisions are being made about cutting services, as Cathryn said, you have to take account of the whole picture and look at the whole impact rather than focus on one particular service or another.

[67] **Mark Isherwood:** So, libraries are a social service and you could actually generate greater costs rather than savings.

[68] **Ms Davies:** Yes.

[69] **Christine Chapman:** Just to remind Members, we have less than quarter of an hour left and we have a number of other questions. I will now bring in Jocelyn and perhaps Cathryn could start the next one.

[70] **Jocelyn Davies:** Thank you. I was going to ask whether local authorities can reduce the cost, but I guess that you have answered that in the co-location idea. What about your opinion now on the use of the home delivery service? I guess that this falls back on a very old-fashioned idea of what a library delivers to people; that is, hard-copy books. Do you have any views on home delivery? Does that help?

[71] **Christine Chapman:** I will bring in Cathryn first. I will bring you in then, Rhian. Would you like to start, this time, Cathryn?

[72] **Ms Marcus:** Well, I am only a one-trick pony. [*Laughter.*]

[73] We have not worked a great deal with the home delivery service, but we think that there are great possibilities for us to do so. We have worked recently with the Royal National Institute of Blind People. Certainly, for those with visual impairments, there is a need sometimes to deliver ICT assistance in the home and to take the equipment to people in the home. We see a very economical way of doing this as working via the library mobile services. I think that we can do that for disabled people with mobility issues too.

[74] **Jocelyn Davies:** So, this would be someone who comes along to help you to set up your broadband, explaining how that works, and assisting you in your own home, not just delivering hard-copy books to people and collecting them after they have been read.

[75] **Ms Marcus:** Absolutely, but it is also before the connectivity issue even kicks in. A lot of people will feel reluctant to use ICT for a variety of reasons. They might be worried about the threats on the internet and so on. Sometimes that initial assistance is needed. This is why it is important. It will help you to be more independent in your own home. Having a session with someone just showing you why this is important can facilitate someone then seeking family help to take them on to the next step. There is a variety of different money-saving options available via the internet and so on. You can have your shopping delivered and save money by switching energy companies. All of those things can be facilitated in that way.

[76] **Jocelyn Davies:** I think that it is in the best interests of companies that want you to be online to support our library services, because they will have a better customer base. Go on, just agree with me. [*Laughter.*]

[77] **Ms Davies:** If you consider online delivery, where you order things online and you get them delivered, or you click and collect or whatever, I guess that there is a lot to learn from business approaches. On the question of co-location, another example that we heard of—I do not think that it is in Wales; I think that it might be in England—is the village pub that acts as a pub, library, post office, local shop and cafe. I think that there are options there, but we have to think creatively.

[78] **Jocelyn Davies:** If you had a GP there, you would never need to go home. You could book yourself in and go on holidays there. *[Laughter.]*

[79] **Ms Davies:** Yes. *[Laughter.]*

[80] **Mike Hedges:** I have two questions. First, there are some services that are provided by volunteers. I am thinking of the talking books in Welsh, for example, which is a volunteer-organised service that sends books out electronically to individuals. Do you see any room for the growth of that to help individuals?

[81] **Christine Chapman:** Who wants to start? Rhian.

[82] **Ms Davies:** Can you just say the last bit again, please?

[83] **Mike Hedges:** Talking Books Wales sends books out and people download them, and I understand from both Talking Books Wales and some users that it works incredibly well. Do you see any opportunity for the growth of that type of service?

[84] **Ms Davies:** Anecdotally, I have heard that visually impaired people, in particular, feel that libraries have perhaps cut back on their talking books service, so that is something to be looked at. I am not sure whether RNIB Cymru will be among your witnesses, but there might be something to explore there. Obviously, there is a role for the use of volunteers and for developing voluntary services in this field. I suppose that the key thing is to ensure that there is appropriate training for people, in terms of the technical expertise and also the approach.

[85] **Mike Hedges:** I am thinking more specifically of the Talking Books Wales group that is based in Carmarthenshire, which provides books through the medium of Welsh at a greater level than, I believe, anybody else does to people who wish to have Welsh-medium books, but who are unable to see. Is there room for growth in that type of area—for groups of people who have difficulty with one or more senses?

[86] **Ms Davies:** Yes, I would say so. Any voluntary scheme also needs some financial support as well in terms of co-ordinating it, running it and delivering it, but, yes, definitely.

[87] **Mike Hedges:** My other question is this: I know the libraries in east Swansea better than anywhere else in Wales, so this is almost an east Swansea question. It loans out DVDs et cetera, but it does not provide what people now want, which is downloads of DVDs. Most people want Netflix—other companies are available I understand—or one of those sorts of facilities where they can just download them rather than having to go to the library to take them out. Libraries are still an old traditional method. Is there room for increasing income by becoming more modern in the means by which people can access films, such as by downloading them?

[88] **Ms Marcus:** I certainly think that there is. Libraries not long ago launched their e-magazine offer to library members. I am sure that there are commercial opportunities there.

[89] **Mike Hedges:** I was going to say that the e-magazine was mentioned last week as

well. As someone who visits the library in Swansea and some of the bigger ones at least four or five times a week, the only time that I have heard about an e-magazine is here—I have never heard about it from the library service. I do not know whether other people have.

[90] **Peter Black:** I hold surgeries in libraries across the region and I have not heard about it.

[91] **Jocelyn Davies:** I joined last night online.

[92] **Gwyn R. Price:** Is that in Swansea?

[93] **Jocelyn Davies:** No, no, it is a Welsh national thing.

[94] **Mike Hedges:** I am just saying that it has not made its way out as well as perhaps we might have hoped.

[95] **Jocelyn Davies:** No.

[96] **Mike Hedges:** If knowledgeable users—which probably includes us in here—do not know about it, what chance have the average users got?

[97] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes.

[98] **Ms Marcus:** I completely agree. I think that the promotion of library services and how they have changed is a big gap that needs to be closed.

[99] **Christine Chapman:** Are there any other questions?

[100] **Mike Hedges:** No, that is me thanks.

[101] **Christine Chapman:** On raising revenue, do you think that there is a role for libraries to raise revenue?

[102] **Ms Davies:** I can see that for things such as letting out rooms, the use of the premises and that sort of thing. When it comes to individual users, particularly where people are using the library for job searches, for benefits claims and things like that, that would negate the whole idea of a free library service. Perhaps the use of the facilities in general terms—

[103] **Christine Chapman:** However, for the core services, you would not think about using those to raise revenue by charging fees or anything.

[104] **Ms Davies:** It is something that would have to be looked at very carefully, because I think that there could be quite considerable implications. It could become a disincentive for the kind of people we are trying to encourage into libraries to learn IT skills, for example. It would have to be approached with caution.

[105] **Christine Chapman:** We are very short of time. I know that Jenny has a series of questions before we finish.

[106] **Jenny Rathbone:** I just want to pick up on the 35,000 people you have trained in the last few years. How did you recruit them?

[107] **Ms Marcus:** They come from a whole variety of different places. In recent years, they are Jobcentre Plus referrals. JCP refers individuals who are not online, and therefore cannot access universal jobmatch, directly to the libraries. We have a task and finish group for

the chief librarians and JCP partnership managers for Wales where we work together on this. But, there is a whole variety of different places. We work with national organisations such as Disability Wales, Age Cymru, the Royal National Institute of Blind People, Shelter Cymru and so on. People who are struggling will come across us via their families. We have a ‘Computer Courses Near You’ online web resource. Post offices will send people. There is a wide variety of things, but fundamental to all of that is that the majority of the sessions are delivered within library premises. That is important, if I may just add that, simply because it has been found that libraries are the most trusted place to go. If you are already nervous about ICT, the library is the place where you prefer to access it.

[108] **Jenny Rathbone:** I can see that JCP would be an obvious place to recruit people. What about people who are beyond the working age and are beyond the age of retirement? They are the group who are least likely to be comfortable about ICT. Three-year-olds have no problem; it is the older age group that is probably the least digitally savvy. How do you recruit them?

[109] **Ms Marcus:** A couple of years back we set up a scheme called Digital Libraries where we would have just a drop-in centre. So, for example, in Caerphilly county borough on a Friday you can go to any public library and simply drop in and be given assistance. Due to the fact that older people tend to use libraries anyway, that gathered momentum, word got out, and we were inundated. Actually, it has been quite interesting since Christmas: people had been given devices by their families, who were desperate for grandma to use the laptop, and so grandma turns up at the library on a Friday, saying, ‘I’ve been given this; I’ve no idea what to do with it. Could you help?’

[110] **Jenny Rathbone:** That is great. So, it is good in Caerphilly, but what about the rest of Wales?

[111] **Ms Marcus:** We are rolling that out and, in fact, the Communities 2.0 programme has recently been extended to the last four counties of Wales where we have not been working until now, in the competitiveness area. So, we will have all-Wales coverage for the last year of the project, and libraries are our primary delivery focus in terms of rolling that out.

[112] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, what is your perception in terms of the numbers of disabled people who now have access to the internet and ICT who did not in the 2013 ONS survey?

[113] **Ms Marcus:** One of the priority groups for the Communities 2.0 project was disabled people, as I have said, and not necessarily registered disabled people, but people with any kind of disability. We know that we have moved that on. What is difficult, because there is not a specific question in this—and we have already talked about how it is difficult within libraries to establish who is disabled and who is not—is putting a precise figure on that. What I can tell you is that, of the 35,000 that we have worked with, just under 2,500 of those people have had a disability. The majority of those people access our services in libraries. I should qualify that with the fact that, of those people who we have worked with, 69% have not ticked the box to say whether they were disabled or not disabled. So, the 2,500—the 7%—is probably a very small reflection of the number of people who actually have disability. I am sorry; it is very difficult, is it not, to put figures on this?

[114] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay; thank you very much.

[115] **Christine Chapman:** I have just one final question. I just wonder whether you feel that the neutral community space provided by a library makes them well placed to contribute to the wellbeing of disabled people.

10:00

[116] **Ms Davies:** Yes, I would definitely agree with that. I think that, as Cathryn said, people feel that libraries are safe and trusted places and there is so much on offer. Obviously, there are the books, but there is information about what is happening locally, support and, as we have been hearing, there are advice services and training opportunities, and I know that a lot of libraries now have coffee machines and things like that. So, I think that they contribute considerably to the whole wellbeing agenda.

[117] **Christine Chapman:** We have our next panel of witnesses ready to come in, but before you leave—and we are very grateful for your attendance this morning—is there anything else that you feel that we need to know about in relation to this inquiry as relating to your organisation?

[118] **Ms Marcus:** I would ask Members to review the case studies that we will send out, because here are individuals—older people, unemployed people and disabled people—describing how important access to ICT in their local library is, as I think that I said.

[119] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. We will certainly do that. May I thank you very much for attending this morning? We will send you a transcript of the meeting, so that you can check it for accuracy. Thank you, once again, for attending.

10:01

**Ymchwiliad i Lyfrgelloedd Cyhoeddus yng Nghymru: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 4—
Age Cymru
Inquiry into Public Libraries in Wales: Evidence Session 4—Age Cymru**

[120] **Christine Chapman:** I would like to invite the next panel to come to the table. I warmly welcome Age Cymru. With us this morning, we have Graeme Francis, who is head of policy and public affairs at Age Cymru, and also Ceri Cryer, a policy adviser at Age Cymru. Welcome to you both. You have sent the committee members a paper, which we have read carefully, so if you are content, we will go straight into questions

[121] **Mr Francis:** Yes, no problem.

[122] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. I just want to start off. We know that the Welsh Government has a programme on this, relating to libraries. Do you think that the programme is suitably ambitious and detailed?

[123] **Mr Francis:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to come to speak to you today on this issue, which we know is of significant importance to a large number of older people. In relation to the Government programme, we have thought of that in two different ways. On the one hand, we have the programme for government, which makes a few commitments towards particular targets during this particular Welsh Government, and then the actual Welsh Government strategy, Libraries Inspire.

[124] If I say a few words on the programme for government—really, I am just adding to what we put in our written evidence to the committee, which was that the programme for government recognises libraries as an important issue and sets some measures around particular aspects of library provision, in particular, the refurbishment programme undertaken by CyMAL, and sets some measures around the number of visits to libraries as well, which we know have gone up over the past 10 years, and particularly over the past few years. So, those are extremely welcome. I guess that what we feel that the programme for government does not do, and this is where Libraries Inspire comes in as a strategy, is set particular targets

around the number of libraries that we need in Wales and where those are. So, that is one comment that we would make on where the programme for government could perhaps have gone further. Also, although, as I said, it measures the number of visits to libraries, it sets no particular targets for that. So, from our point of view, it is a measurement of how things are going without a particular aspiration at the end of it, aside from on the refurbishment programme.

[125] **Ceri**, do you want to say anything on Libraries Inspire?

[126] **Ms Cryer**: Yes. We felt that the Libraries Inspire strategy seemed very comprehensive about delivering improvements to libraries to attract more visitors, in terms of investment in the modernisation of buildings and facilities to make them more accessible and, of course, in terms of the diversification of the services and activities provided, which is very welcome. As Graeme said, visitor numbers to Welsh libraries have gone up, which is a very positive result. However, we felt that the strategy did not really address protecting libraries in terms of budget cuts or mitigating the effects of cuts on communities. We accept that there are some general overarching references about supporting organisations to review their current modes of delivery in response to the current economic climate, and the aim to develop sustainable and collaborative models of delivery.

[127] We were very pleased that the strategy highlights the importance of the role of public libraries in promoting digital inclusion; there is a very big focus on that. The cross-party group on older people and ageing back in November 2012 discussed the importance of digital inclusion for older people in terms of combating social isolation, accessing services and learning opportunities, and promoting financial inclusion. Many older people have their first taste of computers at libraries, so these are vitally important as places where older people can access computer technology.

[128] **Christine Chapman**: I know that we wanted to look at that in detail, because I know some Members have questions on that. Gwyn, you had a question particularly around the Libraries Inspire strategy. Do you want to pick up on that?

[129] **Gwyn R. Price**: You have covered a lot of the questions that I was going to ask. Do you think that the Government is supporting older people in its policies, or would you like to see it go further? Is there anything that you would like it to put in?

[130] **Ms Cryer**: We thought that the Libraries Inspire strategy was quite comprehensive in supporting older people. Other things that we picked out were providing resources in different formats, such as large-print books and the talking book service, which is a lifeline for many visually impaired people—I know that the RNIB has raised concerns regarding the threats to the funding of the talking book service. However, we felt that the strategy was very supportive of the needs of older people.

[131] **Gwyn R. Price**: I think that covers my next question as well. Thank you for that.

[132] **Christine Chapman**: Jenny had some questions on digital inclusion.

[133] **Jenny Rathbone**: On digital inclusion, how successful do you think that the digital inclusion strategies have been at capturing older people's interests and helping them to access this?

[134] **Ms Cryer**: Many local libraries provide social media such as Facebook and stuff, and they are often a very good hook to get older people interested in such technologies. They can speak to their families and things like that—the useful things that they can take away. If they are hooked it perhaps can get them into more complex areas. So, those types of programmes

with Communities 2.0 are excellent in terms of getting people online.

[135] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, how successful do you think it has been?

[136] **Mr Francis:** I would add to Ceri's remarks about it being an intro for older people often through libraries. From my personal experience with family members, libraries have been that first step. In terms of success, we could always do more, but as far as I understand it, all libraries in Wales, or at least the vast majority of them, have facilities available now. Most have trained staff available to help people to access computer systems. Our local partners also work with some local authorities and use libraries as a place to house courses to train older people in IT facilities, or at least people enter them through libraries. So, we do not have any big concerns with that programme. We see it as being a general trend towards digital inclusion, and the numbers of older people using technology are going up. That is to be welcomed, although they might be going up slower than we might hope. However, I do not think that that is necessarily an issue with library provision per se.

[137] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, it is commonplace these days for people to exchange Facebook details, log-ins and all that sort of thing.

[138] **Mr Francis:** One of the things that came up in the meeting of the cross-party group on older people when we looked at digital inclusion—Mike chairs that group, so he will remember the discussion well—around social media in libraries, which was brought up by a couple of people in the room, was that sometimes policies that are operated by local authorities in terms of what you can access in libraries mean that things like Facebook are barred. That is not the case across all libraries, but perhaps Facebook and Skype are considered to be services that are not traditionally appropriate for a public setting or a library where quiet is quite a big part of what that building requires. We did hear that local authorities may need to modernise some of their policies around what websites can be accessed because, as Ceri said, a lot of older people are increasingly using services like Skype to keep in touch with distant family members and things like that. However, in general, we think that library internet provision is really important, and that is a major reason why we believe that libraries play a really important role in the community and for older people.

[139] **Jocelyn Davies:** Why did you think that Facebook should be excluded? I can understand why Skype would be excluded, if you have this idea that libraries should be quiet, which they are not normally now anyway; that is a very old-fashioned view, is it not? Why would Facebook be excluded?

[140] **Mr Francis:** I am not sure. It is probably because it is not targeted at old people; that would be my guess about Facebook. I do not know whether there are concerns around security issues and things like that. Obviously, you have to be pretty careful using a public computer for things that give access to—

[141] **Jocelyn Davies:** Things that allow you to communicate with other people.

[142] **Mr Francis:** Well, if someone was able to get access to your social media account, then they would potentially have access to some quite sensitive information about you. I am not here suggesting that vast numbers of people would use Facebook in libraries, but that was just something that came up in the cross-party group as to why that policy exists. I am not sure about the original rationale for it, but our feeling is that it might need to be reviewed; it could be outdated.

[143] **Jocelyn Davies:** My mother is on Facebook—she calls it 'facepage'—but she does not post anything; she just checks how everybody is. She just looks at other people in the family. She is up-to-date with all the news just because she can have a look. I think it is

fantastic. The idea that ‘facepage’, as my mother calls it, is dangerous is perhaps a bit old-fashioned.

[144] **Peter Black:** My experience of Facebook is that the age profile is getting older. My problem with some libraries is they may bar you from getting on to Facebook, but will let you go on to pay-day loan company sites. So, I think that they do need to look at these policies. I was going to ask you about the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, which local authorities—

[145] **Christine Chapman:** This is like an exam question. *[Laughter.]*

[146] **Peter Black:** It is, yes. The Act states that local authorities have to provide competent and efficient library services, and Welsh Ministers have a statutory role under that Act to promote library services and to intervene when local authorities are not meeting statutory requirements et cetera. The Welsh public library standards are based on that Act. Do you think that the Act needs modernising, given that 1964 was a long time ago now?

[147] **Mr Francis:** It was. In preparing for today, I read some of the written evidence that local authorities gave to you. They would obviously have a more detailed understanding of the Act than we do in terms of looking at their duty. We very much support the fact that the Act places a duty to provide these services, although I do note the comments from local authorities that they would potentially appreciate some more guidelines in terms of how that duty should be implemented. It is quite a broad duty and it does not give much in the way of detail about which elements of library services should be considered a statutory duty. As I say, I am not an expert on that piece of legislation, but we would say that the key issue for us is that there should be Welsh Government guidance and guidelines to local authorities on how their duty should be implemented.

[148] **Peter Black:** I guess the fact that the Act is so broad is why it has survived so long without being amended, because it does give such leeway. However, it does not make public libraries a statutory provision, which is why some of them are being closed. In terms of the Welsh public library standards, do you think that they are an effective tool for ensuring that we get quality library services?

[149] **Mr Francis:** Again, I am not an expert on how local authorities use those standards, but we welcome the fact that they are there and that they give some more detail to the duty that is in the Act. That is welcomed by local authorities. One thing that I am pleased about in terms of those standards goes back to the digital inclusion aspect. They put quite a high emphasis on the provision of digital inclusion, and from our point of view, in terms of the future sustainability of library services, it is that diversification into other areas that keeps libraries relevant and modern, which is going to help them sustain, or will at least give a good rationale for why they should sustain. So, we support the standards on that basis. As I say, digital inclusion and going broader than traditional service models are seen as important aspects.

10:15

[150] **Peter Black:** The Welsh Government is reviewing these standards. Is there anything that you think should be added into them, or taken out?

[151] **Mr Francis:** I think that we would have to go away to analyse that in a bit more detail, to be honest, before we could give a full answer. Ceri, is there anything that strikes you on that?

[152] **Ms Cryer:** No, I have nothing to add. I agree with Graeme; we would have to take

that away to study it.

[153] **Mr Francis:** One thing that I would say on that is that we might come on to questions about regional collaboration, and I think that that is an area where, if we are looking at sustainability in the future as well as diversification of services, there will be a call that we are looking at how different local authorities co-operate on that. I do not know to what extent the standards as they are at the moment either push for that or make that possible. So, that might be an area that you would wish to look at.

[154] **Christine Chapman:** I think that Rhodri wanted to come in next.

[155] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rydych yn mynegi yn eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig—ac rydych wedi ailadrodd hyn y bore yma yn eich tystiolaeth ar lafar—bod gennych bryderon difrifol ynglŷn â gallu Llywodraeth Cymru ac awdurdodau lleol i liniaru effeithiau toriadau ar wasanaethau llyfrgell. Beth mwy y gellir disgwyl i Lywodraeth Cymru neu lywodraeth leol ei wneud i liniaru'r effeithiau hynny?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You say in your written evidence—and you have repeated this this morning in your oral evidence—that you have serious concerns regarding the ability of the Welsh Government and local government to mitigate the effects of cuts on library services. What more could the Welsh Government or local government be expected to do to mitigate those effects?

[156] **Mr Francis:** It is obviously a difficult question—it is the key question in terms of a lot of public services at the moment. There is a story in the press today around bus services, for example, and we recognise that local authorities are having to make very difficult decisions around their funding arrangements. What we have found in preparing for this session and preparing our written evidence is that it is quite difficult to come to a final picture at present around the impact of budget cuts on libraries specifically. Different local authorities are at different points in their processes around deciding on future budgets, but it is clear that libraries are one of the services at risk of cuts—one of many services, I should say. In terms of what could be done to mitigate, we very much believe that if services—libraries being one of those—are being considered as an area where savings could be made, then local authorities have to look very carefully at the impact that that would have, particularly on specific groups. Indeed, things like the Equality Act 2010 will put a requirement on them to consider things like equality impact assessments in budgets. So, on the one hand, local authorities really need to make sure that those cuts or changes are not having a disproportionate effect on different people. Our reasoning for supporting library provision is that we know that there is a major issue gaining traction in Wales and across the UK around loneliness and social isolation, and we think that libraries play a really important role in that.

[157] It is for local authorities to decide what they do in terms of managing their budgets. We think that the duty that exists—the need to provide a form of library service—should be considered to be a strong one, and should mean that they do not remove provision entirely. I guess that we would need to look at things like alternative models of provision. I know local authorities are already looking at how their library services are provided, and whether that needs to be provided in a building or a set of buildings, particularly in areas where the mobile service plays a role. We are not against looking at that service and seeing the ways that it could be provided, but we think that it is important that an element of that service still exists going into the future—a large element, I should say—and that the buildings themselves are an important part of that, because of the opportunities to engage and participate in the community that they provide to people.

[158] **Christine Chapman:** Can I just ask this, Graeme, before Rhodri comes back in: you have said that it is difficult because local authorities are at different stages of this, but are you picking up among the local authorities that some of them have different priorities regarding

libraries—some are putting more emphasis on it and others less emphasis? Are you picking that up at all?

[159] **Mr Francis:** I think that that is probably inevitably the case.

[160] **Christine Chapman:** If so, are the others learning lessons, maybe, from the priorities that they are putting on their libraries?

[161] **Mr Francis:** I do not know. I guess that they are all taking forward this process at the same time, and feeling their own way. For us, local consultation, particularly with service users, would be a really important part of that. They will all have slightly different circumstances that they will be dealing with.

[162] We have big concerns, as we have put in our written evidence, about some of the things that are happening in different areas. There are different stories in the press about areas where library services are at risk, and we have mentioned them in our written evidence. We went out to our local partner organisations across Wales to ask them about provision and likely changes in their areas. Quite a mixed picture came back in the time that we had to do that; we did not get responses from all of them across Wales. We had a mixture of responses from Anglesey, where it was felt that the provision is being protected fairly well, and our local partner there did not expect a huge impact imminently. This is compared with other local authorities in Wales, which have consulted on the closures of some local services, and others where that might not be the case this year, but it had already been indicated that it was likely to be the case, given the budget, that those services would go in future years. I know that that type of evidence has been mirrored in some of the written evidence that you have received as a committee from local authorities across Wales.

[163] So, our understanding is that it is a pretty mixed picture, and you are right that different local authorities will put a different emphasis on services. Obviously, different local authorities have different challenges in terms of the geographical area that they serve and the types of communities that they have. So, it is hard to draw lessons completely, especially at the moment when the process is ongoing.

[164] **Christine Chapman:** Rhodri, did you have any other questions?

[165] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rydych wedi amlinellu'r ffordd yr ydych yn credu y bydd y toriadau hyn yn effeithio ar bobl hŷn, ac rydym yn derbyn hynny ac yn ymwybodol o'r dadleuon o'n gwaith gydag etholwyr, sy'n pryderu'n fawr iawn am y toriadau hyn. A oes unrhyw asesiad wedi cael ei wneud o'r effaith ar bobl hŷn?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You have outlined the way in which you believe these cuts will affect older people, and we accept and are aware of those arguments as a result of our work with constituents, who are very concerned about these cuts. Has any assessment been undertaken of the impact on older people?

[166] **Ms Cryer:** We have not done a formal assessment, but as well as their traditional roles, we know that libraries can play a central role in communities as places where people can meet and take part in community activities. We feel that cuts to library services would have an adverse impact on older people. It would lead to an increase in social exclusion, isolation and loneliness. It could affect older people's ability to fully participate in society and engage in social, cultural and educational facilities—things such as lifelong learning. It will also affect economic benefits, because people go into libraries to access the internet and get information about benefits and financial advice. It could impact on older people becoming digitally included as well. Those are the impacts that we felt that the cuts would have.

[167] **Mr Francis:** I do not think that anyone, to our knowledge, has undertaken an overall

assessment of what those specific impacts would be as a research project. One area where we think that the type of assessment that you are talking about needs to play a part would be in the Welsh Government review that the Minister announced on the future provision of services. In our view, that should take into account the impact on different groups of different types of service provision.

[168] **Christine Chapman:** Mark, did you want to come in? Before I bring Mark in, the statement from the Minister John Griffiths this week said that his review will be looking at our inquiry report with interest. So, that is useful.

[169] **Mark Isherwood:** To what extent have local authorities taken account of the needs of older people when planning reduced or reconfigured library services?

[170] **Mr Francis:** Again, it is a mixed picture. We know from the work that we did with our local partners across Wales to what extent they have been consulted on services, or the extent to which they have been helping to facilitate local authorities to consult. We got a different response back from different partners.

[171] Some had been involved and some had been completely outside of the budget-setting consultation process that authorities had been taking. I do not think I am able to give you a full position on that, in terms of what percentage of local authorities had specifically looked at older people, but we know that different authorities have followed different processes and have consulted in different ways on a variety of changes to services. Where we think it is vital is in equality impact assessing the impact that changes are likely to have on different protected groups, which, obviously, does not just include older people, but is quite likely to include younger people and, as you heard from Rhian this morning, disabled people. The crucial bit for us is engagement with service users—the people who use those services regularly have to form a key part of what local authorities are looking at in making those decisions. For us, if changes are going to happen, or are proposed to happen, they need to look at ways in which they can be mitigated and the types of alternatives that could be put in place. For example, in a case where a local library would be closing in one part of a local authority area, do transport links exist, through buses and things, to take people to more centralised provision or other libraries? Do such things as mobile services have a role to play in picking up some of the loss that would happen if libraries were to close? We are also, as you would imagine, very supportive of housebound services, where they exist, because they help to serve a particular group of older people who, regardless of the library provision, are not going to be able to access a local building.

[172] **Mark Isherwood:** Consultation is often a self-fulfilling prophecy. We heard Disability Wales's view that this is a key area where co-design and co-delivery could come into play. Do you agree with it that older people alongside disabled people should be involved in planning the reconfigured services?

[173] **Mr Francis:** Absolutely. As a process, that would be the optimal way. Consultation is one thing, but, taking it that step further and looking at the design of services with the people who use them, we would absolutely support.

[174] **Mark Isherwood:** It works well in certain parts of the world. I know that we can make it work if we have the will. My final question in this section is: to what extent are local authorities and Welsh Government engaging with you and your partner organisations to ensure that the funding environment does not have a disproportionately detrimental impact on library services for older people?

[175] **Mr Francis:** At a local level, it is the mixed picture I talked about before. Some of our partners have—

[176] **Mark Isherwood:** Do you have an example? Are you able to name and praise or shame?

[177] **Mr Francis:** Well, I need to be a bit careful in this area. As I said, we did not get responses from the whole of Wales, so it might be slightly unfair for me to pick out particular examples. I mentioned Anglesey earlier, and our local partner up there, Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn, has a very good dialogue with the local authority, particularly around how its services can play a part. Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn has Age Well centres around Anglesey. Those centres are hubs for the community and provide a different variety of services, from lunch and learning and training opportunities for older people to fitness clubs and health advice. Each one is different, but they offer a huge range of potential things where older people can get services or social opportunities in one place. We know that Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn has been talking to its local authority quite a lot around the overall programme for changing local government services up in Anglesey and whether its Age Well centres can play a part in that.

[178] I am trying to look to see whether we have a bad example written down on this sheet of paper. Ceri, do you remember anything in particular that came out?

[179] **Ms Cryer:** No, but, talking about Anglesey, the feedback we had was that there are lots of different ways of delivering library services in different areas. It is important to look at different models of delivery. There are good examples of libraries situated next door to school buildings or day centres. Other libraries have extended hours during the summer period and things such as that. It is about looking at the different models that would fit the needs of the community.

10:30

[180] **Mr Francis:** The other part of your question was about how we would engage with the Welsh Government, I think. That would be our role as a national charity. 'We have not', is the answer; we have not been asked to comment by the Welsh Government on anything around library strategies recently, and around mitigation of the cuts, but we would be very willing to do so. One of the key priorities for Age Cymru, moving forward, is a programme of work that we are devising around age-friendly communities. We did some campaigning work on this a couple of years ago and we are continuing with that and developing a more holistic programme of work across the charity around that. One of the things that our new chief executive, Ian Thomas, has been very clear about is that he wants to have this kind of dialogue with the Welsh Government and with local authorities about how we and our partners can play a role in co-designing or co-delivering these kinds of services. We have been talking about that in relation to data thus far, but I think that libraries would be another example of where the full cuts are made. We very much believe that statutory agencies should come to talk to the third sector around what the opportunities might be where we can play a role or work with them to deliver.

[181] **Mark Isherwood:** I know, referring to Anglesey, that many of the services being delivered in the centres are done by third-sector bodies working in partnership—delivery, as well as design.

[182] **Christine Chapman:** Perhaps we could move on. I remind Members that we have less than a quarter of an hour now. I know that we have some other questions. I think that Jocelyn had a question.

[183] **Jocelyn Davies:** The Chair likes to say how much time we have left when she asks me to speak. [*Laughter.*]

[184] You have mentioned a few times this issue of extending mobile services and so on, particularly where libraries are lost or threatened. You also mentioned that people could become isolated. If you extend a service that is delivered in someone's home, will that, in effect, isolate more people, and what could be done then to militate against that?

[185] **Mr Francis:** That is a very good question. It is a little bit of a contradiction, obviously, in what we are talking about. I think that what we would be inclined to say is that every type of service provision can play a role here. Clearly, there is a lot of money, potentially, and time invested in buildings, and in staff numbers. In some places, where footfall is low, for example, or in a particularly rural area, that will be quite difficult to justify and sustain. We perfectly understand that. That is the kind of example of where we would see mobile services as being a potential solution for the people who would be using more of those traditional aspects of library services in terms of book loaning and the rest. However, you are absolutely right; one of the reasons why we think that library provision can play such an important role in communities is because of the opportunity that it gives to older people to participate in the community. In an ideal world, we would very much like to see buildings and library services kind of becoming a way of being that community hub, where people would go and get that sort of participation and social inclusion. This forms part of an overall picture in our communities, which I am sure that all Members will be aware of over recent years, whereby many of those places that traditionally were open buildings in the community have been lost or are being lost. There is a long list of post offices, pubs, day centres, banks and shops. The library is yet another aspect of that. If those are lost, we are basically seeing far fewer opportunities for people to be socially included. So, to answer your question, we think that mobile services play an important role in replacing buildings where they are simply not sustainable.

[186] **Jocelyn Davies:** It is not better, though. You are not suggesting that.

[187] **Mr Francis:** It is definitely not a better service.

[188] **Jocelyn Davies:** We certainly heard earlier that the mobile service could give people the confidence to go online, so that would help, of course, if that happened.

[189] **Mr Francis:** Yes, absolutely.

[190] **Jocelyn Davies:** You have mentioned, in passing, collaboration between local authorities. How do you see that working out?

[191] **Mr Francis:** I know that, in its evidence to you, the WLGA highlighted a few examples of where different groupings of local authorities—and there was one example in north Wales, and another in south-east Wales, in particular—have been grouping together to look at the outcomes they need that library services can deliver and how those could be operated. Again, at the risk of sounding like a broken record, I am not sure that there is one solution to this, but, clearly, the political agenda and the agenda in terms of the way we deliver services is going towards a more regional, collaborative approach between authorities. If that is a place where savings can be made and services can be made to look more sustainable, we very much support that. We highlighted in our written evidence that mobile services, to go back to that point, might be an example of where regional provision can happen because if you have, say, a group of rural local authorities, they could get together on managing that kind of service. We very much see opportunities in that, and housebound services might be an example of that as well.

[192] I guess that a lot of the things around regional collaboration come back to whether, really, they save money in the long run. That will be the \$1 million question for local authorities and for the Welsh Government, I am sure. We said that a lot of the resources tied

up in providing library services are in staff and in buildings. Given my previous answer to you, we would not want to see a full-scale move away from that, so some of those savings are probably not able to be realised. However, it is something that we need to encourage local authorities to be looking at.

[193] **Christine Chapman:** I know that Mike wants to come in, but I know that Jenny had a supplementary question.

[194] **Jenny Rathbone:** I want to know what Age Cymru can do to promote libraries and increase reading. For example, do you promote book clubs among your members?

[195] **Mr Francis:** Yes. Again, it is different in different places, but, particularly going back to the Age Well centres on Anglesey, those are services that are provided there or that people ask for there. I should say that that service provision and a lot of our local partner service provision are very much based on user demand. So, in particular, those Age Well centres, which are our most developed example of this type of working, are built very much around the idea that you provide the building as a hub for the community and that the people who come there tell you what they want to do and the kind of services they want, so those things can change over time and those things are very much related to what people want to see. We fully believe in that rather than putting on a menu of things and dictating to people what types of activities they want to do. These centres are incredibly successful because of that. However, book clubs is one example of the type of service being delivered there. IT classes is another thing that our partner organisations are very involved in. They can sometimes do that in collaboration with libraries.

[196] So, I would not say that we have in the past had a programme specifically designed to push footfall into libraries, for example. However, in those ways that we can potentially collaborate and provide services jointly, anything that can help those premises, that building, to be a thriving community building with different third sector organisations providing services and perhaps with local authorities providing information is the kind of thing that will make these services more sustainable.

[197] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. You are talking about preventing isolation, loneliness and health decline, so are things like book clubs or your members taking books to someone who is housebound and those sorts of things things that you are actively promoting? You are obviously doing some interesting things on Anglesey. How actively are you spreading the word to other parts of Wales?

[198] **Mr Francis:** I mentioned our developing age-friendly communities programme that we have as an organisation. That is exactly the kind of thing we are going to be looking at through that. As Age Cymru, as a national charity, we are very much a policy-focused, campaigning-focused organisation, but our partners are the service delivery bodies. So, what we are currently doing is working with them in terms of what would be appropriate in different communities and the types of service we provide, but we will certainly take that back as an idea.

[199] **Jenny Rathbone:** So your partners are actively promoting—or you are thinking that they ought to be actively promoting—these sorts of things.

[200] **Mr Francis:** Yes, it is a bit of both. I think that there is more that we can do. In different areas, there are different priorities depending on the funding arrangements or the working relationship they have with local authorities. However, providing those kinds of services is what we see as the core of our business as a charity in having the aim of helping older people to participate fully in society.

[201] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Mike do you want to come in here?

[202] **Mike Hedges:** I have two questions. I am not convinced that collaboration between local authorities is going to achieve a great deal. People like their libraries to be local. What about collaboration between local authorities and other library providers? I used to work in Pontypridd, where there was a library within 100 yards of the further education college library. In Swansea, the library is within a quarter or half a mile of the further education college library, and there are also university libraries. Surely, if you want to make things more accessible, opening those up and having that level of collaboration across different organisations might be more helpful.

[203] **Mr Francis:** Yes, I think that there could certainly be some mileage in that; absolutely.

[204] **Mike Hedges:** My other question is about people getting older, and their eyesight tends to deteriorate. There are a lot of organisations that provide talking books in Welsh and in English, and those are voluntary organisations. Is there a role for more voluntary organisations getting involved in providing traditional library services, especially for those who have disabilities?

[205] **Mr Francis:** Again, this is a very interesting one for us. We have been considering volunteer roles both in library provision and wider services recently. I certainly do not discount it as being a solution; I know that it is something that has been tried in different places. However, I know that the mood so far in Wales has very much been for volunteers to add value to existing library services and not to be taking the place of trained and paid staff. I think that we would probably support that as an angle. Voluntary organisations can certainly play a role, and as I have said, we welcome the opportunity to have those discussions with service providers around whether there is a role for our organisation, or whether other third sector organisations can be part of it.

[206] However, I have a note of caution around volunteer use per se. As I say, it can be part of a solution, but we generally have concerns about volunteers being seen as the solution across many public services at the moment. I know that it has been talked about in terms of groups of volunteers taking over public toilets, for example. In libraries, it is the same kind of thing, but is that a way of making the service more sustainable? We would just sound a note of caution around not thinking that recruiting volunteers is a cheap way of delivering services and not ignoring the difficulties. As an organisation that recruits volunteers ourselves, we know that it can often be difficult to do that.

[207] **Mike Hedges:** I was talking about niche areas—talking books particularly and Welsh-language talking books. They can now be sent to people by e-mail or as attachments. It is a development in niche markets, and I wonder whether there is a role for the voluntary sector there. I was not talking about taking over the running of major libraries. It is about niche markets and the role that they could have in dealing with those.

[208] **Mr Francis:** Sorry for misunderstanding your question, Mike. Ceri, I have mentioned talking books already but—

[209] **Ms Cryer:** I know that the RNIB has been very much involved with local authorities and funding talking books. I guess that it is just about highlighting those sorts of specialist areas really.

[210] **Mr Francis:** The RNIB highlighted to us a couple of days ago, knowing that we were coming to give evidence to you, that one of its concerns—I think it is in its written evidence—is that, in the past, local authorities, or the Welsh Government, have funded some

of those provisions and it feels that that is a funding area that is under threat. So, perhaps the volunteer side of that can help to reduce the costs of producing those services. However, it has sounded a note in caution in terms of the fact that it is a service that needs to be funded from somewhere.

[211] **Christine Chapman:** We are coming to the end of this session. Jenny, do you have some questions?

[212] **Jenny Rathbone:** The information world and the way in which we exchange information is changing all the time. What work have you, or your partner organisations, done to promote things like e-readers, so that those with failing sight can still access the written word?

10:45

[213] **Mr Francis:** On e-readers specifically, I am not sure. In terms of new ways of taking technology forward, where we have provided things like IT skills training, our partners are moving increasingly towards new ways of helping people to get online—for example, on tablet computers as opposed to the more traditional style. Anything that is intuitive, in the way that tablets generally are intuitive, is potentially helpful for people who had never used a service previously or who have found services—‘services’ is the wrong word—or products difficult to access. E-readers may well be the same kind of issue, because of the ability to change font sizes and things. It strikes me that that is potentially a good solution. I know that libraries in Wales have moved towards providing a lending service for e-books as well; some do that. However, to be honest, I am not entirely sure about whether our local partners have been involved in promoting that.

[214] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, you are not looking specifically at the opportunities of new technology, and how it could be applied to what Age Cymru promotes.

[215] **Mr Francis:** I think that we are, as I said, on the IT side, with getting online and things. In terms of books, specifically, I am not sure.

[216] **Christine Chapman:** I have one final question. Do you think that libraries are well placed to contribute to the wellbeing of older people, by their position outside of health and other support services? Do you think that their role is as important as that of other services?

[217] **Mr Francis:** Absolutely. We touched a few times on the issues of loneliness and isolation, and there was new research out earlier this week that indicated that loneliness could be even more dangerous, from a health point of view, than obesity, in terms of the impact that it can have on people’s wellbeing. I have talked about libraries being part of a general theme in communities of the closure of places where people go to meet other people and feel as if they are participating in society and feeling valued and having a purpose to life. So yes, absolutely, in terms of the wellbeing agenda. Welsh Government has been looking at that very strongly through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill and through the strategy for older people. We would see this as being a core component of that.

[218] **Christine Chapman:** On that note, I thank you both for attending this morning. We will send you a transcript of the meeting to check for factual accuracy. The committee will take a short break; we will reconvene at 11 a.m.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:47 ac 11:03.
The meeting adjourned between 10:47 and 11:03.*

**Ymchwiliad i Lyfrgelloedd Cyhoeddus yng Nghymru: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 5—
Plant yng Nghymru**
Inquiry into Public Libraries in Wales: Evidence Session 5—Children in Wales

[219] **Christine Chapman:** I extend a warm welcome to Children in Wales. I welcome Catriona Williams, chief executive, and Lynne Hill, policy director. Welcome to you both. You have sent the committee a paper and we have read it very carefully so, if you are happy, we will go straight into questions about our inquiry.

[220] **Ms Williams:** Yes. It was a very short paper, so we are happy to answer lots of questions.

[221] **Christine Chapman:** I will start off. I am not sure whether you are aware of this, but there has been a general increase in visitor numbers to libraries in Wales. Do you know whether the number of children and young people using libraries has increased? Would you know that, Catriona?

[222] **Ms Williams:** In terms of being experts on library services and attendance, we are not. However, from what I understand, it has, in recent times, increased, particularly because of internet access and computer access.

[223] **Christine Chapman:** Do you think that the Welsh Government should have a distinct objective for, or publish statistics on, the number of children and young people visiting libraries in Wales?

[224] **Ms Williams:** Yes, we feel incredibly strongly about this. For most services, particularly at a time of cuts and reductions, there should be a child impact assessment. You need baseline data. We are very concerned about the digital divide for children and young people. A lot of the poorer youngsters have access to the internet only through mobile phones. However, there seems to be an imbalance—I do not know whether this is answering the question—between what education folk are asking children to do for their homework and the ability of poorer children to use a computer. I think, a child impact assessment before you—. What we have seen in recent times is a reduction in the range of cultural activities. There is less drama and fewer external-to-school extracurricular activities. However, the library, where there are good examples, is a hugely important opportunity, particularly for young children and for family learning. As well as the number of children who go to libraries there is also the number of family experiences; it could be a grandmother taking a grandchild, or it could be a child minder. It is a family experience.

[225] **Christine Chapman:** So, you are supportive of the Welsh Government examining this data in detail.

[226] **Ms Williams:** Definitely.

[227] **Ms Hill:** There is a need to think about what data you would be gathering. Are you looking at the number of children through the door? Are you looking at the number of children who join and return? Are you measuring how many books are borrowed across the summer schemes that encourage children to read six books through the summer? Would that be a measure? Is it about family use? Are we looking for mums and grans to be bringing very small children into the library? It is about teasing out who we are targeting, because there are very different needs for different groups, and how we measure that.

[228] **Christine Chapman:** Going on to another aspect of this, there have been improvements to libraries carried out using Welsh Government funding. Do you get a sense

that that is having an impact on accessibility and appeal for young people?

[229] **Ms Hill:** Yes. I can speak about the local libraries that I am aware of, and I have talked to colleagues across Wales: there is a very high take-up. I was just speaking to somebody now who said that, at 3.30 p.m., you cannot get a computer in a library because children and young people are in there doing their homework. There is a bit of a challenge in that, because, as Catriona said, schools are saying, 'Do this and give this to me on a disk or on a stick', but the children do not have a computer at home. They may have access to the internet via a phone, but they cannot do their homework on it. So, there is a pressure, but, yes, I think that children are using it.

[230] Libraries have worked very hard themselves and with partners to do lots of things to encourage very early use of libraries. They do things like a book crawl, where they encourage young mums or whoever is caring for young children to go into the library, where they get a sticker and are encouraged to borrow books, so books go into the home. That is vitally important for people who did not, as children themselves, see the library as an accessible place. When I was a child, you were shushed and not really allowed to touch things. You were encouraged to have books, but you were not encouraged to explore it. Libraries have done a really good job in moving away from that. Some are based in community hubs where there are things like the family information service co-located with them, which give lots of information to families. Some have a cafe and a toilet and, for those who take a small child, somewhere to change them safely and appropriately. It is all those things that make it a very pleasant experience.

[231] **Ms Williams:** Looking at families and the home environment for a lot of children, there may be computer access in the home, but it may be such a chaotic situation that they are living in that the library is one of the few spaces where they can get away to look at the computer, not necessarily just to do their homework, but to contact their friends. On the question about whether we have noticed a change, there are some excellent examples, but there is also a long way to go to promote it. I watched your evidence yesterday, and I did not know about quite a few of the things that exist. I think that how it gets out there to people is probably—

[232] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, we all sort of thought that. I think that Gwyn also had some questions that are sort of related to this.

[233] **Gwyn R. Price:** Yes. Good morning to you both. Do you feel that the Welsh Government's Libraries Inspire strategy pays sufficient regard to the ways in which libraries can help children and young people?

[234] **Ms Williams:** Are you asking whether it pays sufficient attention?

[235] **Gwyn R. Price:** Yes, with Libraries Inspire. I know that your paper is short; it is quite succinct. Do you think that there is enough in there for the young children?

[236] **Ms Hill:** I think that it would be very good to see some specific references to engaging children and young people, and I think that that would make it feel as though it was very much more inclusive. I think that it does give a range of opportunities to develop. I would like to see something about engagement, whether that is outreach to things like schools or engagement with services that can come in. The good examples are where libraries and library staff have done that. I have a brilliant example from Denbighshire, where they do the summer reading challenge, which is offered in every library. However, Denbighshire libraries go out to every primary school in Denbighshire before the summer holidays, and they talk about what is on offer, why it is interesting and what the children might get out of it. Then, they work with the families through the summer. They say that not only do their children's

lending rates go up, but their adult borrowing rates shoot up during the summer, because if families go, adults think, ‘Oh, they’ve got that. That’s interesting’.

[237] **Christine Chapman:** You mentioned Denbighshire; are you aware that it is happening in other authorities as well?

[238] **Ms Hill:** The summer reading scheme happens everywhere, in every library. I think that Denbighshire has actually taken on board how it, as a library service, goes out. It then goes back out to schools in September and gives out medals to all the children that have achieved it. Last summer, one primary school in a fairly challenging area—not a very people-who-access-the-library-anyway school—achieved 100% success. So, that means that 100% of those children went along—

[239] **Jocelyn Davies:** They all read six books.

[240] **Ms Hill:** They have all read six books or more.

[241] **Christine Chapman:** That is really good.

[242] **Jocelyn Davies:** That is excellent.

[243] **Ms Hill:** If you can encourage children to do that through the summer, you are planting a really strong seed for the future. If the adult learning goes up, you are very likely to be making parents think, ‘This is all right, actually’, as opposed to thinking, ‘It is not a place for me’. I think that one of the things about the old style of library, which we are not seeing so much now, is that it feels like a big step to go over the doorstep the first time if you do not know what the system is, you do not have a card and you do not understand the borrowing rules.

[244] **Gwyn R. Price:** Do you think that there is a link between Libraries Inspire and other Welsh Government policies, such as the child poverty strategy?

[245] **Ms Williams:** Basically, not yet. For me, this is the very big issue. I mentioned the digital divide, which we are all more than familiar with, I am sure. The access to information for children is so important and for them to enjoy. It is almost a case of knowing how to make it a pleasurable experience for children from situations that are really difficult. There is real potential to make this an opportunity haven that a child can use, by themselves, alone, if they want peace and quiet or if they want something nice. It is the soft issues around book reading; it is an experience in a library, if it is sufficiently connected, or co-located, with leisure services or whatever, that becomes important for those children. The families in most severe poverty find it the hardest to get into any services, so it helps if you have things that are useful. I think that quite a bit of research could be done about what the families themselves would find useful in that location. We know about the cost of transport in rural areas for poor families, and there is a range of issues that could be well integrated into the poverty, particularly combating child or family poverty.

[246] **Christine Chapman:** I have a supplementary question from Jenny.

11:15

[247] **Jenny Rathbone:** One of the biggest issues around child poverty is language development. Already, you have built in disadvantage by the time they even start nursery. Some libraries provide sing time or language and play sessions for parents and young children. Is enough of that going on? I do not think it is going on universally.

[248] **Ms Williams:** No. It is very interesting. Again, this was a personal ignorance of mine, but I did not realise that some libraries were doing a lot. I have an American daughter-in-law and she is doing Welsh singing with a baby in a library. It is also about Welsh-language development opportunities. However, I think that, where we have models that are really encouraging—. As Lynne says—and I co-chair Voices from Care—for some of the young mums with babies who have no other support, these sorts of activities are very important. It would also help the sort of work that NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Dysgu Cymru does in terms of family group learning. Just going into a group is quite hard for a lot of individuals, if you are a young mum. It is about developing that opportunity. It is a postcode lottery.

[249] **Jenny Rathbone:** All right, but given your role to promote the wellbeing of children, what part can you play in ensuring that all libraries are thinking about this very early age group and actively providing these services for this group?

[250] **Ms Hill:** One of the things we can do, and which I am aware of because of the links we have, is, for example, Flying Start does language and play, and it can use the local libraries. So, that is about influencing and supporting parents to access that. We also work very closely with the family information services. Again, there are good examples of them being co-located. There are other examples of them just crossing over and trying to make those links and we can promote that. For example, I think that, in the Vale, they are not located with the library service, but they do make sure that information about the family information service goes into the Bookstart packs that families have. There are opportunities. Sometimes, it is about linking up those little bits. So, if there is something going out to families from the health visitor to do with books, if there is information in there about the library and promotion about what libraries can offer, that—

[251] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, what can you do to ensure that this good practice is across the piece, across Wales?

[252] **Ms Williams:** Perhaps I can answer that. I think that our umbrella role is very much to inform the professionals across all different disciplines and sectors and the third sector. Going back to my earlier point, we, as organisations, need to know what the potential is from the library service itself with regard to what research it has done and to have a close link. I think that, in fairness, some of the museums have begun to really take on children's issues in a big way. There are close links there where we can promote the work that they are doing. I think that it is a co-production sort of exercise really, particularly with the children and families themselves because I think that that is where we would say, 'Whatever services you are providing, have you thought about children?' We can actively promote with the library service—. In fact, we have some libraries with membership of Children in Wales: Wrexham, for years, was a very active member. However, where the libraries have themselves changed, that message has not gone out publicly, and we could help to promote that.

[253] **Jenny Rathbone:** Good.

[254] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Peter is next.

[255] **Peter Black:** The Welsh public library standards is the statutory guidance issued under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. That Act is 50 years old this year and, clearly, it is fairly broad in the way that it is set out, although we keep up to date further standards that are issued, in guidance. In terms of how libraries should be developing over the next few years, do you have any ideas on whether that Act should be renewed and whether a new Act should come in? If so, what would you like to see in it that would change the way we look at public libraries over the next 50 years, if you like?

[256] **Ms Williams:** I think, for Wales, we have huge potential in terms of getting legislation that cross-references to poverty and all the different bits of legislation. The wellbeing of children is coming through legislation in health and social services and so forth. Lynne is more knowledgeable about the actual content of the Act, but I think, possibly, that there needs to be a period of time where we need to establish what exactly can happen before we rush to the legislative changes. There should probably be a consultative period, particularly with the families, as I say, who are disengaged from education and from the library service, to find out what would really work best for them. Obviously, after 50 years, it is an opportunity that we could take, but we need to know what we are asking for in its place. I would say that, in terms of the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, we should be looking at what children are saying that they need and their overall educational attainment should be linked into how the libraries are supporting those who find it hardest to achieve.

[257] **Ms Hill:** The other thing is—and I know that you have probably heard this from many other people as well as from us—the very good examples are where people have been very proactive in libraries. So, there is a resource there. I do not know how well that has been evaluated and measured to give evidence of that, but there is a resource on that side. This is an opportunity to bring two sides together and to ask, ‘What is best practice and where are the good examples, whether they are through a piece of legislation or whatever, that can be used to make sure that that is out there for everybody?’ So, it should not just be about where you have very dynamic librarians, but about building those standards that very clearly show the importance of engaging families and ways of doing that.

[258] **Peter Black:** So, for example, at the moment, libraries are not a statutory service. Would you want to legislate to make them a statutory service?

[259] **Ms Williams:** Yes.

[260] **Ms Hill:** Yes. We cannot lose them; they are too important.

[261] **Peter Black:** In terms of the standards themselves, if you felt that legislation was not necessary, the standards would give you a chance to set a direction, if you like. You are looking at how we can make best practice from those standards. Is that what you are saying?

[262] **Ms Hill:** Yes. It is about how we can learn from what people have done and share that so that we build on it. It is a very positive way of saying, ‘We did this; it took a lot of thinking about but it did not necessarily need a huge injection of money. It was perhaps just about changing the way that we laid services out or changing the way that we produced information.’ So, it is about building on the low-cost, no-cost things that people have tried and tested and helping other people to use those.

[263] **Ms Williams:** I was thinking particularly about the future generations Bill and the sustainability of this sort of access to opportunities for learning and developing. I do not know which vehicle is the best for which part, but it is about making sure that we cross-reference. There should be a statutory requirement for libraries if it is the shape of a library that is amenable to children’s wellbeing and development. I personally think that there is a very long way to go to get the poorest children who do not have any encouragement into libraries. The school is the answer for children of a primary school age. You need a lot of outreach to youth work and youth services as well. So, where there are good examples, we should develop those themes. However, it is certainly not universal or else it would be being used much more.

[264] **Christine Chapman:** Jocelyn has a supplementary question.

[265] **Jocelyn Davies:** Without hesitation, both of you said ‘yes’ in answer to whether they

should have statutory protection. How do you reconcile that with your earlier answer that we should not rush to legislation? Did you think that there was statutory protection for libraries?

[266] **Ms Williams:** We did, actually, yes. I did read somewhere that there was, but that was obviously—

[267] **Jocelyn Davies:** I think that Peter can enlighten us on this. I think that it is a bit vague, is it not?

[268] **Peter Black:** It is very vague, actually, about what statutory protection is there. That is why local authorities are able to close them.

[269] **Ms Hill:** I am sorry if this is a bit picky, but my reading of the Public Libraries and Museums Act was that public libraries are a statutory service, but I guess that it is as broad as that, so I am guessing that if a local authority has a library, as opposed a library in every community and mobile libraries, it is meeting its—

[270] **Peter Black:** The guidance should say that there should be a library within a certain distance of a settlement, but having regard to that is not compulsory.

[271] **Mike Hedges:** There is case law—[*Inaudible.*]

[272] **Jocelyn Davies:** I am just interested in reconciling the two answers. Obviously, if the witnesses thought that there was already statutory protection, I can understand why they would say that they would not wish to change it.

[273] **Christine Chapman:** Mark, did you want to come in with a supplementary question?

[274] **Mark Isherwood:** We heard reference earlier to one of the possible links between further education college libraries and public libraries. How could we consolidate the links between public libraries and school libraries? Also, organisations like Learn Direct actually operate within a number of libraries already.

[275] **Mr Williams:** We have already touched on the links with primary schools. Possibly, the word ‘library’ might need to be changed. I am just thinking about it. The access to resources is not necessarily through hard-copy books. Where there is a will there is a way, but, in our experience, it has been dependent on enthusiastic individuals to make the links across. Where there is all-Wales access to something, that makes it easy, but that is not necessarily the favoured position of local authorities. Integrating a resource that is accessed via the internet should be possible. I do not know whether you have examples, Lynne.

[276] **Ms Hill:** I do not have an example of a link between schools or colleges and local libraries. That is something that has to be explored, because there are resources in both, and I guess that they can support each other in the use of their services for children and young people. I do not know how that would work in practice. I think it comes down, as it stands at the moment, to individuals actually going out to talk and ask, ‘Could we share this? We are getting a lot of your young people in the library. They are looking for these books. Is there a way that we can link up or come to help you set your services up?’ That is a huge resource issue, and potentially a resource issue in schools. I do not know how well equipped or well supported by staff school libraries are currently.

[277] **Mark Isherwood:** If gaps result from reconfiguration because of resource, could this be a way of helping to fill them?

[278] **Ms Williams:** Certainly it could. There are obviously some schools now that are

allowing children to have iPads to do their work. There are different methodologies. It is about getting up to speed with how children and young people are actually accessing information. This is something that I perhaps should have said earlier: I think that there is potential in libraries to help parents and families with the challenges that they have around safe working with electronic information—safe internet use. The challenge would be linking higher education establishments with libraries and making sure that they are still welcoming of the group of children or young people that is nowhere near higher education establishments. So, obviously, the better the links and sharing of resources the better, but it still has to be an inclusive model.

11:30

[279] **Christine Chapman:** I know that Mike has some questions on this.

[280] **Mike Hedges:** I was going to ask this later, but I think that we have hit it now. Moodle exists and the internet provides a huge amount of information to children within schools, but if I just look at Swansea, for example, I can see that you would have a school library, the school library service that provides books to schools and then the library service. We talk of collaboration across authorities, but we actually should have some collaboration inside an authority between the different parts of the library services. If you want Welsh-medium books, for example, the local library is probably the third best of those places to go. School libraries in Welsh-medium schools tend to be substantially better than local libraries in that sense. However, we talk about collaboration and we do not have collaborations between classes in primary schools, never mind—. What I am trying to say is that there is some work that could be done to get some collaboration within schools, between schools and libraries, and between the school library service and the general library service, before we even start thinking of collaborating with other local authorities. Would you agree with that?

[281] **Ms Williams:** Yes.

[282] **Ms Hill:** Yes. Alongside that is the promotion of the online services that libraries can offer. I am currently studying in Carmarthen and not having to go there, but being able to access many of its resources online is such a bonus and so different from when I last studied, when I used to write essays by hand rather than on a laptop. So, there are things happening and I think that Moodle is a really good example of where that can be done.

[283] **Mike Hedges:** This is my final question. I am not currently convinced that Moodle is made either accessible or available to everybody it could perhaps be. Is there more that could be done to promote its use?

[284] **Ms Williams:** Yes.

[285] **Ms Hill:** Yes.

[286] **Mike Hedges:** I got two 'yesses'; I am doing well. I will stop there. [*Laughter.*]

[287] **Christine Chapman:** Right, Rhodri, I think that you have some questions.

[288] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rydych chi wedi cyfeirio cryn lawer at y defnydd y mae plant a phobl ifanc yn ei wneud o lyfrgelloedd a pha mor bwysig yw hynny, gan awgrymu, mewn gwirionedd, fod angen hyrwyddo mwy o ddefnydd ohonynt, yn enwedig gyda phlant sydd yn dod o'r **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** You have referred quite a lot to the use that children and young people make of libraries and how important that is, suggesting, in fact, that there is a need to promote greater use of them, particularly among children who come from the most deprived backgrounds. However, has any

cefnidroedd mwyaf difreintiedig. Fodd assessment been made of the use that
bynnag, a oes unrhyw asesiad wedi cael ei children and young people make of libraries?
wneud o'r defnydd mae plant a phobl ifanc
yn ei wneud o lyfrgelloedd?

[289] **Ms Williams:** There may well have been, but not to my knowledge. I think that, in particular, the data we have—. In Wales, we have the child wellbeing monitor, which is a good basis for us to begin to look at what is happening for the wellbeing of children. I do not know whether the data are ever disaggregated to work out which children—are they the children who are academically achieving a lot who are turning up at the library or are they the children whose educational attainment is not going to be so great? So, I do not know of anything, but we could find out from the library and the school services and let the committee know—unless you know of anything, Lynne.

[290] **Ms Hill:** No, I am not aware of anything that has been done in a co-ordinated way. I am wondering whether local authorities will individually have some indication of which children are coming through and what particular use they are making of libraries, but I do not know of anything else.

[291] **Christine Chapman:** I think that we could ask the local authorities and the Welsh Government, because I think that this has been raised by another organisation earlier on today. So, we can ask about that. Rhodri, do you have any other questions?

[292] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rydym ni i **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** We all realise that
gyd yn sylweddoli bod awdurdodau lleol yn local authorities are facing cuts in their
wynebu cwtogi ar eu cyllidebau a'u bod budgets and that they are having to make
nhw'n gorfod gwneud penderfyniadau anodd very difficult decisions in terms of which
iawn ynglŷn â pha wasanaethau maen nhw'n services they are going to continue to provide
mynd i barhau i'w cynnig ac ym mhle maen and where they are going to impose cuts.
nhw'n mynd i wneud toriadau. Yn amlwg, Clearly, libraries come into that
mae llyfrgelloedd yn dod i mewn i'r consideration. Do you believe that local
ystyriaeth honno. A ydych chi'n credu bod authorities, when looking at their library
awdurdodau lleol, pan maen nhw'n edrych ar services and deciding whether they are going
eu gwasanaethau llyfrgelloedd ac yn to cut those services, give sufficient
penderfynu a ydynt yn mynd i dorri yn ôl ar y consideration to the needs of children and
gwasanaethau hynny, yn rhoi digon o young people?
ystyriaeth i anghenion pobl ifanc a phlant?

[293] **Ms Williams:** This is one of the bees in my bonnet at the moment: across all the cuts, I do not know whether there is a child impact assessment. We are seeing this with playing fields, with drama or the cultural difference aspects that there used to be, and I think that a lot of parents still assume that they are happening, and they are not. The cuts cannot disproportionately affect children and young people. In fact, there should be positive discrimination towards keeping services that will improve the wellbeing of children and young people.

[294] So, I think that there are two sides to it. It is a very challenging and difficult time, but if the cost-benefit analysis of a service is that it is going to help the educational attainment of the next generation, and if it is a good service that is co-produced by the people using it, then that is cost-effective. I think there have been a lot of almost departmental service decisions that are not necessarily looking at the people that the decisions are going to affect; it is more about the top-end budget cuts. Where it is a discrete area, such as libraries, however the decisions are made, they are not particularly looking at the impact on children and young people.

[295] **Christine Chapman:** Mark, did you have a question?

[296] **Mark Isherwood:** Yes, thank you. It is just the one. What engagement has Welsh Government and local authorities had with you and your partner organisations regarding the impact of plans to change library services on children and young people? If there are any good examples of that, have there been any positive examples of attempts to co-design these services with you and your partner organisations?

[297] **Ms Williams:** We have had no approaches about cuts. The way in which cuts are coming through to us is often via the media. We are asked, 'Did you know this was going to be cut?', and then we look into it. Local authorities have opportunities to raise council tax to keep services or however it is all worked through. It may have come through Flying Start, because Lynne co-ordinates that network. I do not know whether that has come through, Lynne, has it?

[298] **Ms Hill:** Where we have knowledge, it is through the networks that we facilitate. I work very closely with the Flying Start co-ordinators and the family information services co-ordinators, so I hear and we look at what is happening and where they are building links with libraries. However, that is based on personalities perhaps, or opportunity, and it is not across the board. However, both of those networks are opportunities to share that good practice among that cohort of people. We have not done very much, however, I think—. There is not a broader way of sharing that information, and we have not been approached in any way by library services.

[299] **Ms Williams:** I was just thinking when you were asking the question that one of the problems we have in Wales is a piecemeal or silo approach to things, compared with Scandinavian countries where there is a holistic view of the education, care and wellbeing of the population. In terms of my comment about council tax-raising, that is a societal issue. In Scandinavia, the countries there invest in their population. So, there is a wider debate to be had, but we have not been engaged in this, to answer your question, because we are never thought about. Some of our members may have been consulted, but the compartmentalisation of policy areas across Welsh Government that all impact on children's education and wellbeing is an issue. Obviously, it is really helpful that you are having an inquiry into this.

[300] **Christine Chapman:** A child impact study would be very useful, I think. We need to move on. Jocelyn and Mike are next.

[301] **Jocelyn Davies:** Before I come to my question, Facebook was mentioned earlier. I noted what you said earlier about contacting friends via the library internet. How do you feel about access to social network sites by children through libraries?

[302] **Ms Williams:** We have lobbied incredibly hard on the dangers of open access. For looked-after children, for instance, who have no computer access at home, restrictions on what you can use and what you cannot use in terms of social media would be a problem. I think where libraries have an opportunity is to work with people, parents or whomever, in the library setting about the best use of that: for instance, do not put photographs of yourself on, et cetera.

[303] **Jocelyn Davies:** So, with some caveats, you would not see any—

[304] **Ms Williams:** I would not say so, no.

[305] **Ms Hill:** Also, just to support that, I think that there is a potential role for libraries to be making sure that young people have the information about how to be safe and to promote that.

[306] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes. What about the use of volunteers in delivering library services? That has been seen as a sort of solution if there are cutbacks in resources. Do you think that volunteers could run libraries?

[307] **Ms Williams:** I am not so sure about running libraries, but supporting the workforce, yes. There are a lot of volunteers in family learning activities, for instance. NIACE Dysgu Cymru has experience of that. Volunteers are always useful. I would not say that they are an alternative way to run a library service.

[308] **Jocelyn Davies:** What about the idea that, for some library services, there could be a charge on users?

[309] **Ms Williams:** That defeats the purpose of open access. In Wales, it is fantastic that there is free access to broadband in every library. To start charging would immediately increase the divide that I was—

[310] **Jocelyn Davies:** You think that maybe we should—I take it that you do, from the answer you gave earlier—not look at this as a cost, but as an investment in the population and especially in our children.

[311] **Ms Williams:** Yes.

[312] **Christine Chapman:** Before I bring Mike in—

[313] **Mike Hedges:** I have done mine, thanks.

[314] **Christine Chapman:** Right, okay. Before I move on, Catriona, you talked about the Scandinavian countries. We are looking at libraries, but we are also looking at different approaches. Are you aware of any approaches towards volunteers or a lack of volunteers in Scandinavian countries? Does that go against some of the other approaches used in Scandinavian countries?

[315] **Ms Williams:** I do not think that they use volunteers in the same way as the UK does. We have many more charitable organisations through which volunteers develop, and they sort of professionalise a lot of the people involved directly in services for children. You have probably visited some of the settings. It is about the integration of learning and information and parents accessing information in childcare settings that are not just childcare as we know it, but general support settings where families feel confident that, wherever their child is, they will be getting a good all-round experience of education, care, health, monitoring, et cetera. So, it is a different cultural model.

[316] **Christine Chapman:** It is the professional, then, in the Scandinavian countries.

[317] **Ms Williams:** It is professional, yes.

[318] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Jenny, did you have any points?

[319] **Jenny Rathbone:** You said earlier that local authorities had not consulted you about possible changes to services. That is perhaps because you and your 200 organisations have not been very vocal about this issue. You have not actually brought yourself to their attention on this. Is that because libraries are not something that your members are actively thinking about? If we do not use services, we will lose them. Nobody is going to keep open a service that is only used by two people in a day with one paid member of staff. How significant an issue is this for your 200 representative organisations?

[320] **Ms Williams:** I think that it will rise up the agenda with the future generations focus. In terms of capacity, what is happening to a lot of our members is that they themselves are all being cut, and they are having to focus down, particularly on the child poverty agenda, the social services Bill agenda, and on education and PISA. So, I thought that this was a very helpful opportunity for us to connect this in with those other agendas because they do connect. It has certainly not come through our membership to us, but we have a duty to raise it back down to the grass roots, so that they can actually bring us more of the models. However, there is also a capacity issue, I think, among a lot of third sector organisations, because they are experiencing cuts that are affecting where they prioritise their activities.

11:45

[321] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, it would be fair to say that they have not seen it as an integral part of the child poverty agenda.

[322] **Ms Williams:** Yes.

[323] **Christine Chapman:** Did you have a question, Mark?

[324] **Mark Isherwood:** Yes. I would just like to put on the record, in terms of the voluntary sector, that there are a very large number of highly qualified professionals working in the voluntary sector, who have often chosen to take lower incomes because of their sense of commitment and vocation. Also, there has been reference to Scandinavia, but Australia has pioneered successfully a co-production model that designed the system backwards, commissioning and investing in the providers and the assets in the community that can best deliver the support for that community, after having identified the needs with the community. Is that not what we should be considering?

[325] **Ms Williams:** I think exactly that. Was that in Melbourne, in particular?

[326] **Mark Isherwood:** Yes.

[327] **Ms Williams:** We have some colleagues—. I think that there are models, but—

[328] **Mark Isherwood:** It started in Western Australia. I think that it has moved across and had complete—*[Inaudible.]*—and is doing well, I understand.

[329] **Ms Williams:** Yes. I think that that is the model. It is a waste of money to produce a service that is not hitting the target of what we are trying to do. I know that it is an obvious thing to say, but the engagement of—. Where the good models exist is where there has been engagement. For some of them that has been long-term, where there has been a culture, particularly in the library service, for many years, of talking to their service users. So, I think that is—. So, yes, professionals in the voluntary sector as well as volunteers in the voluntary sector.

[330] **Christine Chapman:** I have another question. Obviously, looking at young people in particular, there is a neutral community space provided in libraries. Do you think that those spaces are well placed to attract children and young people?

[331] **Ms Williams:** I think that it is an opportunity, if we are talking about young people, in particular, to escape some of the difficult situations. Children and young people may come from large families, families who are struggling or where there are arguments, or they may have all sorts of issues within their family home, and it is a wonderful space for those children and young people to escape to. That is not everyone, but it is also a place where there can be a

community. It is an equitable place: everyone is in the same sort of situation in a library, and there is one purpose, which is looking at information.

[332] **Christine Chapman:** So, it is not a question of putting—obviously, it is fairly neutral, and it is for everyone, so you do not feel that it excludes young people. Is it as inclusive of children and young people as other organisations or groups?

[333] **Ms Williams:** I see what you mean. I think that that depends on the model. There are still libraries where children and young people are told to be quiet and do not—

[334] **Jocelyn Davies:** That is horrible librarians.

[335] **Ms Williams:** Yes. So, I think that it varies.

[336] **Christine Chapman:** We have come to the end now. Are there any other points that you would like to make us aware of that you feel that we would need to raise in our inquiry with children and young people as far as libraries are concerned? Are there any other points that you would like to raise?

[337] **Ms Williams:** I just think that the promotion—it is the marketing and giving the population the information about what they can access in the libraries. I think that there is a whole area of work that the Welsh Government could really help with in terms of getting the information through to the professionals who are working with the most excluded families, or those families who find it hardest to access services. It should be integrated into whatever work the health and education professionals are involved with.

[338] **Ms Hill:** Yes, and it is also about the library service being aware of certainly some of the Welsh Government's Flying Start programme and the family information services and where there are models of engaging families. Vice versa, those models should be aware of the library as a resource and a reminder of that, I think. There is a role for those to highlight each other's existence.

[339] **Ms Williams:** I have one other point. Going back to the question of why this is not higher up on the agenda, it is important to promote any research that is showing education and wellbeing benefits to children. There are pieces of research—and we can help in that—that show that children, if they use the library, may achieve slightly higher grades than children who do not. It is about getting it into mainstream thinking that there is an opportunity. Children's feedback about how it has helped them is part of that story that, I think, could be quite powerful with the decision makers in local authorities.

[340] **Christine Chapman:** Going back to Jenny's point, obviously, today, we are not scrutinising you as an organisation—you are helping us to scrutinise the Government—but, generally with the children's and young people's agenda, can you tell us a little bit more about the process whereby you work with Government? I know that Jane Davidson, as the Minister at the time, had regular six-monthly meetings, say, with organisations. How do you actually work with the Welsh Government so that you can raise some of these issues? How does it work?

[341] **Ms Williams:** That is a very interesting question because it has changed over the years. Actually, as we speak, we are being asked to apply to a particular pot of funding. We are an umbrella body so we do not compete with our members. We are not a deliverer of front-line services, but we are being asked to apply for the next two or three years' funding from a very narrow pot within one ministerial portfolio. That means that we will have to be talking to that particular Minister. Actually, one of the things we are currently doing is looking at, and asking, 'Okay, what does that mean for children in terms of health or social

services?' So, to answer your question, as the changes have happened, our ability to influence every aspect of Welsh Government, which is what we think we should be doing—

[342] **Christine Chapman:** Obviously, there is funding involved, but you are also speaking on behalf of the organisations and the voices of children and young people. Is there a place where you would meet with Welsh Government Ministers on a regular basis so that you can put these points to them? Is there some sort of formal mechanism for that?

[343] **Ms Williams:** There is not a formal mechanism, but, basically, if we request a meeting, we get a meeting. That is the opportunity. It can work two ways. If there is an issue that a Welsh Government Minister wants to speak to us about, we can go there, but, if we identify an issue, we will ask for a meeting. We do a lot by information exchange, but what I am highlighting, really, is that, because we are supposed to look at every ministerial portfolio, it is actually becoming more and more restricted in terms of our contacts, which is a worry for an umbrella body.

[344] **Christine Chapman:** It is also about influence.

[345] **Ms Williams:** Yes, our influence. The child poverty campaign was our particular campaign originally. It was the same with the children's commissioner and various things like that. You need every part of Government to be involved, so it is a challenge.

[346] **Jocelyn Davies:** This is an obvious question really, but did you find yourselves hampered in criticising Government when you rely on Government for your funding?

[347] **Ms Williams:** We generate half of our funding, but we have never felt hampered; no, we have never felt hampered. I think the critical-friend role, in fairness, is an important one. I think that one of the connections is that we are able to influence quietly, behind the scenes as well, which is something that, possibly, achieves things.

[348] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Mark has a question.

[349] **Mark Isherwood:** Could I suggest that the funding application issue that you highlight might fall under the due-regard duty applying to Welsh Ministers under the children's rights Measure?

[350] **Ms Williams:** Yes.

[351] **Christine Chapman:** If there are no other questions, may I, first of all, thank you, Catriona and Lynne, for attending this morning? It has been a very interesting session. We will send you a transcript of the meeting in due course so that you can check it for factual accuracy, but thank you very much for attending.

11:55

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod**

**Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the
Meeting**

[352] **Christine Chapman:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from item 6 of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).

[353] I see that Members are content to do so.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

[354] Before we close the public meeting, I just want to put on record that the next meeting will take place on Wednesday, 5 March, when the committee will continue taking evidence to inform its inquiry into public libraries in Wales.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11:56.

The public part of the meeting ended at 11:56.