



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau The Petitions Committee

**Dydd Mawrth, 16 Mehefin 2015
Tuesday, 16 June 2015**

Cynnwys
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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad 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**

Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

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

Kayleigh Driscoll	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Steve George	Clerc Clerk
Gwyn Griffiths	Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfreithiol Senior Legal Adviser
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:05.
The meeting began at 09:05.*

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

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da, bawb. **William Powell:** Good morning, all.

[2] Welcome to this meeting of the Petitions Committee. We have no apologies this morning, so the full complement of Members, and the usual housekeeping arrangements apply.

**Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions**

[3] **William Powell:** With no further ado, I move to agenda item 2, which are the new petitions. We start with agenda item 2.1, P-04-637, 'To Protect the Future of Youth Music in Wales'. This petition was submitted by the Friends of Bridgend Youth Music and collected a total of 2,101 signatures—1,363 of those online and 738 on paper. The text reads as follows:

[4] 'We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to protect musical tuition in schools and in particular to: Reinstate central ring-fencing of budgets for professional instrumental tuition in schools; Implement a national strategy to reverse the decline of Youth Music in Wales; Offer the children and young people of Wales their right to receive an education that develops their unique personalities, talents and abilities to the full.'

[5] Now, this petition was received by us as a committee in the Senedd just last week and prior to that, as you'll be aware, a first consideration letter was sent to the Minister for Education and Skills. The Minister has responded and his response is available to us in the public papers today. A task and finish group has been established, in fact, as is confirmed in that letter, to consider the whole issue of the provision of musical services in schools across Wales. The group's final report and the recommendations that arise have not yet been published, but will be soon. In the light of this, the Minister's response states, as we can all see:

[6] 'It would therefore be premature for me to comment on the petition referred to in your letter before the publication of the task and finish group report.'

[7] We've got some additional comments from the petitioners and we all had a really

engaging opportunity to speak with them and to hear their concerns last week. We also have the short video, which we agreed would be available to see, so I suggest that before we decide anything further—I know Bethan’s got a particular interest in this petition and is engaged as an instrumentalist herself—technology allowing, we now sit back and listen to the message.

Dangoswyd DVD. Mae’r cyflwyniad ar gael drwy ddilyn y linc hon: [cyflwyniad DVD](#). A DVD was shown. The presentation can be accessed by following this link: [DVD presentation](#).

[8] **William Powell:** Well, I think we’re very grateful indeed to the Friends of Bridgend Youth Music for that production. I think it’s growing on me. I enjoyed it first time and I think now I’ve got some of the finer points, and they’ve also got some powerful backers, as we can see, starting with Plato and working on. [*Laughter.*] Bethan, I think you indicated.

[9] **Bethan Jenkins:** Russell did as well. Just to say briefly that we thank Bridgend Youth Music for the petition. I declare an interest in the sense that, for some time, I’ve been raising issues and questions with Ministers in the Chamber about cuts to youth music across Wales. While I welcome the task and finish group, I think we need to understand its methodology, as the petitioners suggest, because, obviously, in a lot of areas, the cuts have already taken place, and some of that expertise has already gone. So, from the task and finish group, it’s vital to understand the nature of those recommendations and how they will be implemented, but also, from the petitioners’ point of view, I think it would be good if we could potentially write to the UK Government and the Scottish Government to see what they’ve done, because the petitioners mention that they reversed cuts to music there, and I think it would be useful for us to understand as a committee potentially where that’s going, because, at the moment, as I’m sure people are aware, local authorities fund young people to go on to the National Youth Orchestra of Wales, and, if more cuts are going to go to the local authorities, that may be also threatened. So, I think we have to look at new ways of potentially funding the service, and I know there are some individual schemes, in RCT, for example, to do that. But those are the two main points I’d raise in writing back to the Minister.

[10] **William Powell:** I’m happy to agree to do that. I think that makes a lot of sense, particularly given that there are some points of detail that the petitioners mention in their initial response. Also, it might well be instructive to write to the Westminster Government and the other devolved administrations just to see whether they’ve got some good practice that we could learn from. Russell.

[11] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. I was speaking to somebody over the weekend who’s a member of a family very involved in music in my constituency, and promotion of youth music, and they really told me the same point as Bethan in regard to funding in other parts of the UK being very different to here. But, certainly, I think one of the issues is that it’s now becoming a subject that only families that can afford to pay for the music can actually—.

[12] **William Powell:** Yes. It’s becoming an elite now, potentially.

[13] **Russell George:** So, there are children who are missing out because their parents can’t afford the costs of travelling back and fore. Because of cuts through local authorities, they’re now losing out. So, I welcome this petition this morning to the committee. I think what I would say is that we could write back to Huw Lewis and ask him for a bit more detail on his task and finish group, ask him for a timeline on that, and also ask how they provide some detail about the methodology of the group as well.

[14] **William Powell:** Yes, I’m happy to do that. Joyce.

09:15

[15] **Joyce Watson:** I'd like to congratulate them on their unique presentation. It was very, very good, and they obviously are very committed to delivering this. It is, sadly, the case that budgets are being constrained, so, in writing across the piece, it would be worth also looking at good practice to manage budgets that might exist within Wales as well as beyond our borders and see if there is something there that maybe we can give back to the petitioner to help with that. Definitely, I agree with the previous statements about the task and finish group and its remit and how that is working, and also that the Minister should keep us informed of the progress of that and the findings of it, and any comments he has to add to it.

[16] **William Powell:** I think that's a good idea. There may also be some point in doing a trawl for potential alternative or supplementary sources of funding that might be available through trusts and large-scale endowments and so on, but my suspicion is that all of these avenues will already have been pursued. So, I think we've got sufficient actions for now to take this forward. Okay. Thanks for your contributions.

[17] Agenda item 2.2, P-04-624, 'That Foster Carers be Permitted to be Registered with More Than One Local Authority': this petition was submitted by Mr John Watkins, and has the support of 159 signatures online. The text reads as follows:

[18] 'We, the undersigned, believe that the National Assembly for Wales should ask the Welsh Government to take the following actions to support foster carers:

[19] 'That foster carers be permitted to be registered with more than one Local Authority, to reduce the money spent unnecessarily by LAs to Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA).

[20] 'This would enable foster carers who are not being fully utilized by their Local Authority, and have empty rooms i.e. they may be registered to care for two Looked After Children but have only one in placement, to provide places for children from adjoining local authorities where there may be an excess of children coming into Social Services to be Looked After:- this is where the mismatch of funding occurs—whereby if there is no place available with FCs, the LA will outsource the placement to an IFA.'

[21] In the additional information that was forthcoming, we also had reference to the potential impact of the Williams report with regard to this area in terms of potentially consolidating local authority areas. A first-consideration letter, as is our normal practice, was sent to the Minister for Health and Social Services, and we've got a response from the Minister. As you'll see, that letter points out that there may be some practical issues with the proposals that have been brought forward and that he needs to take advice, via his officials, from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales on this particular issue. We've sought comment back from the petitioner, but, as yet, haven't had any. So, clearly, we need to await those comments. Are there any issues you'd raise at this stage?

[22] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think you've mentioned them, Chair. So, I think we just wait for the petitioners to come back.

[23] **William Powell:** Okay. I think that's probably the best way. Good.

[24] Agenda item 2.3, P-04-636, 'Statutory Sex and Relationships Education (SRE)': this petition was submitted by Cristina Lepri and collected 152 signatures online:

[25] 'We ask the Welsh Government to make SRE a statutory subject in the curriculum for all schools and educational establishments in Wales. We submit this petition on behalf of the ABFABB project's service users and the Bridgend LGBT Forum. SRE is currently delivered

as part of Personal and Social Education (PSE). Delivery is inconsistent and often non-inclusive of LGBT relationships. Evidence shows that 85% of young people are not taught the biological and physical aspects of same-sex relationships, while only 22% discussed LGB issues in SRE classes (Stonewall Cymru, 2012). Inclusive SRE allows a greater awareness of different families, relationships and feelings. It ultimately contributes to combat homophobic, transphobic and biphobic bullying and language in schools. It also favours a more transparent working environment for teachers and all staff.’

[26] And we have a further set of recommendations here within the latter part of the petition, which we have in front of us, as to what would constitute a better and more inclusive approach. So, I sent on behalf of the committee a letter to the Minister for education on this matter and his response is with us, together with further comments from the petitioners.

[27] I would very much appreciate a steer as to how to go with this one. Joyce, you indicated.

[28] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. Again, a petition with plenty of comprehensive information behind it, and that information has been well-presented and well-reasoned. I think, in light of the information that we’ve had back in response to the Minister’s letter, we need to pass that on. They do welcome the Great Debate, which will involve the stakeholders at the next stage of the discussion, and they want to know what the outcomes of that Great Debate are. But I think at this stage it’s simply sending these comments, thoughtful as they are and thought-provoking maybe for some, back to the Minister.

[29] **William Powell:** Yes, absolutely. It was another very engaged and full discussion that we had on the occasion of receiving this petition just a couple of weeks ago. Russell, did you indicate?

[30] **Russell George:** I did, but Joyce has covered the points.

[31] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just think, to be clear, they haven’t been involved in the Great Debate so far, so we need to request that the Minister involves them in the second stage, because I am a bit concerned that they haven’t been, because, when the Minister announced it, he seemed to suggest that it would be very public and very open. Obviously, some people have fallen through the gaps, so we need to understand how the Minister’s engaging people in the second tranche of this Great Debate.

[32] **William Powell:** I think there really does need to be a positive impetus to include harder-to-reach groups and those that haven’t felt involved up to this point; I agree with that. And I think that we need to emphasise that in any correspondence with the Minister. Good.

[33] Agenda item 2.4, P-04-638 ‘Emergency Services—Power of Entry’: this petition was submitted by Mr Fran Richley and has collected 67 online signatures.

[34] ‘To seek the provision of a legislative power of entry for the Ambulance Service, which would allow its employees, when acting in the lawful execution of their duty, to force entry to property for the purpose of saving life and limb.’

[35] And Mr Richley gives us some additional information there to aid our consideration of the petition. I wrote on behalf of the committee at first consideration, and we received a response from the Deputy Minister for Health, Vaughan Gething, and that’s in our papers today. It is a factual but fairly terse response to Mr Richley’s proposals, and we’ve got some additional feedback from Mr Richley with regard to that, which is fleshing out his point of view. I’d very much appreciate again any steer from yourselves, committee, as to how best to take this forward. Clearly, we need to feedback, I suppose, to Vaughan Gething to see if we

can draw him out a little, but any other particular points? Russell George.

[36] **Russell George:** There are a few petitions this morning, Chair, that surprised me that these are issues in the very first place. I would have thought that that would have been just a matter of being the normal process that this could be the case, but I think we should write back to the Deputy Minister and ask him for perhaps a bit more detail on his response, and perhaps also provide the petitioners' additional comments. But also perhaps we could seek the views of the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust on this; it would be interesting to see what they have to say on this.

[37] **William Powell:** Absolutely; I'm happy to do that. I'm not sure whether it might be appropriate to seek a legal brief on this matter, or indeed whether there would be any points at all that our legal adviser could offer us this morning. It's rather a niche issue, really.

[38] **Mr Griffiths:** Yes, it is a very interesting issue. I think the position largely is, as the petitioner outlines at the top of pack page 41, that they can take it upon themselves to force entry if they think it's going to be necessary. I would be very amazed if anybody challenged such a decision—if they take it with a view to saving lives. Nevertheless, it's an interesting issue because so many people have powers of entry these days. It's interesting. So, I think, getting the views of the ambulance service would be useful. If it proves to be justified, it seems to me that it would be an ideal subject for a private Member's Bill, because it's small and self-contained.

[39] **William Powell:** You heard it here first. Thank you very much.

[40] **Bethan Jenkins:** If we're here next time, we can take it on. [*Laughter.*]

[41] **William Powell:** Excellent. Mr Richley is seeking that protection for what already is commonsense practice in an extreme situation, where the employees are carrying out their duties. Anyway, I think that's a very good way forward, and I appreciate the back-up of our legal advice also.

[42] Moving now to agenda item 2.5, P-04-639: 'Save Further Education in Powys', this petition was submitted by Neath Port Talbot College group students and collected 1,673 signatures.

[43] 'We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reconsider the funding cuts that have been made to the NPTC group of colleges and to ensure that the educational futures of the students are safe.'

[44] 'We are students in NPTC Group, Newtown Campus. The Welsh Government have given NPTC group of colleges 12% less money for the next academic year, which equates to approximately £4 million. This means we have lost 50% of our part time courses and 80% of staff have been made redundant. This also means that the teaching we receive on a full-time course will be cut by 50 hours putting strain on the students and the staff. Many of our students depend on college to keep them going and without it we would have little hope and opportunities for the future. The mature students would have to pay an estimate of £400 to attend college which provides a great future for them rather than relying on the benefit system. These cuts are going to make it impossible for some people to make a future for themselves.'

[45] We have some additional information there about the particular economic situation in Powys, with which we're probably familiar. I wrote, on behalf of the committee, to the Minister for Education and Skills, and it was picked up by our colleague, the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology, Julie James, who's written a full and detailed response,

challenging some of the points of detail within the petitioner's wording. As yet, we've not received back any feedback from sharing that letter. It may relate to the time of year and the nature of assumed activities just around now. Russell George firstly and then Joyce.

[46] **Russell George:** Thanks, Chair. I should declare an interest because I was a member of the college when it had a different name for over five years, and I've got lots of friends who work there as well. I think that what is interesting in this and what should be pointed out is that I notice, in the Minister's reply, there's talk about cuts endured from Westminster, which is particularly frustrating because the cuts here in Wales are not the case in any other part of the United Kingdom. The petitioner is particularly pointing out that there's been a 50 per cent cut in part-time courses. Well, that's not the case in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland. This is a decision taken here by this Welsh Government, and I think it's disingenuous to try to point to cuts from Westminster in this case.

[47] I think that we need to wait for the petitioner's response before we go further on this. I think we should press them for a response over the next few weeks, because, clearly, if it goes past the middle of July, then we're not going to hear from them over the summer period. I know we're not sitting, but it would be worth us pressing them for their response over the next few weeks.

[48] **William Powell:** Absolutely, and I am conscious that we will have a presence at some events, not very far removed from this part of mid Wales, in terms of the Royal Welsh Show and maybe the Eisteddfod also, and there may be an opportunity to invite some of the relevant students to engage with us if their business takes them there. Joyce, you've been very patient.

09:30

[49] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, Chair, and I'm all for inviting people on an equal basis, so I'm sure you'll be doing that, too. The point that I want to make is that it is a fact that education budgets are reducing, and that, with an 8 per cent cut in our funding from Westminster—and that's another fact—difficult decisions are being made. The Minister has made it quite clear—but it hasn't been pointed out, so I shall—there is a new scheme on the table, it's called co-financing of skills. We're doing an inquiry in the business committee into that at the moment and that has yet to report. So, that might be interesting, at least with this petition. But we haven't heard back from the petitioner, we cannot get away from the fact that budgets are being squeezed, and there's plenty of evidence here this morning and there'll be plenty more evidence in the very near future about people who feel, quite rightly, concerned about budget squeezes. So, I think what we need to do in the first place is ensure that we do get a reply from the petitioner to the letter. The other thing, of course, that is contained within the letter is answers to the questions that were posed or given as fact to us not being quite the case. There's clearly some misunderstanding there going on.

[50] **William Powell:** Thanks, Joyce. Bethan.

[51] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wanted to say that I find it odd why the Minister said that

[52] 'Not all "part time courses" have been cut.'

[53] The petition actually says that

[54] '50% of our part time courses'—

[55] would be cut, so I'm not sure what she's trying to correct there. I know the Minister has tried to correct the £400 cost for mature students, but I think that might come from the

fact that many of the mature students would be reliant upon those adult education opportunities, and they would have to pay higher fees. So, we need to seek clarification from the petitioners, I think, as to where they got that £400 from, if they get back to us. I thought that we could write to ColegauCymru, and even the college itself, if we were minded to. I've met with the principal and, while it's true that there is a 45-day consultation, what I'm led to understand is that there will have to be cuts regardless of any savings that may be made. So, the Minister's point there I'd just take with a pinch of salt, really. I think we have to get the full idea of what's happening from the horse's mouth, really. That would help the petitioners, but, as you say, they haven't been in touch with us. So, potentially contact the college itself to find out in black and white exactly what they're consulting on.

[56] **William Powell:** As these are operational decisions of Neath Port Talbot College, particularly, in this context, within the former Coleg Powys, before the merger or takeover or whatever—

[57] **Bethan Jenkins:** Whereas Powys now is NP—

[58] **William Powell:** Yes, absolutely. Neath Port Talbot—

[59] **Bethan Jenkins:** They're different. They've rebranded now, haven't they?

[60] **William Powell:** Absolutely, that's right, but within the same estate and the same locations as Coleg Powys would previously operate. I think it would be really useful to get direct information. Probably that would be a more apt way of doing things than perhaps to ColegauCymru, the umbrella group, because they will know exactly what they're proposing, and that will bring a layer of information that maybe we haven't got at the moment.

[61] **Russell George:** Can I suggest, if we want to, we could also write to the union reps at the NPTC Newtown campus and ask them for their view on the petition as well, because they might be able to provide some additional facts?

[62] **William Powell:** I'm sure they'll have something useful to contribute, but I think in the first instance we need to chase the petitioner's response with some urgency, particularly given the time of year and the clock ticking on the remains of this term. Good. Well, thanks for your full contributions there.

09:34

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[63] **William Powell:** Agenda item 3: updates to previous petitions. We start with agenda item 3.1, P-04-346, 'Free Childcare for 3-4 Year Olds in Wales'. Now, this petition was submitted by Zelda Smith and was first considered back in November 2011. It had the support at that time of 67 signatures. It simply reads

[64] 'We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that free childcare for 3-4 year olds is delivered more flexibly across Wales allowing parents, and in particular working parents, to choose when and where they access the free childcare.'

[65] Now, we last considered this petition in March 2013, and we at that point considered a letter from the then Minister for education, Leighton Andrews. The letter informed us that he intended at that time to run a pilot programme to explore ways in which flexibility of

provision for three and four-year-olds could be improved, and the reason that it appears on our agenda today is that we've had notification that that pilot project has taken place. It's due to finish with the end of this current summer term, and an evaluation report of that is due to be published in March of 2016, and we've got that information and associated facts in our public pack today. The petitioner has been asked to comment on the update, but, given the gap, it's perhaps not entirely surprising that we haven't had any response just yet. Joyce, you indicated.

[66] **Joyce Watson:** We have to be consistent, and all that you've said is good news and would be great, but in terms of consistency in looking at the way that we've dealt with other petitioners, we decided last week in several cases to give six weeks for a reply, and if we don't get that reply within six weeks, to close the petition, so, in the name of consistency, we will have to do exactly the same here. But there is good news inasmuch as it would be interesting to see how that pilot has worked, and I would still like to see the results of that.

[67] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I'd be very happy to write to Zelda Smith again, asking her for an initial response and whether she still wishes to take this forward. The evaluation date publication is still six months ahead, and if that's the case, then we can take it forward, but, very much, consistency is needed, I'm sure. Any other comments on this from colleagues? Happy with that approach. Good.

[68] Agenda item 3.2: P-04-522, 'Asbestos in Schools'. This petition was submitted by Cenic Clement-Evans, and we welcome Mr Clement-Evans this morning to the public gallery to watch our deliberations. It was first considered on 10 December 2013 and has collected 448 signatures, calling on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to put in place measures to ensure parents and guardians of children across Wales can easily access information about the presence and management of asbestos in all school buildings.

[69] Now, we considered correspondence on this petition on 12 May, and we agreed to write to the Minister for Education and Skills once again, thanking him for undertaking to provide the written update to the committee by 5 June and also seeking his view on Mr Clement-Evans's further comments, in particular asking for his views on the proposal for the setting up of a steering group to include experts from across the sector. We've got a response from the Minister in our public papers, and we've also got a further response from Cenic Clement-Evans on this matter, which is, again, available to us in our papers today. It is an issue that has concerned people across the UK and we do seem to have the start of some movement here. I know it's an issue that concerns all members of the committee. Bethan, you indicated.

[70] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wanted to ask, in the letter that we wrote to the Minister, did we specifically say the suggestion about the steering group? In this letter, we don't get any recognition of that request, or is that the consideration that he'll get back to us in August with?

[71] **Mr George:** I can't recall exactly, but I'm pretty sure, given that it was specifically drawn out, that that's something—

[72] **William Powell:** That was the action that we wanted to take forward, was it?

[73] **Mr George:** Yes. So, we would've asked generally for comments and specifically on that point, I'm pretty sure, but I'll check that.

[74] **William Powell:** We can revisit that in relation to anything we write now.

[75] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, because obviously August is again delaying it some time. I don't understand why there's got to be a delay in responding to whether a steering group should be set up, so if we can reiterate that.

[76] On the issue with regard to asking school about asbestos management, well, I just feel we're going around in circles, because the whole point of us going back and forth to the Minister was the fact that many local education authorities have very patchy records—some have very good records and don't have it. So, I think the Minister needs to show more accountability in pulling all those plans together to see where there is best practice from different local authorities and where there is nothing happening, because the petitioner, I'm sure, has contacted all the relevant bodies. It's more of a question of, nationally, how that picture is going to change if there is little movement on this.

[77] **William Powell:** Well, I'd be very happy to maybe, later today, have sight of the correspondence and to check in what specific detail we raised the issue at the steering group. I'd like to think that that was in that correspondence, but I can't swear to it. I need to make sure that that is covered in any subsequent letter that we need to send as a matter of priority. I was at a governing body meeting of a school just last night and another issue that seems to be of concern is the tendency by local authorities to be passing down some of the operational responsibility to schools. And there's a danger of further fragmentation, I would suggest, of the management of asbestos policy. I think it's exactly the right time to be pulling this together in a more strategic way. Russell George, you indicated—. Oh, sorry—.

[78] **Bethan Jenkins:** I'm just concerned with the August date because, obviously, we are not here. You know, we could get the Minister in for scrutiny, because I think, otherwise, we're going to be going round in circles continuously. How possible is that before the end of term, if the Minister has said in this letter that a further update will be in August—because, it will either be before, in July, or it's going to be late September?

[79] **Russell George:** Yes, we've only got two committee meetings left, haven't we, Chair? But if there was room in the programme and formal enquiries could be made about whether the Minister could come before us—. I suspect that's not likely, but let's just check.

[80] **William Powell:** I share your suspicion on that also, but it's worth trying. Joyce you indicated, I believe.

[81] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. I think it says in the Minister's response that he's going to do further work and consideration and then give us a response, which is the response that Bethan's referred to, later in the year. I think at this stage and in the name of consistency, in the way that we've done everything else, I think we need to get that—get that on the table. This is a serious issue. It is an issue that we have taken very seriously, but I think we need to get that. It's highly unlikely that we're going to have, within the next two sessions, any room to get the Minister in within our work programme. But, nonetheless, once you've got that reply, and if we feel the need, we can do that early in the next term. I think, you know, if we're going to talk about making progress in a way that we can anticipate, we can probably make that progress.

[82] **William Powell:** Yes. Okay, but I make an undertaking to have sight of the earlier correspondence and to make it more strong and explicit if there was any shortcoming in that respect in what I signed off.

[83] **Bethan Jenkins:** The thing is, I don't mean to be pedantic, but the Minister will know that we don't sit in August, so we need to have some sort of understanding as to why he's come up with the August date, knowing that we can't deal with it actively as a committee. I think that's where my frustration comes, because it's not a new thing. We've

been corresponding with the Minister for quite some time now. If it was a new petition, I could understand, but, you know—.

[84] **William Powell:** I think that, when we sensed there was a movement, we had a real appetite to take it forward, and I share the sentiments that you've just expressed. So, we will make that a matter of priority to get some further clarity on that one.

[85] Agenda item 3.3 is petition P-04-571, 'Treating Pernicious Anaemia'. Now, this petition was submitted by the Pernicious Anaemia Society and was first considered on 15 July 2014 and had the support, at that time, of 91 signatures. It is calling on the Welsh Government to

[86] 'to change the way Pernicious Anaemia is treated away from the current one-size-fits-all format towards a regimen based on the patient's individual needs and where the patient is offered a choice of how he or she receives their replacement therapy B12 including self-administered injections.'

09:45

[87] Now, we last considered correspondence on this petition on 10 March, when we agreed to thank the Minister for his constructive approach and to ask him to inform the committee of the outcome of his letter to Jane Ellison, Member of Parliament, who was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for health at that point, in relation to support for rapid development of a licensed oral preparation, and also to request to NICE to consider developing advice for clinicians in the field. Now, we've got a response from the Minister, which is in our public papers. We also have a response from the petitioner, but it doesn't seem to meet several of the detailed points. It seems a little generic in feeling, really, which was a little disappointing. Colleagues, how do you want to proceed with this? Joyce.

[88] **Joyce Watson:** Well, the Minister has quite clearly given us some detail and particularly talks about NICE and the consideration of topics. He says that Professor Haslam suggests that he considers asking the Department of Health about referring the topic to an exceptional basis, and he's going to seek advice from the national specialist advisory committee. He also says he'd welcome our opinion on this. You're quite right that it is the case that we've got a general response from the petitioner, more about the detail of the condition rather than a response to the Minister's letter, so that gives us a little bit of difficulty, I think. So, whether we can write back requesting specific—

[89] **William Powell:** I think that would help to inform our approach. Exactly.

[90] **Joyce Watson:** So that we can make an informed decision, which we always try to do. I think that's the only way we can go at the moment.

[91] **William Powell:** Yes. Well, certainly the Minister's approach and the level of detail he's provided are to be welcomed. I think we should write, in that vein, thanking for that, and, maybe, seek advice from the national specialist advisory committee, to be kept apprised of developments there. I think it would also be apt to write back to the Pernicious Anaemia Society to see whether we can tease out a more detailed response, because otherwise we're not well placed to comment further and to take advantage of what seems to be a readiness to engage. Are colleagues happy with that?

[92] **Joyce Watson:** I agree.

[93] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes.

[94] **William Powell:** Okay. Agenda item 3.4 is petition P-04-601, 'Proposed Ban on the Use of E-Cigarettes in Public Places'. This petition was submitted by Simon Thurlow and was first considered on 7 October 2014. It had the support of 1,196 electronic signatures.

[95] 'We call upon the Welsh Government not to proceed with their proposed ban on the use of e-cigarettes in enclosed public spaces, substantially enclosed public places, and places of work in Wales. This proposal, if implemented, can only lead to fewer people using e-cigarettes and more people smoking cigarettes.'

[96] Clearly, this has been a very fast-moving issue and has received a lot of attention in all media outlets recently. We last considered correspondence on this at our most recent meeting, on 2 June, and we agreed to await response from the petitioner. I should, on behalf of the committee, express an apology to the petitioner because there had been feedback that had come to the committee that we had inadvertently not given attention to. That is fully within our public papers today, and, as I said, apologies for that. The previous correspondence from the Minister for Health and Social Services, and indeed also the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, our colleague David Rees, is also included for completeness of consideration. Since we last considered the petition, as colleagues will be aware, the Public Health (Wales) Bill has been introduced into the Assembly, and the Bill contains proposals to ban e-cigarettes in enclosed public spaces and workplaces, as is specifically mentioned in the petition. Joyce, you've indicated that you wish to speak.

[97] **Joyce Watson:** This petition started, but we now know we've got this consultation on a proposed piece of legislation that might come forward, out of the health Bill. It is clearly the case that another committee—the substantive committee, which is the Health and Social Care Committee—will be taking evidence and will be making recommendations to inform the debate at Stage 1. I can't really see that we can take this any further forward, in the way that it's being asked of us, simply because of the things that I've just said. There will be wide-ranging debates, there will be many, many petitions that we will come against, and lobbying—because I'm sure, like me, you all have, already—and there will be a thorough debate and discussion within that committee about the evidence that will be presented, which is part of this petition, and the claims that that hasn't happened. So, personally, I can't see where this committee can add anything that won't already be happening in the Health and Social Care Committee. And, if I remember rightly, we do have the right, as a committee, to pass something on to another committee.

[98] **William Powell:** To refer is one route, which we've discussed occasionally.

[99] **Joyce Watson:** And I think that's where we need to go, because I think there's little point in us carrying on with something that, as you say, has moved so quickly.

[100] **William Powell:** I know there'll be robust voices on both sides—on several sides—of the argument, in that committee.

[101] **Joyce Watson:** And that's right.

[102] **William Powell:** And we've already had some of those matters rehearsed in the Chamber, when the Bill was introduced. I'd very much appreciate other colleagues' thoughts on this.

[103] **Joyce Watson:** That's my view.

[104] **William Powell:** Thank you, Joyce. Bethan.

[105] **Bethan Jenkins:** Again, apologies that we didn't consider this last time, due to the

administrative difficulties. I know that the petitioners are really passionate about this issue.

[106] **William Powell:** Sure.

[107] **Bethan Jenkins:** They say that the petitions route is the only route that they feel they can take because they feel the Minister hasn't listened to them, but I'd just like to say to the petitioners that it's going to be very hard for us to do an inquiry into a potential ban and then the health committee looking at the Bill. So, I think that we can keep it open until the end of that Bill—just keep a watching brief—and say that that is where the debate will be happening, but also for them to be, as they are, approaching the different political parties, which may want to put amendments in. If we have two inquiries happening—here and at the other committee—it's going to—

[108] **William Powell:** It would divert resource and it would be confusing.

[109] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, we just need to explain, really, that it's going to duplicate, so that they don't think that the Petitions Committee are just going to sort of move it aside because we don't want to do it. I think it's just right that we leave it for that committee and, hopefully, then, they can engage positively with the health committee, moving forward.

[110] **William Powell:** Well, it's now on the main stage, in that sense, isn't it, I think, in terms of the—?

[111] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. It will be more robust, in that sense, than us continuing to write letters, I think. So, that's what I would say on that.

[112] **Russell George:** I agree with Bethan's points.

[113] **William Powell:** I would fall on that side of the discussion as well—to keep it open, but then very much endorsing the points that Joyce has made regarding the fact that we have a very limited amount that we can bring in terms of extra value, and it's in the right arena now to be considered, and to be considered fully. Joyce.

[114] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, I'll go along—as I always do—with the majority, but we have nothing further to add that isn't going to happen in the other committee, and that is the reality of the situation. That's all I'm going to say.

[115] **William Powell:** I appreciate the clarity of views expressed. Thank you.

[116] Moving now to agenda item 3.5, P-04-603, 'Helping Babies Born at 22 Weeks to Survive'. Now, this petition was submitted by Emma Jones, and was first considered on 25 November 2014, having collected 2,543 electronic signatures and 216 paper signatures, so, a total of 2,759.

[117] 'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to: change the guidelines so that babies born after 22 weeks and who show signs of life are given appropriate medical care; and in changing these guidelines ensure that they include a guarantee that a Paediatrician will review and weigh every baby born after 22 weeks who shows signs of life immediately after their birth so that parents and clinicians can make informed decisions based on the individual baby's chance of survival.'

[118] We last considered this as a committee on 10 March this year and we agreed to write both to the Minister for Health and Social Services and, indeed, to the relevant health board, asking them to provide an update on the work in hand to ensure that lessons are learnt from this case for the future. We wrote to the Health and Social Care Committee also to consider

whether they would have the capacity and whether it would be appropriate to hold an inquiry into the current guidelines for resuscitation of children born prematurely. We also wrote to the petitioner, asking whether there is a formal record of the meeting that took place between herself and the adviser for maternal and child health and whether she would be prepared to share that with the committee.

[119] We have received correspondence and a very full response indeed from Adam Cairns, chief executive of Cardiff and the Vale University Local Health Board, and also from the Minister for Health and Social Services and from the chair of that committee, David Rees. All of those are available in the public papers. We've also got an additional response from the petitioner, including some recent media coverage about the wider issue of the survival chances of very premature babies. What we don't have at this time is the response to the health committee's letter to the chief medical officer, and I think that's a key piece of correspondence here. I very much appreciate colleagues' steer on other aspects of this, because clearly we need to wait for that important letter. Are there any other issues that colleagues would like to air or could help to steer our way forward on this important petition? Joyce.

[120] **Joyce Watson:** It's a very sensitive and heartfelt petition and it has been dealt with in that way, and, to that end, I would like to say that. We do have to await the response to the health committee's letter to the chief medical officer before we can think of going any further forward. Again, in the name of consistency, I think that is what we need to do at this stage.

[121] **William Powell:** Absolutely. There are no further comments at this time, but it's clear that this important matter is something that we should be spending some more time considering, as soon as we've got that other important piece of correspondence.

[122] Agenda item 3.6, P-04-597, 'Protect the future of Funky Dragon, the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales': this petition was submitted by Catherine Patricia Jones and first considered on 23 September 2014, with the support of 1,212 electronic signatures and 429 paper signatures. So, totalling 1,641. We recall the detailed items that were being brought up in this petition and the concern expressed by Funky Dragon and its supporters about the removal of funding. That's detailed for us in the petition and indeed in the additional information that's in front of us.

[123] We've had some very useful evidence sessions on this, as colleagues will also recall. We last considered correspondence on this on 24 February 2015, and we discussed the evidence session that I've just referred to with Children in Wales that was held back on 3 February. We agreed to write to both Welsh Government and the Assembly Commission, asking whether there was further progress towards establishing a representative youth body to succeed Funky Dragon and build on its legacy, but also for information on any meetings held in relation to other issues regarding the petition. We've got a full response from the Presiding Officer, writing on behalf of the Assembly Commission, and also from the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty. We have sought a response from Trish Jones, the petitioner, and haven't, as yet, had anything. But there are some interesting aspects that we might briefly wish to air in the correspondence that we have got. Bethan.

10:00

[124] **Bethan Jenkins:** I was just wondering if we could write to the chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee because we scrutinised the Minister two weeks ago and part of that included all of this, and she committed to sending the committee some additional information about analysing the effectiveness of—

[125] **William Powell:** Of the new arrangements—

[126] **Bethan Jenkins:** —the new arrangements and so forth. She mentioned the new Young Wales website and so forth, so it may be useful for the petitioners, if they do get back in touch, to see that and for them to analyse whether they think that goes far enough. I also asked about the application process by which people put forward their different propositions to the Welsh Government, and they said that they would get back on that as well, so I thought it might be interesting.

[127] **William Powell:** Well, it sounds as though that's a relatively recent piece of evidence that could help to inform how we go, really.

[128] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. For me, it still isn't that body that will take young people in Wales forward on a Wales level in a democratic sense, but we are where we are and I think, if we keep monitoring it, then we can see what's happening on both the National Assembly Commission side and the Welsh Government side of things.

[129] **William Powell:** Yes. Okay. Was reference also made to the sort of representative role at UK level or indeed overseas in other bodies, such as European assemblies?

[130] **Bethan Jenkins:** Well, yes, that's why I was seeking clarity because the Minister's saying that, through this website now, is where they're going to be bringing these forums together and that there will still be that UK and European—

[131] **William Powell:** But it will be more of a virtual forum than—

[132] **Bethan Jenkins:** I don't know how they're going to be funding the active participation. Remember, they told us that—

[133] **William Powell:** Children in Wales—

[134] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, they were funded by—. I can't remember the—. The Speaker of the House of Commons.

[135] **William Powell:** John Bercow, at the time.

[136] **Bethan Jenkins:** I don't know how it's going to be funded in the future. So, those are the things we still need to keep track of, I think.

[137] **William Powell:** Joyce?

[138] **Joyce Watson:** No, it's fine.

[139] **William Powell:** You didn't indicate. Okay. Thank you. I think that will be a really useful thing while we also chase Trish Jones for a response, hopefully.

[140] Moving to agenda item 3.7, P-04-605, 'Save the Cwmcarn Forest Drive from Indefinite or Permanent Closure', this petition was submitted by Robert Jeffrey Southall and was first considered on 25 November 2014 and had the support of 2,392 electronic signatures and 602 in paper form, so, totalling 2,994, calling on the National Assembly for Wales

[141] 'to urge the Welsh Government to reverse the decision of Natural Resources Wales to close the Cwmcarn Forest Drive indefinitely on 2nd November 2014.'

[142] We last considered this back at our most recent meeting of 2 June, and agreed to await comments from the petitioner on the Minister's response. We've now got that response

from Mr Southall and, as you can see, he is keen for us to maintain this petition in a live state for a short additional period because he seems to have limited confidence in some of the undertakings that NRW are making. Are colleagues content for us to respect that request and to revisit it at our meeting on 30 June? Yes? Excellent.

[143] We move now to agenda item 3.8, petition P-04-619, 'LOCALISM IN PLANNING and COMPENSATION FOR THIRD PARTIES RE. INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS'. This petition was submitted by Mr Michael Halsey and was first considered by us on 24 March 2015. It has the support of 462 signatures, calling

[144] 'upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government during its reform of the Welsh planning system, to ensure/guarantee that planning decisions will be taken at the most local level as possible to enable sufficient community engagement and support. Moreover, it encourages the Welsh Government to examine in detail, the impact that major infrastructure schemes have on Third Parties in Wales and considers the implementation of legislation to properly protect and compensate all Third Parties suffering actual loss from the construction, commissioning and operation of major infrastructure projects.'

[145] Now, we last considered correspondence on this on 24 March and agreed to write to the Minister seeking his views on Mr Halsey's response and also to draw the petition to the attention of the Environment and Sustainability Committee. We've got a fairly detailed response from Carl Sargeant, not necessarily one that will meet the aspirations of the petitioners but one that, nevertheless, has the benefit of clarity. We've got, indeed, the petitioner's response to that, which does show that there's not a meeting of minds here. I'm happy to share—consistent with our normal practice—what the petitioner has had to say back with the Minister for some further comments. I suspect that this will have to come to an end at some point in terms of the exchange, but I think there are some substantive points that the petitioner has made that would merit the Minister's attention. Joyce, you've indicated.

[146] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, just in the name of consistency, we will, as you say, seek the Minister's views on their substantive comments. As you also say, we can't keep just going back, fore, back, fore, back, fore like a game of tennis. You know, there are some clear substantive issues. They are reasonable; they are respectfully asking for a reply. We need to respect that at this stage and ask the Minister for his views on them.

[147] **William Powell:** Yes. Excellent. Russell George.

[148] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. I did have the opportunity during the debate at Stage 3 to read out the wording of the petition to the Minister, who responded to that particular wording as well in his reply to me in that part of debate, but I think that there is secondary legislation that will be coming forward now. There's also going to be a wider discussion about where extra powers will come into Wales, and where those powers will be decided will be in the debate again, which links into the petition as well. But I think that the petitioner has asked a number of questions in his letter to us on 8 June, especially around the compensation as well. So, I think we should forward that letter to the Minister and ask him to respond to the points.

[149] **William Powell:** Yes. Absolutely. There may be some aspects here where issues of the St David's Day process and how that's been taken forward in terms of energy—there may be some overlap there. But let's see what the Minister has to say in response to the quite cogent points that the petitioner's making.

[150] The final update for today is agenda item 3.9, P-04-627, 'Improved Commuter Train Services for North Wales Residents'. This petition was submitted by Professor Tom Rippeth

and was first considered by us on 24 March 2015. It has the support of 36 signatures.

[151] ‘Although train fares across North Wales have risen at above the rate of inflation over a number of recent years the service offered to commuters has been reduced.’

[152] In particular, the petitioner raises that

[153] ‘the service offered at times convenient for most commuters to Bangor—home of one of Wales largest Universities, and also a major hospital...have been greatly cut over the last couple of years.’

[154] In particular, the petitioners call for the reintroduction of the Chester-Bangor service, which used, apparently, to call in at Bangor at 09.36, which isn't, according to the petition, any longer the case. We last considered correspondence on this petition back in our meeting on 24 March and we agreed to write to the Minister, seeking her views on this and some of the specific comments made by the petitioner. We've now got a response, which is in the public papers. We have sought a response from Professor Rippeth to the Minister's comments, and we haven't as yet had it. I think—again, to be consistent with normal practice—we should give the petitioner the opportunity to respond. Happy with that? Yes? Excellent. Okay.

[155] So, thank you, colleagues, for your attendance and contributions today. I'll just draw to your attention the fact that we have a petition handover today at 1 o'clock. The title of the petition is, 'Bring Down the Age of Smears to 18'. I'd very much appreciate your attendance and involvement in that if your diary commitments allow.

[156] Diolch yn fawr iawn am y sesiwn. Thank you very much for the session.

[157] Thank you very much, and I hope to see you later on.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10:09.
The meeting ended at 10:09.*