

Plenary

Meeting date:
Wednesday, 20 February 2013

Meeting time:
13:30

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Agenda (114)v3

1. Questions to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development (45 mins)

[View Questions](#)

2. Questions to the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage (45 mins)

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3. Debate on the Health & Social Care Committee's Inquiry into Residential care for older people in Wales (60 mins)

NDM5165 Mark Drakeford (Cardiff West)

The National Assembly for Wales:

Notes the report of the Health and Social Care Committee on its inquiry into residential care for older people in Wales, which was laid in the Table Office on 13 December 2012.

Note: The Welsh Government's response to the report was laid in the Table Office on 13 February 2013.

Supporting Documents:

[The report of the Health and Social Care Committee on its inquiry into residential](#)

[care for older people in Wales](#)

[Welsh Government's response](#)

4. Debate on the Finance Committee's report 'The Effectiveness of European Structural Funds in Wales' (60 mins)

NDM5166 Jocelyn Davies (South Wales East)

To propose that the National Assembly for Wales:

Notes the Finance Committee's report on Effectiveness of European Structural Funds in Wales which was laid in the Table Office on 17 December 2012.

Supporting Documents:

[The Finance Committee's report on Effectiveness of European Structural Funds in Wales](#)

[Welsh Government's response](#)

5. Welsh Liberal Democrats Debate (60 mins)

NDM5167 Aled Roberts (North Wales)

To propose that the National Assembly for Wales:

1. Notes that, according to Stats Wales, there are an estimated 31,644 empty homes in Wales, with 23,287 classed as long-term empty dwellings.

2. Welcomes the intention of the Welsh Government's 'Houses into Homes' initiative, including the additional £5million invested into the scheme as a result of the budget deal with the Welsh Liberal Democrats in 2012-13.

3. Welcomes the progress in reducing the number of empty homes in Wales by 2,000, but believes that more must be done to develop a cohesive empty homes strategy which includes:

a) establishing a Welsh Empty Homes website to share advice and guidance and raise the profile of the empty homes initiative;

b) a full time equivalent Empty Homes Officer in each local authority to drive forward the initiative;

- c) simplifying the legislation and procedures surrounding Empty Dwelling Management Orders and Compulsory Purchase Orders;
- d) updating empty homes good practice guidance to local authorities'
- e) allowing councils greater flexibility to impose punitive council tax rates on long term empty homes;
- f) encouraging the sharing of best practice examples and facilitating partnership working between local authorities; and
- g) looking at an incentive scheme for local councils for every long term private sector home brought back into use, similar to the UK Government's 'New Homes Bonus Scheme'.

Information on the Houses into Homes initiative can be found on the following link:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/private/emptyhomes/housestohomes/?lang=en>

Information on the New Homes Bonus Scheme can be found on the following links:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6004/1846530.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-the-number-of-available-homes/supporting-pages/new-homes-bonus>

The following amendments have been tabled:

Amendment 1 – Jocelyn Davies (South Wales East)

Insert as new point 1 and renumber accordingly:

Notes that empty homes present an opportunity for housing regeneration which provides an important stimulus to the economy.

Amendment 2 – Jocelyn Davies (South Wales East)

Add at the end of point 1:

'and that these properties could be used to alleviate the unmet need for social

housing’

Amendment 3 – William Graham (South Wales East)

Insert at the end of sub point 3b:

‘recognising that that every empty home has its own story and that the key is for Empty Homes Officers to understand why it is empty, and to work closely with the owner to bring it back into use’

Amendment 4 – William Graham (South Wales East)

Insert at the end of sub point 3e:

‘through the creation of an empty homes council tax premium for properties left vacant for more than two years, to ensure sensitivity to individual circumstances – such as bereaved owners or owners with complex issues that, with support, could be addressed’

Amendment 5 – Jocelyn Davies (South Wales East)

Add as new sub point at end of point 3:

‘lobbying the UK Government to reduce VAT to 5% on home repairs and improvements.’

Amendment 6 – William Graham (South Wales East)

Add as new sub point at end of point 3:

‘making funding available to community and voluntary groups as part of a programme to bring empty properties back in to use as affordable housing;’

Amendment 7 – William Graham (South Wales East)

Add as new sub point at end of point 3:

‘allowing greater flexibility in the use of properties funded under the ‘Houses into Homes’ initiative so that maximum benefit may be delivered to those in housing need;’

Voting Time

6. Short Debate (30 mins)

NDM5168 Lynne Neagle (Torfaen):

Softening the Blow

Mitigating the Impact of the Bedroom Tax in Wales.

The Assembly will sit again in Plenary at 13:30, Tuesday, 26 February 2013