

Concise Minutes – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 4 – Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: Tuesday, 29 September
2020

Meeting time: 09.00 – 10.23

This meeting can be viewed

on [Senedd TV](#) at:

<http://senedd.tv/en/6431>

Attendance

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

1 Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting

Apologies were received from Michelle Brown MS.



2 New COVID-19 Petitions

2.1 P-05-1006 Release the £59 million to the arts to prevent local grassroots music venues from closure

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to write back to the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism to ask:

- why the full £59 million consequential funding has not been utilised for the Cultural Recovery Fund; and
- how the Government intends to use the resources at its disposal to ensure that buildings used as music venues are protected during the pandemic and not lost to redevelopment or other purposes.

The Committee indicated an intention to close the petition once this information has been received.

2.2 P-05-1013 Provide financial support for self-employed individuals within the Welsh live music industry

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and noted the financial support for individuals due to be available from 5 October. The Committee agreed to write back to the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism to seek further information about the eligibility criteria for the funding available to individual freelancers under the Cultural Recovery Fund, and ask how the Government will keep that criteria under review if evidence shows that people employed in this sector 'fall through the gaps'.

2.3 P-05-1011 Virtual On-line teacher-led lessons to be provided for all school children

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to write back to the Minister in relation to this petition and P-05-1015, to outline the concerns raised

and ask what plans are now in place, should circumstances change further during the autumn term due to national or local restrictions, to ensure there are resources available to support remote or online teaching of all pupils. The Committee also agreed to ask how many pupils in Wales do not have access to the Internet for the purposes of accessing online teaching at home, according to Government data.

2.4 P-05-1015 Categorise schools as critical infrastructure

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to write back to the Minister in relation to this petition and P-05-1011, to outline the concerns raised and ask what plans are now in place, should circumstances change further during the autumn term due to national or local restrictions, to ensure there are resources available to support remote or online teaching of all pupils. The Committee also agreed to ask how many pupils in Wales do not have access to the Internet for the purposes of accessing online teaching at home, according to Government data.

2.5 P-05-1017 Allow pupils to wear masks in all areas of the school premises

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and, given that the Welsh Government have issued guidance to schools and are reviewing the policy around face masks regularly, agreed to close the petition.

In doing so, the Committee agreed to provide the petitioner's recent comments to the Minister for Education for use in those reviews.

2.6 P-05-1020 Introduce an Appeals process in Wales for all Centre Assessed Grades for 2020 public exam programme

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to await the views of the petitioner on the response from the Minister for Education before considering the petition further.

3 Other New petitions

3.1 P-05-995 Freedom to Donate Blood

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to thank the petitioner for raising this important issue and:

- write back to the Minister for Health and Social Services to share the response provided by the petitioners and request that the Welsh Government considers expressing support for the principle of using a more individualised donor selection policy instead of the current three month deferral period to the Department of Health Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO) and the Joint Professional Advisory Committee on Donor Selection; and
- keep a watching brief on this issue in light of the work being carried out by the FAIR (For the Assessment of Individualised Risk) steering group and due to be considered by SaBTO in late 2020, and to consider the petition again at that point.

3.2 P-05-1007 Merge Hope and Caergwrle into a two-member ward in the County of Flintshire

Jack Sargeant declared the following relevant interest under Standing Order 17.24A:

The petitioners are known to him and he has previously expressed support for the principle of merging the wards referred to by the petition.

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 concerns of the petitioner over enacting boundary changes during the Coronavirus pandemic and ask:

- what consideration the Minister has given to pausing the review process in light of the current situation; and
- whether other factors, such as community cohesion, should be given increased weight by the Boundary Commission as a result.

3.3 P-05-1008 Teach mental health first aid in schools in Wales

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to await the views of the petitioner on the response from the Minister for Education before considering the petition further.

3.4 P-05-1009 Mandate Welsh Councils to apply a minimum 100% Council Tax surcharge on second homes

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to seek information about how many councils in Wales currently use the discretionary power to charge council tax premiums for second homes.

3.5 P-05-1010 An independent inquiry into the 2020 flooding in Rhondda Cynon Taf so that lessons are learned

Leanne Wood declared the following relevant interest under Standing Order 17.24A:

She knows the petitioner and has shared the petition within her constituency.

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to write to Business Committee to seek time for a plenary debate on the petition.

3.6 P-05-1012 Oxygen chamber therapy for fibromyalgia patients on the NHS

Leanne Wood declared the following relevant interest under Standing Order 17.24A:

She believes that she may know the petitioner.

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to await the views of the petitioner on the information provided by the Minister for Health and Social Services before considering whether to take any further action.

3.7 P-05-1016 Extend the new Green Homes Grant to Wales

The Committee considered the petition for the first time and agreed to await the views of the petitioner on the information provided by the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs before considering whether to take any further action.

4 Updates to previous petitions

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

The Committee considered further correspondence and agreed to note the Minister's intention to consider further advice and write again to the Committee once this has been received.

4.2 P-05-868 Water Safety/Drowning Prevention and the effects of Cold Water Shock to be taught in all Schools in Wales

The Committee considered an update on the petition and agreed to await the anticipated launch of a Wales Water Safety Strategy and further views from the petitioner before considering whether to take any further action on the petition.

4.3 P-05-933 Ban Goldfish from being given away at funfairs.#OperationGoldfish

The Committee considered an update on the petition and, in light of the information provided by the Minister for Environment that work to make The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Animal Exhibits) (Wales) Regulations 2020 has been postponed due to the impact of Covid-19 and that the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group will consider the giving of animals as prizes in the future, the Committee concluded that there was little further that it could achieve at this time. The Committee agreed to close the petition and thank the petitioner for bringing the issue forward.

4.4 P-05-941 Biodiversity Remit for NRW

The Committee considered an update on the petition and noted that the Remit Letter for NRW for 2020/21 makes reference to biodiversity. The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs to ask her to give further consideration to whether the resources available to NRW are sufficient to ensure that it can appropriately prioritise work on biodiversity in addition to its other responsibilities.

4.5 P-05-951 Impose a legal limit on the maximum number of breeding bitches in licensed dog breeding establishments in Wales

The Committee considered an update on the petition and agreed to await the views of the petitioner on the response received from the Minister for Environment before considering whether there is any further action that it could take on the petition.

4.6 P-05-953 Ban Single Use Plastic Milk Bottles in schools

The Committee considered an update on the petition and agreed to await the views of the petitioners on the latest response received from the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government.

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

The Committee considered an update on the petition and agreed to write to the Minister for Health and Social Services to ask him to intervene to ensure that all health boards are supported and enabled to provide separate facilities for people who are going through miscarriage.

The Committee also agreed to write to all health boards to highlight the petition and the issues raised by the petitioner and ask:

- for information about the provision of facilities in their hospitals for supporting families experiencing miscarriage, and specifically whether support is available separately to maternity wards or could be improved in light of the experience of the petitioner; and
- for details of ongoing support services available to families who have been bereaved, both through miscarriage and through other causes.

4.8 P-05-940 Reduce cancelled operations

The Committee considered comments from the petitioner and agreed to write back to the Minister for Health and Social Services to ask for a breakdown of figures in relation to cancelled operations for the 5 years prior to 2020, including:

- how many were cancelled by health boards;
- how many were cancelled by patient request;
- how many were children.

4.9 P-05-798 Male domestic violence victim support services to be independently run & funded

Consideration of this petition was deferred to the following meeting at the request of the petitioner.

4.10 P-05-898 Ban the use of A boards in Wales

The Committee considered an update on the petition and agreed to await the views of the petitioner on the response from the Minister for Housing and Local Government before deciding how to proceed with the petition.

4.11 P-05-913 Creation of Lôn Las Môn Multi-Use Path

The Committee considered a number of updates on the petition and In light of the responses received, including the Welsh Government's desire to maintain a rail solution cited by both the Minister and Network Rail, and the ongoing negotiations over a lease of the line for heritage rail, it is unlikely that the aims of the petitioners can be met.

The Committee agreed to close the petition and thank the petitioners for their engagement with the process.

4.12 P-05-932 Education On Food Allergies In Schools & Mandatory EPI PEN Training

The Committee considered correspondence on the petition and agreed to write back to the Minister for Education to ask whether the planned review of its approach to allergies has been impacted by the pandemic, and to the WLGA to ask for details of the work being taken forward on special diets in schools.

4.13 P-05-950 Agriculture and Countryside Education for 4-16-year olds in our schools

The Committee noted the Minister's responses on this petition and agreed to close the petition, given the lack of contact received from the petitioner and the scrutiny work being carried out into the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill and the Children, Young People and Education Committee.