

Concise Minutes – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 4 – Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: Tuesday, 15 December
2020

Meeting time: 09.05 – 10.28

This meeting can be viewed

on [Senedd TV](#) at:

<http://senedd.tv/en/11043>

Attendance

| Category | Names |
|-------------------|--|
| Assembly Members: | Janet Finch–Saunders MS (Chair) Michelle Brown MS Jack Sargeant MS Leanne Wood MS |
| Witnesses: | |
| Committee Staff: | Graeme Francis (Clerk) Mared Llwyd (Second Clerk) Steffan Lewis (Deputy Clerk) Samiwel Davies (Legal Adviser) |

1 Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.



2 Covid-19 new petitions

2.1 P-05-1046 Reconsider lockdown and investigate scientific evidence

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to await a response to the petition from the Welsh Government before considering whether to take any further action on the petition.

2.2 P-05-1054 The Hair & Beauty sector has proved itself COVID secure. Do not close us and risk Welsh jobs again

The Committee agreed to keep on watching brief on this issue at the current time, agreeing that it would consider the petition further in the light of changes to circumstances in the New Year further comments from the petitioner.

2.3 P-05-1060 Allow supermarkets to sell "non-essential"

The Committee formally noted the strength of feeling expressed by the petition, the further views provided by the petitioner and the response from the Welsh Government during the debate held on 11 November. Given that the petition has been debated and the firebreak lockdown has ended, the Committee agreed that there was little action it was able to take at this time. It therefore agreed to close the petition and thank the petitioner.

In doing so the Committee agreed to write again to the Welsh Government to highlight the further issues raised by the petitioner in his detailed submission to the Committee.

2.4 P-05-1062 Abandon the rt-PCR test for covid-19 testing as its unfit for purpose

The Committee agreed to await a response to the petition from the Welsh Government before considering whether it can take any further action on the petition.

2.5 P-05-1070 Advise all people who are extremely vulnerable or previously shielding in Wales to stay home, not work, during periods of high covid 19 community infection

The Committee agreed to write back to the Minister for Health and Social Services to share the further concerns expressed by the petitioner and others. In light of the suggestions that some employers are showing a lack of empathy or support for people at high risk, the Committee agreed to ask what action the Welsh Government would consider taking, or is able to take, against employers who do not make workplaces safe or respond appropriately to the circumstances of vulnerable members of their workforce.

2.6 P-05-1074 Raise the number of people allowed in outdoor spaces so football can restart for all teams in Wales

The Committee agreed to include the issues raised by the petition during the broad debate on access to sport and physical activity during lockdown, which the Committee intends to hold in January 2021.

In doing so, the Committee agreed to close the petition and thank the petitioner.

2.7 P-05-1076 Allow all the Performing Arts to re-open – live music, dance, theatres and concert halls

The Committee noted the petition and the Deputy Minister's outline of the initial steps that were taken, but then paused due to the current circumstances in relation to transmission of Coronavirus, which have also impacted upon hospitality and other sectors.

In light of the scrutiny of the impact on this sector being conducted by the Culture Welsh Language and Communications Committee, the Committee agreed to take no further action itself but to bring the petition to that Committee's attention and thank the petitioner.

2.8 P-05-1095 Implement a 2 week holiday-lockdown for schools before 24 Dec

Following recent announcements, including that secondary schools in Wales have moved to online teaching for the final week of term and primary schools in some areas have also closed early, the Committee noted that the petition has been successful in helping to highlight concerns to the Government and in the media. On the basis that there was little further action that it could take at this point the Committee agreed close the petition and thank the petitioner.

2.9 P-05-1099 Don't shut the Hospitality Sector (Pubs, Restaurants, Cafes) without providing scientific evidence

This petition was considered alongside petition [P-05-1100 Allow pubs and restaurants in Wales to serve alcohol & stay open after 6pm.](#)

The Committee agreed to await a formal response from the Welsh Government before considering whether there is any further action that it could take on the petitions at that stage. The Committee also agreed to write back to the Petitioner to ask for the source of the statistics included in the petition.

In relation to a Plenary debate, the Committee noted that the restrictions on the hospitality industry have been raised a number of times in Plenary in recent weeks, including on 1 December and a debate and vote held on 9 December, with the Regulations themselves due to be voted on during Plenary on the afternoon of 15 December. The Committee therefore agreed to write to the Business Committee to make them aware of the petition but not to request a debate at this point.

2.10 P-05-1100 Allow pubs and restaurants in Wales to serve alcohol & stay open after 6pm

This petition was considered alongside petition [P-05-1099 Don't shut the Hospitality Sector \(Pubs, Restaurants, Cafes\) without providing scientific evidence.](#)

The Committee agreed to await a formal response from the Welsh Government before considering whether there is any further action that it could take on the petitions at that stage.

2.11 P-05-1045 To make shared-decision making and monthly mental health care-plan reviews a legal requirement

The Committee acknowledged the petitioner and her family's strength in creating the petition and sent their deepest condolences. Members also noted their disappointment that no response had been received from the Welsh Government, and agreed to write again enclosing the petitioner's further comments for consideration, and seeking a response at the earliest opportunity.

2.12 P-05-1056 Give Local Authorities powers to control the housing market in rural and tourist areas of Wales

The Committee agreed to write back to the Minister for Housing and Local Government to ask what urgent action she is considering taking to mitigate the affordable housing challenges in many Welsh communities, seek a further response to the proposals put forward by the petitioners including, for example, possible changes in land transaction tax and council tax.

The Committee also agreed to ask that further powers be granted to local authorities to enable them to rectify the current situation and ask that the points raised by the petitioners and the Committee are addressed by the Minister in the statement that she intends to make in January 2021.

Members agreed to return to the petition, including the possibility of a further debate or specific investigation by a committee, following that statement and also indicated an interest in exploring further the potential issue of the second home owners registering their properties for business rates to avoid paying the second homes council tax premium.

2.13 P-05-1064 Extend Land Transaction Tax a further 6 months past 31st March and increase the threshold to £300k

The Committee agreed to note the petition and the response received. In light of the Minister's clear statements that the threshold was set to reflect the property market in Wales that there are no current plans to extend the period, the Committee concluded that there was little further which could be achieved at this time. The Committee thanked the petitioner for bringing this matter forward and closed the petition.

2.14 P-05-1069 Save the farmland and green fields at Cosmeston

The Committee agreed to write back to the Minister for Finance to share the further detailed concerns raised by the petitioner and ask for these to be considered by the Welsh Government in relation to the development, and seek a response to the specific points raised by the petitioner.

Members also agreed to ask how the Welsh Government seeks to balance the competing interests of protecting the environment and developing additional housing, including affordable properties.

2.15 P-05-1071 Print the vehicle registration on all drive through fast food packaging

The Committee noted the petition and the response received from the Welsh Government, including the circular economy strategy [*'Beyond Recycling'*](#) and to the intention to publish a Litter Prevention Plan next year, which will include actions to address littering from vehicles. In light of this, the Committee agreed to write back to the Government to highlight its interest in the proposal made by the petitioner and await a response and further comments from the petitioner before considering whether there is any further action that it could take.

2.16 P-05-1072 Investigate what powers the Welsh Parliament has in relation to banning conversion therapy

The Committee noted the correspondence received and agreed to write back to the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip to ask for further information to be provided about the steps that the Welsh Government has considered, or would consider, taking to prevent conversion therapy being able to take place in Wales.

2.17 P-05-1073 Create and build a new branch of National Museum Wales dedicated to Welsh involvement in colonialism

The Committee noted the correspondence received from the Welsh Government and agreed to write to Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales to highlight the petition and ask for further information about the work it is undertaking in relation to this subject.

2.18 P-05-1077 Stop the voting boundary change to Ystrad Mynach south

The Committee noted the petition and the further information received. It acknowledged that the statutory period for representations to be made to Welsh Ministers on this proposal ends imminently and noted its expectations that the petition will be considered as part of this. The Committee agreed to draw the Minister's attention to the additional comments provided by the petitioner and, in line with its decision on a previous petition that it is not appropriate for it to scrutinise specific boundary reform proposals, to close the petition.

3 Updates to previous petitions

3.1 P-05-908 CF3 against the Incinerator

The Committee agreed to note the further information received and the fact that a planning application is now under consideration by the Planning Inspectorate. Given the formal planning process which controls the consideration of applications for Developments of National Significance, the Committee agreed that there is no further action that it is able to take at this time. It therefore agreed to close the petition and thank the petitioner.

3.2 P-05-1003 Demand an EIA now on the dumping of radioactively contaminated mud in Welsh waters

The Committee considered further comments received following the Plenary debate held on 21 October and agreed to write to NRW to seek an update on the marine licencing process for this application and a response to the further comments made by the petitioners.

3.3 P-05-914 Equal Access to Health Care for the Disabled

The Committee agreed to write back to the Minister for Health and Social Services to draw attention to the further information gathered and to the suggestions made around developing cluster arrangements for GP practices to access equipment and a loan scheme. In line with the proposal from the BMA, the Committee also agreed to ask whether the Government will consider instigating discussions with health boards and patient groups, such as SHINE, to develop solutions to this problem.

3.4 P-05-965 Push the government into introducing a separate ward other than maternity ward, for families going through a miscarriage

The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Health and Social Services, providing a summary of the position gathered from health boards and sharing the responses received. It also agreed to request a further response outlining what further action that Welsh Government intends to take in light of the facilities and services outlined.

3.5 P-05-995 Freedom to Donate Blood

The Committee considered further correspondence on the petition and the announcement made on 14 December that a more individualised donor assessment will be introduced from summer 2021, with the result that LGBTQ+ men will be able to donate blood. The Committee agreed to congratulate the petitioner on the success achieved through their campaign and close the petition.

3.6 P-05-1001 Hold an independent inquiry into the choice of site for the proposed new Velindre Cancer Centre

This petition was considered alongside [P-05-1018 Support for the current proposed plans to build a new Velindre Cancer Centre, Cardiff, in any future inquiry.](#)

In light of the new evidence received from a number of parties and the recent publication of advice provided by the Nuffield Trust, the Committee agreed to write back to the Minister for Health and Social Services to:

- Draw attention to the information received by the Committee in the context of the scrutiny of the Outline Business Case (OBC) within the Welsh Government;
- Request an update on the current status of this work following the publication of the Nuffield Trust advice, and an indicative timeline for further consideration of the OBC by the Welsh Government; and
- Seek a response to further points made by the petitioners for P-05-1001 in respect of their view that a full independent review of the clinical model is still required, before a decision is made on the project.

3.7 P-05-1018 Support for the current proposed plans to build a new Velindre Cancer Centre, Cardiff, in any future inquiry

This petition was considered alongside [P-05-1001 Hold an independent inquiry into the choice of site for the proposed new Velindre Cancer Centre.](#)

In light of the new evidence received from a number of parties and the recent publication of advice provided by the Nuffield Trust, the Committee agreed to write back to the Minister for Health and Social Services to:

- Draw attention to the information received by the Committee in the context of the scrutiny of the Outline Business Case (OBC) within the Welsh Government;

- Request an update on the current status of this work following the publication of the Nuffield Trust advice, and an indicative timeline for further consideration of the OBC by the Welsh Government; and
- Seek a response to further points made by the petitioners for P-05-1001 in respect of their view that a full independent review of the clinical model is still required, before a decision is made on the project.

3.8 P-05-992 We call on the Welsh Government to create a common body of knowledge about Welsh history that all pupils will learn

The Committee agreed to note the contributions made during the Plenary debate on 4 November, the written responses received and the recommendation about Welsh history made by the CYPE Committee as part of its Stage 1 scrutiny report on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

As a debate has now been held, scrutiny is being applied by another committee, and Estyn is conducting a review into the teaching of Welsh history, the Committee concluded that there is little further that could be achieved by the Petitions Committee at this time. It agreed to close the petition and thank the petitioner for his continued campaigning on this subject.

3.9 P-05-883 National Welsh History Week

In light of the focus given to the current opportunities to learn about Welsh history as part of the Plenary debate on [P-05-992 We call on the Welsh Government to create a common body of knowledge about Welsh history that all pupils will learn](#), and the Deputy Minister's previous pledge to discuss how promotional work can develop a wider narrative, the Committee agreed to close the petition at this stage and thank the petitioner.

3.10 P-05-1025 Ensure fairness for students taking exams in 2021

The Committee noted the further correspondence received and the outline of the steps that are being taken to adapt course content and assessment within the regulatory framework. The Committee agreed to write to Qualifications Wales to seek their response to the petition and the additional information recently provided by the

petitioners and the WJEC, before considering whether there is any further action that it could take.

Chair's Closing Remarks

In closing the meeting, the Chair wished to thank the Committee Clerking Team, the Members of the Committee and all who have shown an interest and submitted Petitions to the Committee in the last year.

In concluding the meeting the Chair wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.