

Concise Minutes – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Video Conference via Zoom

Meeting date: Friday, 17 July 2020

Meeting time: 09.07 – 10.16

This meeting can be viewed

on [Senedd TV](#) at:

<http://senedd.tv/en/6417>

Attendance

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

1 Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting

In accordance with Standing Order 34.19, the Chair stated that she had determined that the public were excluded from the Committee's meeting in order to protect public health.



Senedd Cymru
Welsh Parliament

There were no apologies or declarations of interest.

2 New COVID-19 Petitions

2.1 P-05-975 Reconsider second home council tax uplift while illegal to travel to second homes

The Committee considered the petition for the first time, noting the Minister for Finance's response that the use of the discretionary power to levy a council tax premium is a matter for individual local authorities. Members agreed to write to Pembrokeshire County Council to raise the views of the petitioner with them.

2.2 P-05-976 Permit weddings of 5 people (registrar/couple/2 witnesses) during COVID 19 in Wales

The Committee noted that the aims of the petition have been achieved, in light of the fact that small wedding ceremonies are now able to take place again in Wales. The Committee agreed to close the petition and thank the petitioner.

2.3 P-05-977 Re-open full general dental services in Wales as has happened in England

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and noted that dental services are now going through a phased reopening. The Committee agreed to return to the petition in the autumn to consider the latest situation then.

2.4 P-05-978 Allow Zoos and Wildlife attractions to reopen with social distancing in place throughout Wales

The Committee noted that the aims of the petition have now been achieved, in light of the fact that outdoor visitor attractions, including zoos, are now able to reopen. The Committee agreed to close the petition and thank the petitioner.

2.5 P-05-979 Adopt the policies of UK government with regard to easing of lockdown rules

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

2.6 P-05-980 Extend grants immediately to small businesses outside of Small Business Rates Relief in Wales

The Committee considered the petition for the first time, noted the response from the Minister for Finance and agreed to request further information on the extent of the discretion available to local authorities in awarding grants or other funding to businesses outside of Small Business Rates Relief

2.7 P-05-981 Allow gyms and leisure centres to reopen

The Committee considered for the petition for the first time alongside [P-05-986 Allow small gyms and personal training spaces to open sooner during COVID restrictions](#), and agreed to write to the Deputy Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport to ask:

- whether the Welsh Government can share evidence which indicates that gyms and other indoor sporting facilities present a particular transmission risk for Covid-19, and
- what consideration the Welsh Government has given to the importance of exercise to the mental health and wellbeing of people in their decisions around opening leisure facilities.

2.8 P-05-986 Allow small gyms and personal training spaces to open sooner during COVID restrictions

The Committee considered the petition for the first time alongside [P-05-981 Allow gyms and leisure centres to reopen](#) and agreed to write back to the Deputy Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport to ask:

- whether the Welsh Government can share evidence which indicates that gyms and other indoor sporting facilities present a particular transmission risk for Covid-19, and

- what consideration the Welsh Government has given to the importance of exercise to the mental health and wellbeing of people in their decisions around opening leisure facilities.

2.9 P-05-982 Re-open outdoor tennis courts and training in line with the rest of the UK and Europe

The Committee noted that the aims of the petition appear to have been achieved, in light of the fact that the resumption of outdoor tennis has been permitted in Wales since 22 June. The Committee therefore agreed to close the petition.

2.10 P-05-983 Give grant aid to Bed and Breakfast businesses in Wales that pay council tax and not business rates

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to write back to the Minister for Finance to provide the petitioners further comments and ask whether there is a support scheme available for bed & breakfast businesses that are not business rates payers, if they are not employers or VAT registered and whether future funding from the UK Government could be used for this purpose.

2.11 P-05-984 Stop discriminatory remote consultations for incinerator applications during the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to write back to the Minister for Housing and Local Government to:

- share the petitioner's latest submission;
- ask that she considers exercising her powers to extend the timescale for consultation if and when this progresses to a full application; and
- ask how the petitioner would be able to make such a request at the appropriate time.

2.12 P-05-985 Provide key-worker childcare equivalent to what was available prior to the Covid-19 pandemic

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to write back to the Minister for Education to share the petitioner's response to her letter and ask what

the Government's expectations are for summer holiday key worker childcare provision and, following the announcement that schools will be expected to reopen fully for the autumn term, seek further information about the extended hours provision expected to be available for key workers.

2.13 P-05-988 Give key worker children equal access to their schools and teachers

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to write back to the Minister for Education to share the comments made by the petitioner. and ask:

- whether, and how, she considers local or regional disparities in education provision for the children of key workers could be avoided in the event of any future reduction in school provision; and
- whether contact groups or 'bubbles' from September will be available in full to the children of key workers, or any parents who need to access wraparound childcare.

2.14 P-05-990 Open schools in September. Scrap blended learning

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to close the petition in light of the Minister for Education's recent announcement that schools in Wales will return full time for all pupils from September. The Committee noted the success of the petition and thanked the petitioners for raising this issue.

3 Other new petitions

3.1 P-05-954 Petition for a public inquiry by the Welsh Government into the historic child abuse on Caldey Island

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to write back to the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services to share the correspondence received by the Committee and ask her to provide a further response. The Committee also highlighted the indications received that the Independent Inquiry in to Child Sexual Abuse will not be considering abuse which took place on Caldey Island specifically, and asked for further consideration to be given to the issue of a public inquiry in light of this.

4 Updates to previous petitions

4.1 P-05-931 Sun cream in schools

In view of the lack of contact from the original petitioner, and noting the response to the petition provided by the Minister for Education, the Committee agreed to close the petition.

4.2 P-05-958 Recent Decisions Regarding AS Grades 2020

In light of the petitioner's acceptance of the additional explanation provided by the Minister for Education and the fact that grades for the 2019/20 academic year are unlikely to be changed at this stage, the Committee agreed to close the petition and thank the petitioner as there is little further the Committee could achieve.

4.3 P-05-962 An emergency amendment to extend age of entitlement to additional educational support from 25 to 26 and to define within Government guidance the Covid 19 pandemic as an exceptional circumstance

The Committee considered further information and noted the update provided by the Minister for Education, including the confirmation that four requests for extensions have been received and all have been approved, and agreed to await a further substantive response to the issues raised in the petitioner's previous correspondence.

4.4 P-05-906 Save Sam Davies Ward at Barry Hospital

The Committee considered further information and agreed to write back to Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to seek a response to the concerns raised by the South Glamorgan Community Health Council and an update on the current position in relation to the patient pathway for frail older people and the Sam Davies Ward.

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

In light of the responses provided by the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Equality and Human Rights Commission that health boards have duties in relation to ensuring that GP services commissioned can meet equality duties and the needs of their local populations, the Committee agreed to write to all local health boards to ask

for details of how many GP practices in their areas provide adjustable treatment beds and hoists for the use of disabled patients.

The Committee also agreed to write to SHINE (Spinabifida and Hydrocephalus Information Network Equality) and the Spinal Injuries Association, to seek their views and experiences of the provision of adjustable treatment beds and hoists in GP services in Wales.

4.6 P-05-926 To Provide a Chronic Fatigue Department in Wales

The Committee considered further information and agreed to write back to the Minister for Health and Social Services to share the recommendations provided by the Welsh Association of ME and CFS Support (WAMES) and seek a response to these.

4.7 P-05-960 Fund the funeral costs of all NHS staff who die from or with Covid-19

The Committee considered further correspondence and noted the confirmation provided by the Minister for Health and Social Services that families of locum and agency staff, and non-British citizens working in the NHS are entitled to apply for the Death in Service Benefit Scheme.

The Committee agreed to write back to the Minister for Health and Social Services to express its' support for the petitioners' view that the basic funeral costs of NHS staff who die as a result of contracting Covid-19 through their work should be paid for, in addition to the Death in Service Benefit Scheme.

4.8 P-05-964 Extend covid-19 financial support and paid leave to vulnerable and pregnant NHS wales bank workers

The Committee considered further information and agreed to write back to the Minister for Health and Social Services over the summer recess to ask for an update on the consideration being given to this issue and for conclusions reached.

4.9 P-05-934 Public Transport in Blaenau Gwent

The Committee considered further information and agreed to write to:

- Blaenau Gwent Council again to seek a response to the previous correspondence, taking into account the subsequent impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; and
- the Welsh Government regarding the progress of the work undertaken by the Valleys Taskforce, the implementation of the delivery plan and what plans the Welsh Government have to update their Strategy for Public Transport for the short, medium and long term in light of Covid-19.

4.10 P-05-955 Objection to proposal by Costain to implement Option B in the rerouting of the A465 at Brynmawr

In light of the fact that the Welsh Government and Costain have confirmed that Option B will be implemented, the Committee agreed that there is little further that it could achieve at this point. It noted the petitioners' frustration but agreed to close the petition.

4.11 P-05-968 Pay Coronavirus grants to all businesses eligible for Small Business Rate Relief same as rest of UK

As self-catering accommodation is now able to reopen in Wales, and in the absence of further comments from the petitioner, the Committee agreed to take no further action and close the petition.

4.12 P-05-973 Reopen barbers and hairdressers as long as they have strict social distancing measures in place

In light of the fact that the restrictions on barbers and hairdressing salons were lifted on 13 July, the Committee agreed to close the petition and thank the petitioner for highlighting the issue.