



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

**Pwyllgor Deddfwriaeth Rhif 3  
Legislation Committee No. 3**

**Dydd Iau, 23 Medi 2010  
Thursday, 23 September 2010**

**Cynnwys**  
**Contents**

- 3 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon  
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions
- 4 Mesur Arfaethedig ynghylch Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru): Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 1  
The Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure: Evidence Session 1

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.  
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Veronica German	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
William Graham	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
David Lloyd	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

Frank Cuthbert	Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government
Anne Koppel	Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government
Emma Locke	Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government
Stephen Phipps	Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government
Deborah Richards	Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government
Carl Sargeant	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Y Gweinidog dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a Llywodraeth Leol) Assembly Member, Labour (The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government)

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

Ruth Hatton	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Bethan Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Carys Jones	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 1.20 p.m.*  
*The meeting began at 1.20 p.m.*

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

[1] **David Lloyd:** Croeso i gyfarfod Pwyllgor Deddfwriaeth Rhif 3. Yr ydym wedi derbyn ymddiheuriadau oddi wrth Helen Mary Jones. Mae pawb arall yn bresennol. Croeso hefyd i aelodau'r cyhoedd a'r swyddogion sydd yma.

**David Lloyd:** Welcome to this meeting of Legislation Committee No. 3. We have received apologies from Helen Mary Jones. Everyone else is present. I also welcome members of the public and the officials who are present.

[2] Os bydd larwm tân yn canu, dylai'r Aelodau adael yr ystafell drwy'r allanfeydd tân penodol a dilyn cyfarwyddiadau'r tywyswyr a'r staff. Nid ydym yn disgwyl prawf tân y prynhawn yma, nac yn disgwyl tân ychwaith. [*Chwerthin.*]

If a fire alarms sounds, Members should leave the room through the appropriate fire exits and follow the instructions of ushers and staff. We are not expecting a fire drill this afternoon, nor are we expecting a fire. [*Laughter.*]

[3] Dylai pawb ddiffodd eu ffonau symudol, eu galwyr a'u mwyar duon, gan eu bod yn amharu ar yr offer darlledu.

Everyone should switch off their mobile phones, their pagers and their BlackBerrys, because they interfere with the broadcasting equipment.

[4] Mae Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn gweithredu'n ddwyieithog. Mae clustffonau ar gael er mwyn clywed y cyfieithiad ar y pryd, a gall pobl sy'n drwm eu clyw hefyd addasu'r sain arnynt. Peidiwch â chyffwrdd â'r botymau ar y meicroffonau oherwydd gallai hynny amharu ar y system, a sicrhewch fod golau coch yn disgleirio cyn cychwyn siarad. Mae cyfieithiad ar y pryd ar gael ar sianel 1 a'r darllediad gair am air ar sianel 0.

The National Assembly for Wales operates bilingually. Headsets are available to hear the simultaneous translation, and people who are hard of hearing can also use them to amplify the sound. Do not touch the buttons on the microphones because that could interfere with the system, and ensure that the red light is showing before you start speaking. The interpretation is available on channel 1 and the verbatim feed is on channel 0.

1.21 p.m.

### **Mesur Arfaethedig ynghylch Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru): Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 1 The Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure: Evidence Session 1**

[5] **David Lloyd:** Croeso i'r Gweinidog dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a Llywodraeth Leol; byddaf yn ei groesawi'n ffurfiol yn y man. Rôl y pwyllgor yw ystyried a chyflwyno adroddiad ar egwyddorion cyffredinol y Mesur Arfaethedig ynghylch Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru), a gyflwynwyd ar 12 Gorffennaf gan y Gweinidog dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a Llywodraeth Leol, Carl Sargeant. Rhaid i'r pwyllgor gwblhau ei waith a gosod adroddiad gerbron y Cynulliad heb fod yn hwyrach na 17 Rhagfyr eleni.

**David Lloyd:** I welcome the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government; I will formally welcome him shortly. The role of the committee is to consider and report on the general principles of the Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure, which was introduced on 12 July by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, Carl Sargeant. The committee must conclude its work and lay a report before the Assembly no later than 17 December of this year.

[6] Hon yw ein sesiwn dystiolaeth gyntaf mewn perthynas â'r Mesur arfaethedig hwn. Bydd ein hymgyngoriad yn dod i ben ddydd Gwener, 1 Hydref, a gellir gweld y manylion ar wefan y pwyllgor. Diben cyfarfod heddiw yw gwranddo ar dystiolaeth lafar mewn perthynas â'r Mesur Arfaethedig ynghylch Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru). Felly, i'r perwyl hwnnw, croesawn yn ffurfiol Carl Sargeant, Aelod Cynulliad a'r Gweinidog dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a Llywodraeth

This is our first evidence session in connection to this proposed Measure. Our consultation closes on Friday, 1 October, and details can be found on the committee's website. The purpose of today's meeting is to take oral evidence in connection with the Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure. So, to that end, I officially welcome Carl Sargeant, Assembly Member and the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, who is the Member in charge of

Leol, sef yr Aelod sy'n gyfrifol am y Mesur arfaethedig. Croesawn hefyd y swyddogion sydd yma i'w gefnogi. Fel y gwyddoch, sesiwn gwestiynau ac atebion yw hon; mae nifer o gwestiynau ond nifer cyfyngedig o funudau i'w hateb neu byddwn yma drwy'r dydd. Dechreuaf gyda'r ddau gwestiwn cyntaf, sy'n gyffredinol.

this proposed Measure. I also welcome his officials who are here to support him. As you will know, this is a question and answer session; there are a great number of questions but a limited number of minutes to respond to them or we will be here all day. I will start with the first two questions, which are general.

[7] I ba raddau ydych chi wedi bod yn ymgynghori â llywodraeth leol a chydau cynghorau tref a chymuned ar ddatblygiad y Mesur arfaethedig? Pa drafodaethau ydych chi wedi'u cynnal gyda'r cyrff hyn y tu allan i'r broses ymgynghori ffurfiol?

To what extent have you consulted with local government and with town and community councils on the development of the proposed Measure? What discussions have you had with these bodies outside any formal consultation process?

[8] **The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government (Carl Sargeant):** Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to give you some clarity on the proposed Measure today. The consultation period that took place on the principles of the proposed Measure brought many of the subject areas into one area in the proposed Measure, and I will allude to some of the detail around that. We did not have a consultation on the draft proposal itself, but we did consult on the pieces that bring it together, and I will go through those.

[9] The principles were established by the overarching policy statement in a shared responsibility in 2007, and were a product of extensive consultation with the engagement exercise with local government, public bodies and the third sector. Parts 1 and 2 of the proposed Measure were informed by recommendations in the document 'Are we being served?', which was a report by the Councillors' Commission's expert panel in Wales. Parts 3 to 6 were informed by the consultation of the proposals for scrutiny and political structures staged between December 2009 and March 2010, and a summary of those responses is available on the Welsh Assembly Government's website.

[10] Part 7 flows from the Aberystwyth studies into the role and functions of community and town councils in Wales. Part 8 is the independent remuneration panel element of this, and this has been consistent in public reports for the broader remit to take on the responsibilities within the proposed Measure. In respect of section 9, the Welsh Assembly Government has consulted on non-statutory guidance on collaboration. Again, responses from partners were overwhelmingly positive in that respect. We have not consulted upon the draft Measure as a whole, but we have extensive coverage over all Parts of the proposed Measure that build up the proposed Measure.

[11] **David Lloyd:** Diolch yn fawr am yr ateb, Weinidog. Yn naturiol, wrth i'r cwestiynau fynd yn eu blaenau, byddwn yn drilio i lawr ar y syniadaeth. Hoffwn ofyn un cwestiwn cyffredinol arall. Pa dystiolaeth sydd gennych fod angen y Mesur arfaethedig hwn er mwyn cyrraedd y dyheadau yr ydych yn dymuno eu gweld yn digwydd yn llywodraeth leol? Yr ydych chi wedi olrhain yr hyn y dymunwch ei weld yn digwydd yn llywodraeth leol ac ati, ond pa dystiolaeth sydd gennych fod angen y Mesur arfaethedig newydd hwn i gyflawni'r dyheadau hynny?

**David Lloyd:** Thank you for that response, Minister. Naturally, as the questions proceed, we will be focusing on those ideas. I wish to ask one more general question. What evidence do you have that the proposed Measure is needed in order to achieve the stated objectives within local government? You have described what you would like to see happening within local government and so forth, but what evidence can you provide that this proposed Measure is needed to achieve those objectives?

[12] **Carl Sargeant:** As I said earlier, we have done an awful lot of background work in terms of the consultation around this. If you wish, I could go into the Parts again in terms of the detail around each section, if that would be helpful in terms of our response and why it is needed, and why we believe that it is needed. Parts 1 and 2 were on the expert panel report, which concluded that action was needed to encourage a more diverse range of elected members at all levels of local government. It was a clear recommendation. Councils are currently dominated by councillors who are generally white, male, elderly and retired. That came from the report; therefore, the recommendation was that we should be looking to encourage a broader balance with regard to gender and age.

[13] Parts 3 to 6 contain existing scrutiny and governance arrangements that have been in place since the Local Government Act 2000. The Beecham review concluded that scrutiny was a powerful tool for improving good government, whether that would be on a local or national level. Again, a lot of evidence was taken during the Beecham review. The Welsh Assembly Government endorsed the views of Beecham. We agreed with this principle, but we have not been in a position to bring that into legislation; therefore, this is the opportunity to do that now.

[14] Part 7, again, is a comprehensive study based on the Aberystwyth study about town and community councils. Some community councils could be achieving more for the residents, according to the evidence in the documents. We also found some negative features reported, which we are hoping to address, including the lack of inclusiveness of councils and low levels of contested elections. We will try to put some good practice in place around that area.

[15] Part 8 is the existing system for councillors' allowances. Obviously, I do not need to go over that in too much detail because there has been a great deal of coverage on allowances in the media. As politicians, we are aware of the public mood and feeling about that. This is about clarity and transparency. We are subject to the same scrutiny and I think that it is appropriate that that also applies to local government.

[16] In Part 9, section 164 of the proposed Measure deals with collaboration. There has been a lot of consultation on this and many of the documents support the proposed Measure that we hope to take forward.

[17] **David Lloyd:** Diolch am yr ateb. Mae gennyf un cwestiwn atodol, yn enwedig ynglŷn â phethau megis bod cynghorwyr sir, fel y dywedaso, yn dueddol o fod yn hen, wedi ymddeol, yn ddynion ac yn wyn, er enghraifft. Dyna'r dystiolaeth, er bod rhai ohonom yma, efallai—neu bob un ohonom—wedi bod yn gynghorwyr sir yn ein tro, ond yr ydym yn grŵp eithaf anarferol o gwmpas y bwrdd hwn. O safbwynt hynny, sut yn union y gwnaiff y Mesur arfaethedig hwn rywbeth ynglŷn â hynny?

**David Lloyd:** Thank you for the response. I have one supplementary question, particularly in terms of issues like county councillors, who, as you said, tend to be older, retired, male and white, for example. That is the evidence, although some of us, perhaps—or all of us—have been county councillors in our time, but perhaps we are quite an unusual group around this table. In that sense, how exactly will this proposed Measure do something about that?

1.30 p.m.

[18] **Carl Sargeant:** We say that we understand the problem and this is about understanding the scale of the problem. We had a discussion about equal pay on Tuesday. You have to understand the scale of the problem before you can fix it. In Part 1, we are asking for surveys to be undertaken to understand who stands for election and why they do or do not stand. We need to identify the problem. It is like a patient entering a doctor's surgery and the

doctor prescribing tablets for their leg when their arm is broken. So, you have to understand the scale of the problem before you can find the solution. So, that is part of the issue relating to Part 1 of the proposed Measure.

[19] **David Lloyd:** Mae'r cwestiynau **David Lloyd:** The next questions are from nesaf o dan law Joyce Watson. **Joyce Watson.**

[20] **Joyce Watson:** Could you explain why you have opted for a prescriptive approach in placing a duty on local authorities to conduct a survey of councillors and failed candidates?

[21] **Carl Sargeant:** Again, this is about understanding the issues. This was recommended by the expert panel, which found that, overwhelmingly, and for many years, councillors were white, male, elderly and retired. That is not to say that they are not good councillors, but this is about achieving diversity and understanding how we can broaden the selection of those who stand for election. Councillors are central to the health and quality of local democracy—they are key on the ground and it is important to have local members who understand the needs and experiences of our communities. So we are encouraging, on the back of this recommendation, the provision of opportunities for all to be able to stand for council. There are currently no detailed data on the diversity of candidates; there is nothing to show any actions taken by political parties or by governments and so on, so we just do not know what the scale of the issue is. However, we know that there are currently many elderly, white, male, retired councillors.

[22] **Veronica German:** I understand what you are trying to achieve and I agree completely, but I am not sure that surveying the ones who have already stood will meet that aim because, as you just said, we need to know about those who are not standing and why they are not standing. Is that not like shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted? I can understand why you want to know who is standing so that we know where we are, but I think that we know where we are because we can see the results in elections. In all the elections that I have been involved in, and they were many and varied across Wales, those who did not get in were very different from those who do. I know that that is anecdotal and you want more robust evidence, but I do not think that conducting surveys would address the problem that you are trying to address.

[23] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you for your comments, but I do not agree wholeheartedly with you. The issue for us is to understand the data that are coming in for the very reason that you outlined in that the same type of people always stand for election and there are obviously reasons for that. So this is about the whole package—understanding the problem and the scale of the problem, who is applying to stand and what age group is applying to stand. It might be a simple issue, and this may come up later in our discussions on the proposed Measure, but if we identify that only white, elderly, male, retired individuals are standing, that may be because council meetings are always held at 2 p.m. on a Wednesday. If that is the case, then we can do something about it by altering the time, but because we do not have the data to confirm that, we have only anecdotal evidence to rely on. This is about collecting data to solve the problem. When we know what the problem is, we hope that we can resolve it.

[24] **Joyce Watson:** You say in the explanatory memorandum that the estimate of the costs of the survey to be held every four years, starting in 2012-13, is £35,000 and that it will be funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. Can you explain how that figure was arrived at and how it will be distributed to councils? For example, will that money be hypothecated?

[25] **Carl Sargeant:** The breakdown of the overarching figure of £35,000 is around £1,750 per authority. We do that in many cases already. Through the distribution of council tax benefit services, we allocate an amount to an authority. That is current practice, and that is what we have worked out that these costs should be. The cost of analysing the data provided

by the whole survey will also be around £2,500, but, again, the Assembly Government will absorb that. I do not think that this is a huge cost for a four-year cycle. We are talking about £36,000 or £37,000 every four years.

[26] We are trying to support democracy. Once we understand that problem, I hope that we will have a broad, diverse range of councillors on the ground. I may be criticised because we are spending £37,000 on this, but the endgame is a more wholesome community in relation to diversity and range of services.

[27] I am not sure whether we have discussed hypothecation, but I am trying to move away from hypothecation and specific grants. We have placed the duty to do this in the proposed Measure, so I do not think that an authority will have too much trouble paying £1,750, whether it is hypothecated or not, to be honest.

[28] **Joyce Watson:** In its response to the expert panel's recommendations that councillors produce annual reports, the WLGA raised a point of principle, asking why councillors should have to produce an annual report, while Assembly Members and Members of Parliament do not. It suggested that monitoring reports would be sensitive and provide a further burden for officers. What consideration did you give to those concerns about councillors' annual reports before deciding to include the proposals in the proposed Measure?

[29] **Carl Sargeant:** I am slightly surprised at some of the WLGA's comments, because its representatives sat on some of the panels. However, an annual report is not a bad thing for the public, as part of the democratic process and understanding what your councillor does. I do not think that that goes beyond the realms of what is reasonable to ask. I do not believe that it will be burdensome. Many good councillors already do this through newsletters and so on. This will make it a level playing field for all councillors, in which they can post exactly what they do on the authority website. I am open-minded. This may be beyond the committee's remit, but if you feel that Assembly Members should also do that, I would be comfortable with that. It is a good thing to tell people what their local councillor does, which committees they are on, what their responsibilities are and whether they attend meetings. It may be the case that there are no elections so a councillor may be a shoo-in, and so they rarely attend meetings, just the bare minimum. We need to understand that people have a right to access that information.

[30] **Christine Chapman:** Section 5(2) of the proposed Measure states in respect of annual reports that

[31] 'The arrangements may include conditions as to the content of a report that must be satisfied by the person making it.'

[32] Can you explain further what that means?

1.40 p.m.

[33] **Carl Sargeant:** My expectation is that we will issue guidance around this section of the proposed Measure. We will ask for annual reports to be factual and not political. As I said, it is just about who your councillor is, what they do, and which committees they do and do not attend—simple things about local democracy. It has to be factual. We have similar guidelines here at the Assembly about the use of websites funded from the public purse. What we are asking is not unusual, and it would be issued in the form of guidance. I do not believe that it would be a burden, because we would not be asking for pages and pages of contributions; it would be purely factual information about local democracy.

[34] **Christine Chapman:** In its response to the expert group's recommendations about



councillor training and development, the WLGA stated that training and development opportunities were already available to members of local authorities. Given that the WLGA already undertakes such work through the charter of training and development, why did you see the need to include section 7?

[35] **Carl Sargeant:** It was partly because of consistency. When I travel Wales, I see 22 councils operating in 22 different ways at different levels. The councillor/officer relationship also varies, and the training. Section 7 reflects concerns expressed by councillors themselves. They said in the consultation that training needs to be relevant, up-to-date and supportive of the work of councillors, which is logical. We are trying to get some consistency in access to training across Wales. This also fits into the broader theme of what I have been saying about collaboration. To use my local authorities of Wrexham and Flintshire as an example, the councillors are democratically accountable to their particular electorate, but actually their training needs are the same—they need to understanding planning, and so on. It is just about consistency, and the councillors themselves are saying that there is a need for this, which is why we have brought it into the legislation.

[36] **Christine Chapman:** Could you also explain why you have included provision requiring local authorities to designate one of their officers as head of democratic services responsible for administrative and research support for non-executive members?

[37] **Carl Sargeant:** All council members need the proper support and advice. They are all democratically elected, and access to good information and support facilities for all is only fair. It is not just the executive that should have support, but backbench members as well. Several authorities already provide good support services to non-executive members.

[38] **Christine Chapman:** Are there some that are not doing it, then? You say that there are some that are, so does that mean that some are not?

[39] **Carl Sargeant:** Some are not doing it well. I think that they would all say that that is a fair comment. There is not currently a ban on supporting non-executive members or backbenchers, but some do it better than others. It is again about having that consistency in the kind of training and support that is available, how it is accessed, and who can access it. That is what we are putting in the legislation. There will be a duty to provide that. What we are doing is lifting the support mechanism for councillors to do their jobs better.

[40] **Christine Chapman:** Could you also explain why you want to require local authorities to have a designated democratic services committee?

[41] **Carl Sargeant:** The expert panel, do you mean? First, the broader picture of why we are legislating for this is to give a clear message to authorities and councils that this is an important role for non-executive members. The expert panel that recommended this found that there was no real appetite for legal separation of who does what and where. We have something similar here, with the Assembly Commission and WAG. There are two different areas that we gain support from.

[42] **William Graham:** Minister, can I draw you on to Part 3, which deals with available governance arrangements? Can you explain why the mayor and council manager option is to be abolished?

[43] **Carl Sargeant:** That is a really interesting question, because it is the first time that it has been raised. There has never been any interest in Wales in this option, and so it is, in effect, redundant. It has already been abolished in England. No-one has ever used it and no-one has ever asked to use it. It has already gone in England, so we are just following that process. Perhaps it should not be in the proposed Measure at all, but that is the reason behind

that.

[44] **William Graham:** Can you explain why you are of the opinion that the alternative arrangements option does not work well where it has operated?

[45] **Carl Sargeant:** It has not worked well over the long term. It has forced political groups to work together sometimes where circumstances have not been conducive to that. It is a process that demands that they work together. It is like my collaboration message, in which I say, 'You two must work together', and they do, but badly. That is what has happened with this, and it has actually undermined aspects of coherent leadership and effectiveness, as well as the transparency of some of the decisions. It has just not worked. Political relations can be strained when people are placed in that position. You could have opposition within the board that is making the decisions. We do not believe that it has worked successfully.

[46] **William Graham:** Moving to Part 4, the explanatory memorandum describes the existing arrangements for changing executive arrangements as cumbersome. Can you explain how the proposed Measure would simplify that process?

[47] **Carl Sargeant:** The process would be simplified because we would no longer be required to consult or prepare fall-back proposals on duties. We consider the existing processes to be cumbersome, and some of the public consultation areas are costly. So, those are the reasons why we are trying to remove that burden.

[48] **William Graham:** What consideration, if any, did you give to including a provision in the proposed Measure that would change the threshold for triggering a referendum for an elected mayor?

[49] **Carl Sargeant:** That is another interesting question. We have debated this thoroughly in the past, and my position has not really changed, for good reason. The issue of the threshold is not dealt with in this proposed Measure; it comes under the regulations in section 34 of the 2000 Act. The reason for our thinking is that the authorities in Wales are much smaller than those in England. I do not know whether we have the numbers, but a referendum in Merthyr, which is a small authority, might require only two or three streets' worth of residents to trigger it. The numbers are very small, and so we have a higher threshold than the one set in England because our authorities are much smaller.

[50] **Veronica German:** We move to Part 5 now, which deals with delegating decision-making functions to non-executive elected members. Can you expand a little on that proposal?

[51] **Carl Sargeant:** This is an enabling power only, but it could be used to allow local councillors to address local issues that would otherwise follow the calls-for-action route. It recognises the development of more partnership working across local government and the wider public sector. I believe that it will also enhance the role of the backbencher in representing a local authority or the executive on a partnership body with regard to how they take decisions. That is about their ability to discharge their functions for the council.

1.50 p.m.

[52] **Veronica German:** Moving on to joint overview and scrutiny committees, in Part 6, the explanatory memorandum says that some gaps in scrutiny have been identified. Can you explain why the proposed Measure makes provision for joint overview and scrutiny, and how these gaps will be filled because of it?

[53] **Carl Sargeant:** Legislation will be unable to keep pace with scrutiny. The

development of partnership working across local authority boundaries exists. We are already doing that, but there is no legislation behind it to support it. So, we need to legislate on the need for joint committees to scrutinise delivery in service areas, across boundaries, across the public sector and so on. Some authorities already do it on an informal basis, and the proposed Measure just puts it on statute.

[54] **Veronica German:** The WLGA has said that it supports the principle of joint scrutiny, but it says:

[55] ‘However the practical operation of multi-authority committees will need careful consideration as for example there may be democratic issues and political tensions arising from the potential for elected members having the power to call-in decisions of neighbouring authorities and/or summon executives of neighbouring authorities to appear before them.’

[56] How does the proposed Measure propose to address those concerns?

[57] **Carl Sargeant:** It is about natural progression. It is easy to put up a wall or see a problem, but I do not believe that one exists. We are saying that the agenda for change in Wales and the UK is about providing services differently. That collaboration message is new. In some authorities, it has never happened, whereas some are already very good at doing it. That is why I said before that there are some informal arrangements in relation to scrutiny, and there are good examples in Cardiff of joint scrutiny with other bodies. So, it does work. There are tensions, and there always will be—in the world of politics, if there are no tensions then it is not working at all. This is about good scrutiny, and we are putting legislation in place so that there is no doubt in that respect. One authority said to me that it now had joint service provision with a head of services, but that it could not carry out collective scrutiny of that person with the other authority. I said that it could. It then said that that was not in legislation, but that was just convenient; it will be in legislation if the proposed Measure goes through. So, it is about standardisation and tidying up so that there are no legal loopholes that undermine progress and the democratic political process.

[58] **Veronica German:** To carry on from there, section 57(1) says that you can make regulations that permit local authorities to conduct joint scrutiny. Can you clarify whether that means that local authorities must apply to the Minister on an ad hoc basis if they wish to undertake joint scrutiny, or will the regulations just be permissive?

[59] **Carl Sargeant:** I will have to ask for advice on that. The principle in the proposed Measure is that there will be an expectation that it would be permissive. I would not have thought that they would have to apply—

[60] **Mr Cuthbert:** I believe that our intention would be to make regulations that covered all authorities, and so permitted them to set up the committees as soon as the regulations were in place. The WLGA has a good point to an extent, in that you would need to have provisions that covered issues to do with proportionality. If a large authority and a small authority form a joint committee, how do they decide on representation, how does it reflect political balance within the authorities, and who appoints the chair and so on? It is better for that to be dealt with in regulations rather than on the face of the proposed Measure because of the sheer number of provisions that you would need to cover, but the proposal would be to have provisions that would be there for all authorities to follow at the same time if they wished.

[61] **Carl Sargeant:** The key is setting up the ground rules and then understanding that they can be applied, and not the other way around where they are saying that they cannot do it because it is not in legislation.

[62] **Joyce Watson:** Keeping with this idea of overview and scrutiny, you mentioned

designated persons who may be subject to scrutiny. Can you give an example of a designated person who might be called to scrutiny?

[63] **Carl Sargeant:** There are many examples of more authorities working together with public sector bodies for the delivery of linked services. Persons who would be considered designated persons are those who provide the public with services, goods or facilities. That is the technical term, even if it is not carried out directly by those persons. It is someone who is a link within a partner organisation that could be scrutinised as a designated person.

[64] **Joyce Watson:** You decided to give local authorities the option of conferring voting rights on co-opted members of overview and scrutiny committee. Could you explain that decision?

[65] **Carl Sargeant:** The feedback that we have received on the proposed Measure so far is that this is the area where there is a little concern and contention. Again, this is an opportunity to support and enhance the political structures. Co-opted members are there to bring in their expertise in scrutiny procedures and I believe that they have a valuable role to play, in which they can enhance the ability of a committee and hold the executive to account. Remember that this is about scrutiny. We touched on this earlier, that good scrutiny usually provides good governance and decisions; if you are continually challenged by expert panels and groups, supporting councils with their knowledge, that would be a move forward. Decisions that executives make are generally informed by professional officers of a council or an authority. I have support today, and as it would be unreasonable for me to be expected to know the detail and the legal aspects of the complete Measure, it would be unreasonable for councillors to be expected know the detail of everything. That is why the expert co-opted member can enhance the support given to councillors.

[66] **David Lloyd:** You think that Frank should have the vote, then, this afternoon?

[67] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes, I am happy with that. [*Laughter.*]

[68] **William Graham:** From my own experience, I recall when the education committees of county councils used to have business representatives on them. I also recall that when they voted against the majority group, they were voted off. So, although they would have to remain on the committee under this proposed Measure, their voting rights could easily be removed. How will you prevent that sort of thing from happening?

[69] **Carl Sargeant:** We are not talking about council decisions here. We are talking about the scrutiny of authorities. A council decision made by democratic process in the council is very different to a process that involves scrutiny by a panel that is supported by an expert group. How do we stop people getting voted off? Have we considered that element?

[70] **William Graham:** What if they ask awkward questions?

[71] **Carl Sargeant:** They do not have to ask the awkward questions. You can always ask the elected member to ask those. It is about support.

[72] **William Graham:** You are allowed whipping.

[73] **Carl Sargeant:** This is not about whipping. [*Laughter.*] This is about scrutiny.

2.00 p.m.

[74] **Mr Cuthbert:** There are situations already where councillors could not do that. The nominees from churches and parent governors on education scrutiny committees are elected

by other groups, and they have a statutory right to attend scrutiny meetings and vote on school-related issues. The precedent is already there. We already have a situation with the crime and disorder scrutiny committees that now exist, which were established under Home Office regulations, whereby there can be co-option with voting rights, but you are right that it is at the choice of the local authority itself. All that we are proposing is that if local authorities feel that it would strengthen their scrutiny committees—particularly if taken together with the previous provision on broader public services—and if having outside expertise would strengthen their legitimacy in the eyes of partner organisations, they can take that step. In the end, it remains in the hands of the local authority or the scrutiny committee to remove the co-opted members at the next annual meeting or whatever, but we would just hope that that would not happen very often.

[75] **Joyce Watson:** These are interesting times. What is your reaction to the concerns raised by the Welsh Local Government Association in its response to your policy paper on scrutiny in political structures, that the legislation would be difficult to monitor and enforce and could undermine democratic legitimacy if those decisions are challenged?

[76] **Carl Sargeant:** We are in the same position as the UK Government; the Welsh Assembly Government does not police legislation any more than the UK Government, because that is a job for the Wales Audit Office. I met the WLGA only yesterday and issues related to regulation and inspection were raised; the same issues are raised every time that I meet with its representatives, and I think that the same issues were raised with Brian Gibbons and all other previous Ministers. That is not to say that there is not an issue with regulation and inspection; we have to strike a fine balance between monitoring and assessing what goes on in the sector, particularly now. I know that the First Minister is keen to look at the situation, but that is a duty that the Wales Audit Office would undertake, and we are already in discussions about what is considered reasonable for the future; that is covered by the WAO. In local government, it is again the duty of the monitoring officer of each local authority. Between the WAO and the monitoring officer, I believe that this legislation would be monitored like all others; I do not see it as posing a particular problem.

[77] **Veronica German:** I am particularly interested in the whipping aspect of these scrutiny committees. In my experience of two different councils, I have not noticed that there is any party-political whipping in the scrutiny process; it seems to be quite open. The WLGA has also said that whipping is not a common feature. I think that we all agree that that is the right thing, but do we need legislation to enforce it? I wonder whether we overburden ourselves with legislation sometimes; if something is not really a problem, do we need to legislate for it?

[78] **Carl Sargeant:** That is a fair question. As a former Chief Whip, I am very experienced in the art of the whipping process.

[79] **Veronica German:** Are you saying that if it is going to happen, it is going to happen underground?

[80] **Carl Sargeant:** This is about the scrutiny element of the decision-making process. I want to discourage hidden whipping; it is interesting for me to be saying this, but good governance is enhanced by good scrutiny. The driving of whipping underground needs to be tackled in legislation. If it is evident, and assessed by the monitoring officer, then the decisions made within those scrutiny committees should be revisited. That is why we would legislate for this, because this is a serious point.

[81] **William Graham:** On this business of balanced chairs—I understand the legal element of it—it was your predecessor, whenever it was that Edwina was the Minister, who put it in the guidance, but it was largely ignored.

[82] **Joyce Watson:** That was my question.

[83] **William Graham:** Sorry. *[Laughter.]* I thought that it was an appropriate point to raise the matter. It relates very much to Veronica's question. That was suggested as a way that this could be avoided. You have said that it will be monitored, which I accept. However, I remember that, on one particular council not very far from here, there were only one or two opposition members. Appointing that particular person as Chair of all of these various committees made it unworkable. No doubt you will be wise to that, but how will you influence a council to make sure that it is entirely above board and proper?

[84] **Carl Sargeant:** I think that I understand your question. If I do not answer it—

[85] **David Lloyd:** It is about politically balanced Chairs.

[86] **Carl Sargeant:** Okay. We already do that at the Assembly. It is good practice. I accept that there may be some tensions around doing that in certain councils, but this is about good scrutiny. I do not think that it is appropriate that the chairs of the scrutiny committees should be of the ruling party. I just think that that is bad. All political parties have been guilty of this in the past. I think that we should regulate for that so that there is political balance across the structure.

[87] **William Graham:** It is not just about the political balance, though. I am asking how you will monitor it.

[88] **Carl Sargeant:** It will be included in the regulation in terms of what our expectation is.

[89] **William Graham:** That is fine. That was the assurance that I wanted.

[90] **Carl Sargeant:** The guidance issued will give the detail about ensuring political balance.

[91] **William Graham:** If it will be in the regulation, that is fine.

[92] **David Lloyd:** Joyce, a oedd gennyt **David Lloyd:** Joyce, did you have a gwestiwn atodol i'r cwestiwn hwn? supplementary question to this question?

[93] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. I am really delighted to see that you will bring in politically balanced chairs because I have been banging this drum forever. I support it fully and commend that it is here, to be perfectly honest. You have explained that the monitoring and enforcement will be in the legislation. Will you watch it from the very start, Carl? I assume that this will come in before the next local elections.

[94] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes. We would expect that to take place when the proposed Measure is enacted. That is the intention on the timings.

[95] **David Lloyd:** Diolch yn fawr. **David Lloyd:** Thank you. We will now move Symudwn ymlaen yn awr at gwestiynau on to Christine Chapman's questions. Christine Chapman.

[96] **Christine Chapman:** Part 6 of the proposed Measure introduces community or councillor calls for action, enabling local councillors and their electors to ensure a response from the council's leadership on issues of local importance. You previously said, Minister, that these provisions would be supported by guidance on how to deal with frivolous or

repetitive bids. Could you provide examples of what you would consider to be a frivolous call for action?

[97] **Carl Sargeant:** I think that we have all experienced interested parties who, when they are not satisfied with a democratic decision, will pursue that process and, when they pursue that process and get the same answer, keep going. People do that, and that is not a bad thing. However, you reach a point when you have to say, 'Hang on a second; we have considered this twice and have got the same response'. Whether that would be considered to be frivolous, I do not know. I will be careful in choosing my words, but I think that we have to understand, through the monitoring officer process, what would be considered to be right. The proposed Measure will replicate the English provision, which is allowing the issuing of guidance around councils calling for action. So, this is new for us, but it has already been in operation in England.

2.10 p.m.

[98] **Christine Chapman:** I think that 'repetitive' is more straightforward, but 'frivolous' is a bit more open to judgment. There could be a difference there.

[99] **Carl Sargeant:** Is it in the English guidance?

[100] **Ms Koppel:** The proposed Measure is, basically, amending section 21A of the Local Government Act 2000, which was originally enacted for England. It enables a member of the authority to refer to the overview and scrutiny committee any local government matter that is relevant to the functions of the committee. In considering whether to exercise that power, the member must have regard to Welsh Ministers' guidance, and there can be different types of guidance for different types of cases. An Order-making power is also available to Welsh Ministers to exclude certain matters. That would not necessarily address vexatious or frivolous issues, but—

[101] **Carl Sargeant:** I understand what you are saying; it is a difficult one. This is already operating in policing, is it not?

[102] **Mr Cuthbert:** Yes, in the crime and disorder area. I heard the other day what I believe to be the first councillor call for action in Wales, when a councillor in Rhondda Cynon Taf raised an issue about drinking in public places in Pontypridd. I understand that it has followed the course, it has worked well and the issue is being addressed. However, there is not any guidance published in England yet, possibly because of the relatively rare occurrence of these calls for action, although there is best practice guidance produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Local Government Association in England. Collaborating with the WLGA and the CfPS to produce guidance on dealing with calls for action is something that we might consider in the future.

[103] **Carl Sargeant:** As Frank said with regard to the crime and disorder scrutiny committee, this is a tool for the public to use through councillors. It has not been used a lot; we have had one case since this has been running. I do not know whether that is because of a lack of knowledge and because no-one knows about the process and that, once people know, councils will be inundated. We will have to consider that with regard to the guidance; if that is what happens, I would be happy to do that.

[104] **Christine Chapman:** Following on from Anne's comment, is the proposed guidance statutory?

[105] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes.

[106] **Christine Chapman:** Where in the proposed Measure is it provided for?

[107] **Ms Koppel:** Section 62 of the proposed Measure amends section 21A of the Local Government Act 2000 to apply the provisions to Wales. You will find it there.

[108] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. I now move on to sections 84 to 94, which relate to a new requirement that local authorities establish and appoint an audit committee. Minister, why have you chosen to introduce this as a requirement, rather than allow for local flexibility, as was suggested by the WLGA?

[109] **Carl Sargeant:** Many councils have established audit committees in this process, but not all of them, despite the guidance by CIPFA, which is the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, is it not?

[110] **Mr Cuthbert:** Yes, that is right.

[111] **Carl Sargeant:** So, since the guidance in 2005 advocating having an audit committee, many have established them, but not all. Welsh Ministers, including myself, have endorsed CIPFA's advice. Audit committees are a positive feature of a local authority. We operate that system here, and it is about good scrutiny and an understanding of local democracy, about what happens and what has happened and how we can improve. It is, again, about a process that we standardise across Wales.

[112] **Veronica German:** I have a very brief supplementary question on that. There are some places that have what they would refer to as an audit committee, but it is not called an audit committee. On the terms of reference and how audit committees work, are you planning on providing guidance, or even statutory guidance, on what must be included in their scrutiny process? You can have audit committees, but they may not all do the same thing unless you make them do it.

[113] **Carl Sargent:** We will issue guidance on that.

[114] **Christine Chapman:** The explanatory memorandum states that the Welsh Assembly Government had originally proposed requiring the audit committees to be chaired by a lay person, but that attracted strong objections. Could you explain why that was proposed in the first place and what objections were received?

[115] **Carl Sargent:** I can answer part of that question by saying that we believe that it would have strengthened the independence of such a committee and would have reinforced the perception that the committee was not in the pocket of the executive and was about an independent person scrutinising completely independently in terms of their audit role. I am not sure whether we have the detail of the evidence to support that on us, but I can let the committee it.

[116] **Christine Chapman:** That would be good. Thank you.

[117] **David Lloyd:** Trown yn awr at **David Lloyd:** We will now turn to gynghorau cymunedol a William Graham. community councils and William Graham.

[118] **William Graham:** On community councils, can you explain how the proposed Measure simplifies setting up a town or community council?

[119] **Carl Sargent:** The process for establishing and dissolving community councils remains the same, essentially. The existing Local Government Act 1972 is extremely complex and we have just tidied that up and made it easier to understand; it was just a tidying-up



exercise.

[120] **William Graham:** Could you elaborate further on the higher threshold required for dissolution of an existing council?

[121] **Carl Sargent:** On the policy objective of the process, the proposed Measure would make it easier for communities to establish community councils, so that is the simplification element of it. It does that by lowering the threshold for the vote at community meetings on a proposal to hold a poll of the electorate for the establishment of a council. The threshold has been lowered from 30 per cent of the local government electors or 300 electors to 10 per cent or 150 electors. That will help people if they believe that there should be a community or town council—it enables them to develop that at a lower threshold.

[122] **William Graham:** Quite so, but my question was on dissolution.

[123] **David Lloyd:** Getting rid of them.

[124] **William Graham:** Why do you want a higher threshold for dissolution?

[125] **Mr Phipps:** It flows from the Aberystwyth report, which recommended that the power of communities to dissolve their community councils should be removed in its entirety. Ministers concluded that there should be some retention of the ability of communities, where perhaps a community council is particularly dysfunctional—I think there have been one or two examples of that in the past—to vote to dissolve it. On how the threshold has been changed, at the moment dissolution requires a poll and a simple majority of people voting in that poll to agree that a council should be dissolved. The new requirement would be a two-thirds decision in favour of dissolution.

[126] **William Graham:** When the proposed legislative competence Order was being scrutinised by Legislation Committee No. 2, much concern was expressed that a one-size-fits-all approach should not be taken with regard to town and community councils because they vary so greatly in size and resources.

[127] **Carl Sargent:** We are very mindful of the diverse nature of community councils. I was chair of a community council before I came to the Assembly, so I am a big fan of town and community councils; I think that they do a very good job, but I recognise that they are all very different and that they support their communities very differently. Our aim is to provide a framework to strengthen the role of the local councils by enabling them to deliver a wide range of services locally, which was evident in the Aberystwyth study on giving more support to town and community councils while increasing the effectiveness of their representation role and their ability to work in partnership with local bodies. We recognise the support that town and community councils need to develop.

2.20 p.m.

[128] **Veronica German:** I have a supplementary question. As far as I can see, although I might not have read it correctly, the extension of their powers was restricted to a power of wellbeing; is that right?

[129] **Carl Sargeant:** No, I do not believe so.

[130] **Veronica German:** You said that you wanted to extend what they do, and I think that most people would agree that the problems with town and community councils arise when they do not have much to think about, or much to do, because they lack the powers. I do not see anything there that makes me think that they will be able to do more.

[131] **Carl Sargeant:** One of the specific proposals is that the proposed Measure will provide a power to co-opt a youth representative on to councils, which is a significant move in community engagement and relationships. It is a step forward for town and community councils. I hope that they take advantage of that when it comes through in the proposed Measure. Steve, do you want to expand on the power of wellbeing?

[132] **Mr Phipps:** Briefly, in some respects you are right—this proposed Measure concentrates on extending the power of wellbeing, but it should not be seen in isolation from a whole range of policy development and legislation over the period since the Aberystwyth report. For example, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 made it a duty for community councils to collaborate with county councils in developing and implementing community strategy. What this proposed Measure does is complement that by extending the power of wellbeing, and giving a broader basket of powers to community councils to take the actions that they deem to be appropriate. They already have a wide range of powers; it is just adding to that range of powers that they have at the moment.

[133] **Veronica German:** They do not usually have the wherewithal to do anything with these powers.

[134] **Mr Phipps:** I guess that it comes back to the question of proportionality. This is not compulsion; it is about enabling them where they have the capacity to use these powers.

[135] **Carl Sargeant:** It is important that we see the proposed Measure in the round. This is Part 7 of the proposed Measure, but in Part 1, we talked about membership, inclusiveness and diversity. You tend to find that a lot of town and community councillors are also county councillors, so the make-up of those councils is the same. If we can get the collection of data right, and understand the problems people have in becoming councillors, we will have new people, new ideas and new concepts, and we will move forward. The proposed Measure should be taken in the round. I understand the questions on specific areas, but this is a package about changing democracy at a local level.

[136] **David Lloyd:** Symudwn yn awr at y **David Lloyd:** We move on now to the final cwestiynau olaf. questions.

[137] **Veronica German:** I will move on to Part 8—everyone’s favourite—on members’ payments and pensions. Could you explain further how this proposed Measure changes the powers of the independent remuneration panel?

[138] **Carl Sargeant:** The main changes are to allow the IRP to set rates of allowances rather than maximums, and to allow those to cover the fire authorities, national parks and community councils should they decide that they wish to go down the road of paying members. That is the main change.

[139] **Veronica German:** Then on Part 9, on collaboration, do you consider that the duty imposed upon Welsh improvement authorities by the newly inserted section 12A of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 is sufficiently robust to give proper effect to the mechanics of the collaborative process between Welsh improvement authorities?

[140] **Carl Sargeant:** I suppose that there is a technical answer to that and then a statement that I can also bring into this. We will draft the guidance later this year in terms of the passage of the proposed Measure. It will set out the different forms in which collaboration can or will take place. You said earlier that, sometimes, there are political difficulties in which collaboration can be stifled, with regard to what can and cannot happen. The proposed Measure will take that into account and there will be guidance about what collaboration can

look like. Looking at the proposed Measure as it is and asking whether we need to do more work on what that means, I would suggest that we do. This is not a technical answer, but more of a statement; what I have seen around Wales is that collaboration is embraced in some areas and it is pushed to the back of the cupboard in others. I do not know whether asking for collaboration to take place is the right answer. We have to factor that process of collaboration and how it should work into the proposed Measure. I do not know whether we should look at anything else.

[141] **Veronica German:** I think that you have answered all of my questions, because the issue is that you can take a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. You can get them all in the same room, but that does not mean that they are collaborating, does it?

[142] **Carl Sargeant:** Absolutely. I was at the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee meeting, and similar questions were posed to me about the collaboration message and what we do. I spoke to committee members then about whether we need to look beyond voluntary collaboration. This will give us the broad terms of what collaboration can be and should be, but what is next? You gave the example of taking a horse to water. Again, I would be happy to look at that in further detail should the committee recommend that I do so.

[143] **David Lloyd:** O ran yr adran honno, yn yr hinsawdd ariannol sydd ohoni, bydd gofyn i gynghorau ac ati gydweithio'n fwyfwy. Nid wyf yn rhagddweud y fath o dystiolaeth a ddaw ger ein bron, ond mwy na thebyg bydd y rhan hon o'r agenda a'r cydweithio arfaethedig yn bwysig. Efallai bydd angen edrych ar sut bydd y Mesur arfaethedig yn datblygu hynny.

**David Lloyd:** With regard to that section, in the current financial climate, councils and so on will be required to collaborate more and more. Not that I am pre-empting what kind of evidence will come before us, but this part of the agenda and the proposed collaboration will, more than likely, be important. Perhaps it will be necessary to look at how the proposed Measure develops that.

[144] Gyda hynny, dyna ddiwedd y cwestiynau ffurfiol, bydd pawb yn falch o nodi—y Gweinidog yn arbennig. Diolch i'r Gweinidog a'i swyddogion. Yr ydym yn gresynu nad yw Frank wedi cael y bleidlais eto, ond bydd yn gallu gweithio ar hynny yn dyddiau i ddod.

With that, we come to the end of the formal questions, everyone will be happy to note—the Minister in particular. I thank the Minister and his officials. We regret that Frank has not yet received the vote, but we can work on that in coming days.

[145] **Carl Sargeant:** We will get there. [*Laughter.*]

[146] **David Lloyd:** Gwnaethoch un addewid, sef i gyflwyno nodyn ar gwestiwn trefniadau'r pwyllgor archwilio.

**David Lloyd:** You made one pledge, namely to submit a note on the question on audit committee arrangements.

[147] **Carl Sargeant:** On the guidance element, yes.

[148] **David Lloyd:** Felly, bydd nodyn am hynny. Dyna'r unig bwynt gweithredu i'r swyddogion ei nodi'n ffurfiol.

**David Lloyd:** So, there will be a note on that. That is the only action point for the officials to note formally.

[149] **Christine Chapman:** [*Inaudible.*] Is there any indication of the evidence?

[150] **Carl Sargeant:** We would also be happy to provide the detail on that.

[151] **David Lloyd:** Dyna ddiwedd yr eitem ac mae bron yn ddiwedd cyfarfod y

**David Lloyd:** That is the end of the item and almost the end of the committee meeting. To

pwyllgor. I gloi, cynhelir cyfarfod nesaf Pwyllgor Deddfwriaeth Rhif 3 ddydd Iau nesaf, 30 Medi, pan fyddwn yn ystyried Cam 2 Mesur Arfaethedig Iechyd Meddwl (Cymru), nad yw i'w ddrysu â'r Mesur Arfaethedig ynghylch Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru); mae'r Mesur arfaethedig iechyd meddwl yn ddarn hollol wahanol o ddeddfwriaeth, a byddwn yn ei ystyried yr wythnos nesaf. Diolch yn fawr i chi i gyd am eich presenoldeb a'ch cyfraniadau. Diolch yn fawr i'r swyddogion a'r clerccod ac am y cyfieithu. Yr wyf yn datgan bod y cyfarfod ar ben.

close, the next meeting of Legislation Committee No. 3 will be held next Thursday, 30 September, when we will consider Stage 2 of the Proposed Mental Health (Wales) Measure—not to be confused with the Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure; the proposed mental health Measure is a completely different piece of legislation, and we will consider it next week. Thank you all for your attendance and contributions. I thank the officials and the clerks and for the translation. I declare the meeting closed.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 2.29 p.m.  
The meeting ended at 2.29 p.m.*