



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Deisebau](#)

[The Petitions Committee](#)

19/09/2017

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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 ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd. Lle y mae cyfranwyr wedi darparu cywiriadau i'w tystiolaeth, nodir y rheini yn y trawsgrifiad.

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. Where contributors have supplied corrections to their evidence, these are noted in the transcript.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Janet Finch–Saunders Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Mike Hedges Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Neil McEvoy Bywgraffiad Biography	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
David J. Rowlands Bywgraffiad Biography	UKIP Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) UKIP Wales (Committee Chair)

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

Graeme Francis	Clerc Clerk
Kayleigh Imperato	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Lisa Salkeld	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:01.
The meeting began at 09:01.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datganiadau o Fuddiant
Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

[1] **David J. Rowlands:** Welcome, all. I hope that we're all suitably refreshed after the summer recess. We welcome everyone to the meeting. Participants are welcome to speak in Welsh or English. Headsets are available for translation of Welsh to English, and there is no need to turn off mobile phones. Item 1 is apologies and substitutions: no apologies have been

received.

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[2] **David J. Rowlands:** There are three new petitions, so we'll move on to the first of those. This petition was submitted by Hywel ap John Griffiths, having collected 69 signatures. We looked at it on 21 August and we agreed to ask for the Cabinet Secretary to make comments on it. He has done that and the petitioner was offered the opportunity to provide further comments, but none have been received at this point.

[3] The Cabinet Secretary said that the NHS Wales Health Collaborative is looking into this matter and the collaborative intends to make recommendations to the health board in early autumn. So, the possible action on this is to await further views from the petitioner before deciding whether the committee can take any further action on the petition.

[4] **Mike Hedges:** Can I move we do that?

[5] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes. I second that.

[6] **David J. Rowlands:** Okay, yes. We're all agreed then. The next petition is to reopen Crumlin railway station. This petition was submitted by Michael Davies, having collected 208 signatures. An initial response to the petition was received from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure on 21 August. The petitioner has submitted further comments that are included in the papers for this meeting. It seems, obviously, that the Welsh Government are in the process of drawing up lists for stations that they believe should be looked at, and this—Crumlin station—will be looked at in the second tranche of these lists. So, the possible action is to share the detailed information provided by the petitioner to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure and ask (a), whether this can be fed into the future assessment as potential for a new station in the area, and (b), whether there will be an opportunity for local views to be considered during this assessment.

[7] **Mike Hedges:** I move that we do that.

[8] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes.

[9] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Yes.

[10] **David J. Rowlands:** Fine. Yes, we're all agreed that that is what we will do. The next petition was submitted by Gerwyn David Evans, having collected 11,091 signatures, so this is quite a significant number of signatures. But it appears that what was being asked for has now more or less been granted by the Welsh Government in that it does not intend to proceed with the proposed design. We have not had a formal response from the Government on this matter, so it may be worth while us asking for a formal response from the Government. Obviously, the possible action is that, as this petition has collected in excess of 5,000 signatures, committee should consider whether to request time for a Plenary debate on the subject. However, given that the issue appears to have been resolved, there is maybe little value in this. And the committee could await a formal response from the Cabinet Secretary and seek the views of the petitioner on it, with a view to closing the petition and congratulating the petitioner on the success of the campaign at that point.

[11] **Mike Hedges:** Can we wait until we get a formal response saying it's been cancelled? And I think if we get a formal response saying it's been cancelled, we can send that to the petitioner, and I move that we close the petition at that stage. If we don't get a formal response, then we bring this back to a future meeting.

[12] **David J. Rowlands:** Okay. Are we all agreed on that?

[13] **Neil McEvoy:** Almost—I'd almost like the Minister to come in and explain how it could happen in the first place, to be honest. I think there's a huge ignorance of Welsh history, but, you know, we see this—. I agree with Mike, yes.

[14] **David J. Rowlands:** So, are we agreed that the committee should await a formal response from the Cabinet Secretary and then seek the views of the petitioners?

09:06

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[15] **David J. Rowlands:** We come to the petitions that have been submitted earlier, and the one by Mohammed Sarul Islam is to build an international

mother language monument at Cardiff Bay. It had collected 16 signatures. Now, it appears that the Cabinet Secretary said there is no funding available for this to go ahead, so if we note that and close the petition, drawing the petitioner's attention to the research brief, which identifies organisations and charities who may be able to help—. Do we all agree on that?

[16] **Neil McEvoy:** I'd agree with that. It's just that I would outline one area of concern that it's a replica of a Bangladeshi nationalist monument, which members of other communities have pointed out. So, I think I'm glad the petition will be closed.

[17] **David J. Rowlands:** Okay, so we're all agreed on that action. Fine, thank you.

[18] The next petition was 'Save Our Bus'. It was submitted by Patricia Threadgill and was first considered on 14 February, having collected 60 signatures. Now, there's been a very full explanation of the services available that came from Stagecoach, pointing out quite comprehensively the sort of arrangements that are made. So, given that the committee could take little further action on this, the possible action then is to close this petition.

[19] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes, I propose we close it.

[20] **David J. Rowlands:** Would we all agree with that? Yes—just close that petition.

[21] This is something that's been ongoing for a little while. It's the train transport for school pupils with Arriva Trains Wales. The petition was submitted by Elin Tuckwood and was first considered on 1 November 2016, having collected 937 signatures. There seem to be two threads to this particular petition. One is whether children would be allowed an allowance and their transport would be paid, and the other is with regard to the safety of the platform that is being used. I think that we've had quite comprehensive answers from Arriva Trains with regard to the matter of the safety of that particular station, and they've confirmed that all reasonable measures have been taken in order to make sure that the safety that's on all other platforms is in place.

[22] The other thing is that there doesn't seem to be any movement with regard to the council with regard to actually paying for pupils on this. So, the possible actions again are to write again to Arriva Trains to see if they have

any possible further comments with regard to this, particularly the safety concerns, and/or write to Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council to seek their views on transport provision for pupils to Treorchy Comprehensive School, and whether they have had any discussions about the safety of pupils using the station.

[23] **Mike Hedges:** I suggest we do both.

[24] **David J. Rowlands:** We do both—

[25] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[26] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes, okay. Yes, we'll take both those actions.

[27] The next petition is 'TATA Steel Port Talbot Power Plant'. This was submitted by Peter Bamsey and was first considered on 13 September 2016, having collected 531 signatures. We have had a response from the First Minister, indicating that the Welsh Government could offer help with the power plant as part of a £60 million funding package. Having said that, the options open are that we write to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure to ask if there have been any recent discussions involving the Welsh Government over a new power plant at Port Talbot before considering what further action the committee could take. We also note at this point that there has been further correspondence from Mr Bamsey with regard to the fact that perhaps Tata's pension scheme responsibilities and liabilities may have impacted on their ability to put money into this plant themselves. But you'd have to very carefully consider whether that should be included in this particular petition or not.

[28] **Mike Hedges:** I don't think it should because it wasn't part of it. I still think that we should go back to the Cabinet Secretary and ask for an update on what's actually happening.

[29] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes, fine. Thank you. So, the action we'll take is that.

[30] The next item is 'Resurfacing of the A40 Raglan–Abergavenny Road'. The petition was submitted by Sara Jones and was first considered on 13 September 2016 and collected 164 signatures. There has been a response from the Cabinet Secretary, and he says that the road will be looked at, but it's not a priority as at this time. So, the possible action is to seek a response

from the petitioner to the latest information before determining future action on the petition.

[31] **Mike Hedges:** I move we do that.

[32] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes, fine. That's the action we'll take. Thank you.

[33] 'Petition to Protect our High Street'—this petition was submitted by Sally Stephenson, and was first considered on 14 February 2017, having collected 1,668 signatures. There have been responses from the Cabinet Secretary, and one of those responses is the proposal for a new, permanent small business rate relief. This runs until 13 October. So, possible actions are to probably write to the petitioner to seek views on the proposals contained in the current consultation, and encourage them to also respond directly to the Government as part of that consultation.

[34] **Mike Hedges:** Yes.

[35] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes. Are we all agreed on that? Right. So that's the action we will take.

[36] The next petition is 'Give Rate Relief to Local Authorities for Leisure and Cultural Facilities'. This petition was submitted by Ryan Dansie, and was first considered on 13 December 2016, having collected 17 signatures. The committee last considered the petition on 9 May and agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government to seek his response. The Cabinet Secretary's response was received on 14 June. The petitioner has been sent this response and been offered the opportunity to comment but had not done so when the papers were finished. The possible action on this is to await further comments from the petitioner before deciding whether to take any further action on the petition, or the other alternative is to close this petition.

[37] **Mike Hedges:** How long did the petitioner have to respond?

[38] **Mr Francis:** In this case, because this petition was deferred from before the summer, quite a period of time, though we didn't chase for a period of time during the summer break.

[39] **Mike Hedges:** Can I suggest we chase now, and if they don't reply by the next meeting we close it?

[40] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** I agree.

[41] **David J. Rowlands:** Right. Neil, do you have anything to add?

[42] **Neil McEvoy:** No.

[43] **David J. Rowlands:** Fine. So, we'll await further comments from the petitioner.

[44] The next item is 'Ban Letting Agent Fees to Tenants'. This petition was submitted by Shelter Cymru and was first considered on 14 February 2017, having collected 328 signatures.

09:15

[45] The committee last considered the petition on 21 March, and agreed to await a response from the Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee as to whether they intend to conduct further work on the issue, and ask the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children when he intends to make a statement on the issue. The Cabinet Secretary did respond on 20 June. The petitioner was given the opportunity to provide a response, but had not done so when the papers were finalised. But apparently there is currently running a consultation exercise to inform future actions, including legislative proposals. So, our possible actions are to await further comments from the petitioner, before deciding what further action the committee can take.

[46] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Yes.

[47] **David J. Rowlands:** Are we all in agreement with that? Neil? Mike?

[48] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[49] **Mike Hedges:** Sorry. I think we need a response on paper, that's all.

[50] **David J. Rowlands:** Okay. We'll await further comments from the petitioner on that matter.

[51] The next petition is 'Recognition of Parental Alienation'. This petition was submitted by Families Need Fathers Both Parents Matter Cymru, and was

first considered on 9 May 2017, having collected 2,058 signatures. The committee last considered the petition on 9 May, and agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children to ask the specific questions raised by the petitioners. The Cabinet Secretary's response was received on 23 June. The petitioner was offered the opportunity to respond to this, but hadn't done so when the papers were finalised.

[52] **Neil McEvoy:** I think I need to declare an interest here, 17.24A, with my interactions with the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service, which are actually very informative, rather than prejudicial, I could say.

[53] **David J. Rowlands:** Right, okay. So, we have possible actions to await further comments from the petitioner before deciding what further action to take or—

[54] **Neil McEvoy:** I'd be inclined to invite the petitioner in, and the Minister in as well. There seems to be a contradiction on what is really the reality. I note from the Minister's response that there is no data; so, if there's no data, I'm not sure how he can actually reach a conclusion. In terms of the charity not responding, it's probably because of workload. It's actually a real charity, where they do things for free, and they do a lot of good work. And I think that it would be good to bring them in to get their view, and the Minister as well, I would say.

[55] **David J. Rowlands:** Because that was one of the other actions: to invite the petitioner to give oral evidence to a future committee meeting, and write to the Children, Young People and Education Committee to ask whether they have done any work on this issue or are planning to consider it as part of their work programme.

[56] **Mike Hedges:** Can I move an amendment to what Neil said? Yes, I'm all for inviting them in, and the Minister, but can we check first that the children's committee aren't going to do exactly the same thing? So, if the children's committee aren't going to do it, can we do it, but, if the children's committee are going to do it, can we let them do it?

[57] **Neil McEvoy:** I don't know; I'd like him to come in.

[58] **Mike Hedges:** But if he's going in to the children's committee, if the children's committee are going to do it and going to invite him in, then it's

pointless us duplicating it.

[59] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** But we've received the petition, haven't we? I think we should invite him in. Sorry, Mike, but I do; I agree with Neil. Because it is a big issue—certainly I've come across this in my own constituency.

[60] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes, it's obviously a large issue, with 2,000-odd signatures to the petition, so I think that we ought to give it due consideration.

[61] **Mike Hedges:** I don't want to fight anybody over it, but I just thought that it could be easier to make sure that we weren't duplicating another committee.

[62] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Well, it's been put on our agenda, hasn't it, with the petition?

[63] **Neil McEvoy:** It's one of the major things that walks through my office door continuously.

[64] **David J. Rowlands:** Fine. So, we're agreed that we will invite the petitioner to give oral evidence. Is that—?

[65] **Mike Hedges:** And we'll have the Minister to respond, then, at some other stage.

[66] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes, fine.

[67] The next petition is 'Ensure Disabled People's Housing Adaptation Needs are Adequately Met'. This was submitted by Whizz–Kidz Cardiff Ambassador Club, and first considered on 11 October 2016, having collected 125 signatures. Now, it appears that what's been asked for in this petition has been agreed by the Welsh Government and therefore—. And the Cabinet Secretary has responded on this matter. So, the possible actions are to close the petition in the light of the positive response received from the petitioners themselves.

[68] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Can I just say on this one—? We've done three committee inquiries by the Assembly now on how people access equipment and support, and I think it's fair to say that, with each report going forward, the recommendations are largely the same, and I haven't seen any

improvement at all in the speed at which people get—. And when you read this, where a seven-year-old is unable to live with their parents, I'm not so sure we should be closing this one. I think that we perhaps ought to be putting more pressure on the Government. We have used Assembly resources in the past and found the weaknesses on three occasions as to the length of time it takes people to get support and the equipment they need.

[69] **David J. Rowlands:** The only thing I will say is that we are dealing just with the petition itself. That may be for further Government intervention in some way, but, with regard to this particular petition, the petitioners have stated that they are satisfied with the policies implemented by the Government and that's why we're proposing to close this particular petition.

[70] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** All right. Okay.

[71] **David J. Rowlands:** Neil, do you have any comments, and Mike on this?

[72] **Mike Hedges:** Happy to close it.

[73] **David J. Rowlands:** You're happy to close the petition. Thank you.

[74] The next petition, 'A Welsh Government Department for Europe would ensure a clear, strategic and accountable voice for Wales in ongoing negotiations': the petition was submitted by Tegid Roberts and was first considered on 11 October 2016, having collected 22 signatures. The committee last considered the petition on 9 May and agreed to forward the petitioner's comments to the First Minister and ask for answers to the questions raised. A response from the First Minister was received on 3 July. The petitioner was informed that the petition would be considered but had not provided further comments when papers were finalised.

[75] The First Minister has provided a detailed response to the questions previously raised by the petitioner. So, the possible actions are that we offer the petitioner a further opportunity to comment on the information provided by the First Minister and/or consider closing the petition given that the organisation of Welsh Government is a matter for the First Minister and the fact that regular updates on the Welsh Government's response to Brexit are provided during other Assembly proceedings.

[76] **Mr Francis:** And, since the papers were published, we have had a comment from the petitioner on this, which was circulated prior to the

meeting, which is a comment about the length of time the process has taken to get to this point in terms of getting the answers through the petitions process, but also appears to be a kind of recognition that we've maybe reached the point with the petition where the petition's been answered by the First Minister, even if it's not gone exactly down the line that the petitioner was originally seeking.

[77] **Mike Hedges:** Yes, fine. I suggest we close it.

[78] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Yes.

[79] **David J. Rowlands:** Neil, do you have any comments?

[80] **Neil McEvoy:** We could write to him, possibly. I'd prefer to write to him, really.

[81] **Mr Francis:** To the petitioner?

[82] **Neil McEvoy:** To the petitioner, yes.

[83] **David J. Rowlands:** Write to the petitioner.

[84] **Mr Francis:** So, we've had the comments on the fourteenth, at the end of last week—some basic comments from him. There should've been a sheet on your table when you came in. But we can ask and get some more specific reaction, perhaps.

[85] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes. What does the committee think? Are you happy to close or—? Where are we at?

[86] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** I'm happy to close it.

[87] **David J. Rowlands:** Mike?

[88] **Mike Hedges:** Happy to close it.

[89] **Neil McEvoy:** Okay.

[90] **David J. Rowlands:** I'm of that opinion as well, Neil.

[91] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes, it's fine.

[92] **David J. Rowlands:** I don't think it's going any further. Okay, we're closing the petition.

[93] The next petition was with regard to 'A Roundabout for the A477/A4075 Junction'. The petition was submitted by Pembroke Town Council, and was first considered on 19 January 2016, having collected 597 signatures. The committee last considered the petition on 15 November 2016 and agreed to await the results of a road safety audit and the petitioners' reaction to these before deciding on any further action. An update was received from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure on 21 July. Further comments from the petitioners are also included in the papers for the meeting. The Cabinet Secretary has informed the committee that the stage 4 safety audit report has been received, but some further details need to be discussed with the designer before the audit is completed. So, the possible actions are to provide the further comments from the petitioners to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure for his information, and/or request whether the petitioners can be provided with a copy of the stage 4 road safety audit when the process is completed.

[94] **Mike Hedges:** I suggest we do that, but do both.

[95] **David J Rowlands:** Yes, both; I think we take both those actions. All agreed? Yes. Fine. Thank you.

[96] The next petition is, again, another matter to do with road improvements, 'Road Safety Improvements Along the A487 Trunk Road between Cardigan and Aberystwyth, to Include Passing Places'. The petition was submitted by Maldwyn Lewis and was first considered on 13 September 2016, having collected 849 signatures. The committee considered the petition on 13 June and agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure for an update on the outcome of discussions with Ceredigion County Council about further improvement measures that may be possible on the A487. The Cabinet Secretary responded on 14 July. The petitioner was informed that the petition would be considered but had not submitted comments when the papers were finalised. The possible actions are to await the views of the petitioner on the latest information received from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure.

[97] **Mike Hedges:** Yes, I'd suggest we do that.

[98] **David J Rowlands:** Yes. We're all agreed. That's the action we will take, then.

[99] The next petition is to 'Include a Mynachdy and Talybont Station as Part of the Cardiff Metro Proposal'. The petition was submitted by Dr Ashley Wood and was first considered on 1 November 2016, having collected 137 signatures. The committee last considered the petition on 13 June and agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure to request details on the consideration that was given to a new station at Gabalfa as part of the stage 1 assessment. The Cabinet Secretary responded on 12 July. The Cabinet Secretary states that a new station at Gabalfa scored well and will be looked at in the further considerations for stations. So, the possible actions are to close the petition, given that this area is included in the detailed assessment process for potential new stations, and, in doing so, provide the petitioner's views on the location of a station to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure and ask for this to be taken into account in any future consideration.

[100] **Mike Hedges:** Can I move that?

[101] **David J Rowlands:** Yes. Are we all agreed? *[Inaudible.]*

[102] The next matter's 'Public Petition for the Dinas Powys By-Pass'. This petition was submitted by V.P. Driscoll, A.R. Robertson and R.T. Harrod, having collected 3,305 signatures. The committee last considered the petition on 13 June and agreed to write to the Vale of Glamorgan Council to seek its views on the subject of the petition and ask for further information about the review of transport infrastructure in the vale. A response from the leader of the Vale of Glamorgan was received on 10 July. The leader of the Vale of Glamorgan states that a proposal was due to go to a Cabinet meeting in July to approve stage 2. The council has highlighted the potential for a bypass. The petitioner has updated that the Cabinet subsequently agreed to refer the issue to the council's scrutiny committee for environment and regeneration. Our possible actions are to write to the Vale of Glamorgan to ask for an update when a decision is reached on whether to proceed with a stage 2 report. Are we agreed on that? That's the action we will take.

[103] The next petition is 'Call on Welsh Government to make the A48 safe for all road users and pedestrians at Laleston, Broadlands and Merthyr Mawr'. The petition was submitted by Ian Spiller, having collected 997 signatures.

09:30

[104] The committee considered the petition for the first time on 23 May, and agreed to write to Bridgend County Borough Council to inform them of the petition and the response of the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure. The response from the petitioner was received on 1 June and is included in papers for the meeting. The possible actions: as previously advised, this stretch of road is the responsibility of Bridgend County Borough Council and, therefore, the committee has limited options for progressing the petition. The committee could, therefore, write to the relevant scrutiny committee at Bridgend council to ask if they will consider investigating the issues raised by the petition. In doing so, the committee could consider closing the petition with an explanation letter to the petitioner that the responsibility for this lies with the borough council.

[105] **Mike Hedges:** I would just send it to Bridgend council and let them decide where they think is more suitable, whether it should go to their cabinet or whether it should go to their scrutiny committee. So, just send it to Bridgend and let them sort it out, rather than try and second-guess what they're doing. But, apart from that, I'm happy.

[106] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes? Fine.

[107] The next petition for consideration is 'Unacceptable Waiting Times for NHS patients in A&E Wreccsam/Wrexham Maelor Hospital'. This was submitted by Charles Dodman and it was first considered on 17 January, having collected 14 signatures. We agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport to ask whether the A&E waiting times have continued to improve at Wrexham Maelor Hospital and what steps are being taken nationally to improve emergency waiting times. A response was received from the Cabinet Secretary on 21 July. The Cabinet Secretary stated that

[108] 'we have not seen the sustained improvement against emergency care access targets we had hoped for at Wrexham Maelor Hospital'.

[109] So, possible actions are to ask the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport to update the committee when the outcome of the current six-month targeted intervention, and the impact it has on emergency waiting times, is known.

[110] **Mike Hedges:** I move that.

[111] **David J. Rowlands:** Neil, are you happy that—?

[112] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[113] **David J. Rowlands:** That's the action we'll take,

[114] 'To Make Mental Health Services More Accessible'. This is the next petition. It was submitted by Laura Williams, having collected 73 signatures. We should point out that Laura has been in regular contact with the committee clerks. The committee considered the petition on 23 May and agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport to highlight the concerns and proposals for improvements made by the petitioner and Hafal, and seek further information about plans to improve the responsiveness of services. A response from the Cabinet Secretary was received on 6 July. The Cabinet Secretary has reiterated that mental health is a priority and spending is ring-fenced. The petitioner has expressed disappointment with the response, which she doesn't feel addresses the points raised and how services could be improved. The possible actions for us are: to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport to ask for further information about how the actions contained in the 'Together for Mental Health' delivery plan are providing improved access to services, and any available evidence for this; or, if the committee wishes to do further work on this issue, it could invite the petitioner to attend a committee meeting to provide further evidence on her petition. The committee is also considering another petition on mental health services, 'Better Mental Health Services for Adults', and could invite both petitioners to attend the same session.

[115] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I think mental health is a huge issue in Wales and we know from work we've done here and elsewhere—. The Cabinet Secretary's response skirts around a lot of the issues that certainly many of my constituents are facing. I've raised it in the Chamber. Somebody can walk into my office and trying to get them help in an emergency—in a crisis—is nigh on impossible, and I think we should be holding the feet of the Cabinet Secretary to the fire on just how bad mental health service support is in Wales. They mention 'there's always extra money'. I'm talking about the fundamental principles of people being able to access help.

[116] **David J. Rowlands:** Fine—

[117] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** If you look at the number of male suicides in north Wales, it's a really big issue for us, and it's when we get petitions like this that we know that these issues exist. And it's not just in south Wales, it's across Wales, across the board, and I think we should be challenging the Cabinet Secretary more on this.

[118] **David J. Rowlands:** Okay, so are we agreed that we call the two petitioners in at the same time?

[119] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes. I'd like to invite Hafal in as well—

[120] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Yes.

[121] **David J. Rowlands:** And Hafal.

[122] **Neil McEvoy:** —but I do want to say on the record, really, that I find the dismissive response of the Minister—

[123] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** It's unbelievable.

[124] **Neil McEvoy:** —absolutely disrespectful to this committee and to the petitioner and people who are suffering out there. You cannot access, very often, the appropriate mental health care in Wales. That's just the reality. I've had complaints about people not being diagnosed and the reality is that they're seeing doctors who are actually not qualified to give a diagnosis. It's a huge area. And if there was a response from the Minister that maybe gave the detail of the delivery plan or if there was some kind of effort with this letter to us and to the petitioner, then I wouldn't feel so strongly, but I think we should write back to the Minister and just say that this kind of response just isn't good enough.

[125] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Yes, I think I endorse that 100 per cent.

[126] **David J. Rowlands:** We'll reiterate the fact the petitioner has expressed disappointment with the response as well. So, we ought to write to the Cabinet Secretary and ask for—

[127] **Mike Hedges:** Echoing the disappointment of the petitioner.

[128] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes, fine. Okay. And then do we go on and invite

the people together and possibly—?

[129] **Mr Francis:** Yes.

[130] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes. Fine, thank you.

[131] The next petition is the 'Lack of support for children with disabilities at crisis'. The petition was submitted by Rebecca Weale, having collected 200 paper signatures. This may in fact coincide a little with the previous one because we are talking again about a certain degree of mental health problems with this child. So, we may in fact be covering much of what this lady is worrying about with the previous petition. However, the committee considered the petition for the first time on 13 June and agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport. A response from the Cabinet Secretary was received on 25 July. The Cabinet Secretary has confirmed that CAMHS crisis care teams are for acute mental illnesses and that if they have this, children with learning difficulties should be seen. So, our possible actions are to await the views of the petitioner on the response received from the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport before considering what further action to take in relation to the petition. Are we happy with that?

[132] **Neil McEvoy:** Just a comment on CAMHS: in this area, the service—I'll declare an interest because I used to work in the area—but the service, when I was there, was non-existent. I'd want to refer children and it was impossible. You'd refer them and I was told that there was one professional in the whole borough to deal with these kinds of issues, so therefore I ended up counselling the children rather than the professionals, to be frank.

[133] **David J. Rowlands:** Fine. Okay, so we take that action then.

[134] The next petition: 'Make a Vegan Option Compulsory in Public Canteens'. It was submitted by Rachel Turnbull, having collected 118 signatures. The committee considered the petition for the first time on 11 July and agreed to await a response from the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport before considering the petition again in the autumn. The Cabinet Secretary has given a response on 18 July. Possible actions here are to await the views of the petitioner on the response received from the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs.

[135] **Mike Hedges:** That's all we can do.

[136] **David J. Rowlands:** Are we agreed on that action, Neil?

[137] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[138] **David J. Rowlands:** Fine. Thank you.

[139] The next petition is quite an interesting one from the point of view that it has been brought by the Marine Conservation Society, and it's 'For single use items: introduce a Deposit Return System for drink containers and make fast food containers and utensils compostable'. The petition was submitted by Marine Conservation Society, having collected 1,993 signatures. The committee last considered the petition on 13 June and agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs to seek the clarifications requested by the petitioners, including whether the planned reviews will include an evaluation of prospects of introducing a deposit return system. The committee also agreed to consider holding an inquiry into the proposal once a response was received from the Cabinet Secretary. A response was received from the Cabinet Secretary on 4 July. The Cabinet Secretary has stated that the evaluation and refresh of the waste strategy will seek to identify opportunities for changes to waste practices. This will include research on deposit return systems for food and drink packaging. So, the possible actions are to await the views of the petitioners on the information provided by the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, and/or agree to take forward a piece of more detailed work on this issue, as previously discussed.

[140] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I think we should do a more detailed piece of work on this issue. I don't think the Cabinet Secretary's response actually—. It's a huge issue now with marine pollution, and I know that it's gaining momentum here within this establishment. Politically, I honestly think this would be a really—. I'd like to see this as a debate in the Chamber as well.

[141] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes. It has been raised in the Chamber, but not as a debate, so I think I would agree with the fact that we should give more scrutiny to this.

[142] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Definitely.

[143] **David J. Rowlands:** Any other Members?

[144] **Mike Hedges:** Yes.

[145] **Neil McEvoy:** I completely agree, yes.

[146] **Mike Hedges:** All I would say is that it also fits in with the new taxes policies, which may well come in, where you can't make people produce disposable or returnable items, but you can tax them if they don't, and that may well be a more successful route to getting them to do it than to try and make it compulsory.

[147] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes.

[148] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I think it's well worth pushing this forward for further work.

[149] **David J. Rowlands:** Right. So, we agree to take forward a piece of more detailed work.

[150] **Mr Francis:** In relation to the first stage for that, would you see that as being to get the petitioners in to outline their reasons for bringing the petition, and take it from there with that?

[151] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes.

[152] **Mr Francis:** Okay.

[153] **David J. Rowlands:** The next petition is 'Stop Compulsory Welsh Language GCSE', submitted by Emma Williams, having collected 128 signatures. The committee considered the petition for the first time on 13 June and agreed to await the views of the petitioner on the response from the Cabinet Secretary for Education before deciding on a course of action. A response from the petitioner was received also on 5 July, and is in the papers for the meeting.

[154] **Mike Hedges:** I have no problem with writing to the Cabinet Secretary to seek a response to the concerns raised. I would say, of course, that there are those who find compulsory double science up to the age of 16 something they would prefer not to have, because they would prefer to concentrate on languages, for example. If you're going to have compulsory subjects, why not Welsh? It is the language of Wales. Let's write and get a response.

[155] **David J. Rowlands:** So, the possible action is to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education to seek a response to the concerns raised by the petitioner, especially in relation to a potential reduction in subject options for pupils due to timetable clashes and pressures on school budgets.

[156] **Neil McEvoy:** Chair, can I comment on the ignorance of the petitioner? I speak as a modern languages teacher—formerly—and if you're brought up bilingually, there are not only health benefits to that, but also there are benefits in acquiring other languages. I think this kind of petition is the short end of a very prejudiced/racist wedge that we see in Wales, unfortunately. These people never admit to being anti Welsh or anti Welsh language, but I think they clearly are, so if it were up to me, I would dismiss the petition and close it now, really. I wouldn't imagine there's a consensus on this, so—

[157] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I disagree. I think that they've got every right to, you know—

[158] **Neil McEvoy:** Well, ban English then. Is that where you're going?

[159] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Neil, I'm not going to get into an argument about the Welsh language—

[160] **Mike Hedges:** Let them have an opportunity to respond.

09:45

[161] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Let them; they've got every right. We live in a democracy. They've got every right. They've made representation, and I propose that we move it, you know, to the next stage of whatever, you know, because it—

[162] **David J. Rowlands:** Right. Well, let me reiterate the possible actions: we'll write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education to seek a response to the concerns raised by the petitioner, especially in relation to a potential reduction in subject options for the pupils due to timetable clashes and pressure on school budgets.

[163] **Neil McEvoy:** Can I just finally comment on the economic aspect, because the Welsh language actually makes money for Wales? It embraces the circular economy, keeping money in the country.

[164] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** I agree.

[165] **Neil McEvoy:** We have a television industry because of the Welsh language, we have a publishing industry because of the Welsh language, and it's a misrepresentation to say that the language actually loses money and costs us money. It doesn't; it makes us money, economically.

[166] **Mike Hedges:** Can we just get a response on [*Inaudible.*]?

[167] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Yes, and I do think we, as a committee, and AMs in particular, need to be a bit careful about our language when we are dealing with petitions, because it's been sent in, you know, they have every democratic right to send that in, and I think we should be very careful about name calling, Neil.

[168] **Neil McEvoy:** I'm just stating my opinion, as a Member.

[169] **Mike Hedges:** We have a process that we go through, where we write to the Minister, we get the Minister's response, we send that to the petitioner, the petitioner responds again, we send that to the Minister, then we get the Minister's next response, then we decide what we want to do with the petition. I think, whatever our personal views on the petition, we should always do those processes—.

[170] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Absolutely.

[171] **Mike Hedges:** If we want to close it at the end of that stage, it's up to us, or if we're going to take it forward, or whatever, but I think that every petition should be treated in exactly the same way.

[172] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** With respect.

[173] **Mike Hedges:** And with the same respect, whether it's something we like or we don't. Because there've been several—. There are always several petitions that I fundamentally disagree with, but I think we have to treat each petitioner with respect, because we're not here on the Petitions Committee for our own views; we're here to carry out a function of the National Assembly.

[174] **David J. Rowlands:** Absolutely.

[175] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** And we don't want to put people off.

[176] **Neil McEvoy:** I'm content to follow my colleagues on this. I wanted to make the point.

[177] **David J. Rowlands:** I fully agree with the fact that we have to give due consideration to every petition that's put to us, irrespective of the political views expressed in those petitions, or whatever. Thank you.

09:47

**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**

Cynnig:

Motion:

*bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to
gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y exclude the public from the
cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog remainder of the meeting in
17.42(vi).*

*accordance with Standing Order
17.42(vi).*

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.

Motion moved.

[178] **David J. Rowlands:** Now, I'd like to come to the motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting.

[179] **Mike Hedges:** I move, and we'll get the crowds out now. *[Laughter.]*

[180] **David J. Rowlands:** Moved. Yes, fine.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 09:47.

The public part of the meeting ended at 09:47.

