

Minutes of the **Cross Party Group on Disability** 8th June 2023 (online)

1. Present:

Mark Isherwood MS (Chair), Megan Thomas (Secretary), Shaun Bendle, Kat Watkins, Rhian Davies, David Rowlands, Ross Thomas, Cari Jones, Rebecca Phillips, Owen Williams, Trevor Palmer, Marg McNeil, Joe Powell, Andrea Boyce, Tracey Blockwell, Becky Ricketts, Petra Kennady, Teresa Carberry, Amanda Say, Chris Dunn, Jan Thomas, Christine Stewart, Gareth Marshall, Shahd Zorob, Kelly Stuart, William Fawcett, Hilary McClean (Captioner).

2. Apologies:

Gary Simpson, Rhys Ab Owen MS, Llyr Gruffydd MS, Jenny Caroll, Peredur Owen Griffiths MS, Joanna Fashan, Faye Patton, Jessica Laimann, Andrea Gordon

3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th February 2023

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

Proposed: Marg McNeil

Seconded: Owen Williams

4. Matters arising from the minutes

Cari Jones reported that an access group is being set up in the Gower area which could help feed into See Around Britain.

Cari also asked how she could join the Disability Rights Taskforce. Megan responded and informed Cari that the Minister appoints members to the Disability Rights Taskforce,

but people can request to join the taskforce subgroups. Megan will share the list of taskforce subgroups with Cari.

See Around Britain

Marg McNeil sought an update from Mark Isherwood MS on the letter to Prince William's office.

Mark Isherwood MS said he's still awaiting a response and that the Archbishop of Wales had written to Prince William's office in support. He will also be raising 'See Around Britain' with both the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) British Islands & Mediterranean Region and the Conservative Disability Group (CDG).

Marg McNeil informed the group that See Around Britain is trying to commission a tv series in Wales. He asked if Mark Isherwood MS and Sioned Williams MS, on behalf of the CPG, could support this and jointly approach the three commissioning editors, BBC, ITV and S4C.

Mark Isherwood MS asked Marg to prompt Zoe Richards (LDW) to take this forward.

Training New Rehabilitation/Habilitation Officers in Wales

Owen Williams updated the group and said progress is being made in seeking funding to train new Vision Rehabilitation/Habilitation Specialists in Wales and will report back at the next CPGD.

5. Secretary update

The next meeting of the CPGD will be a hybrid meeting enabling members to join face-to-face in Cardiff and online.

6. Chair update

In reference to the previous minutes regarding DWP, Mark Isherwood MS informed the group that he wrote to the UK Government Treasury some months ago who then transferred the letter to DWP for a response.

A response has now been received and they offered to send officials to a CPGD meeting. The Secretary will organise this for the next meeting in September.

7. PRESENTATION: Right to Adequate Housing - David Rowlands, Tai Pawb.

David opened his presentation by explaining the background to the Right to Adequate Housing which is based on the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Although the UK signed up to it, it hasn't incorporated it. They are seeking full incorporation from Welsh Government whereby they will be required to realise the right to adequate housing for every citizen in Wales.

The Back the Bill campaign, which was established in 2019, is a coalition between Tai Pawb, the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru and Shelter Cymru. They believe everyone should be entitled to have a safe, suitable home they can afford.

Following a cost benefit analysis, results identified that over a 30-year period, introducing the right to adequate housing in Wales will generate £11.5 billion in benefits whilst costing £5 billion.

In terms of disability, there is a chronic shortage of accessible housing, allocation of social housing is problematic, and the adaptation system is ineffective.

The difference it can make for disabled people include:

- Prioritisation of funding and focus
- Framework for better homes for all
- Accessibility – key components
- Participation in decision-making
- Failure to make progress: breach of progressive realisation obligation
- Ministers would need to clearly indicate how they have given proper consideration to disabled people's right to housing
- Disabled people can use the right to hold ministers to account
- Depending on model: disabled person could bring judicial proceeding for breach of right to housing

Ross Thomas, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Tai Pawb.

Ross provided a legislative update of the campaign which has gone from strength to strength with increasing stakeholder and political buy-in across the spectrum. The right to adequate housing has reached the Programme for Government and the cooperation agreement between Welsh government and Plaid Cymru in 2021 by way of a pledge to publish a green and a white paper.

Local Government & Housing Committee has agreed to undertake an inquiry into the right to adequate housing. A conclusion is expected shortly, followed by recommendations, followed by a debate in the Senedd.

The Green Paper has been published and open to consultation until mid September.

8. PRESENTATION: Disability-related Expenses - Cari Jones

Cari informed the group about the Scrap Care Charges group who are a coalition of disabled people's organisations,

parents, carers and allies providing support and guidance into claiming back disability-related expenses.

The Scrap Care Charges Group is an English group and therefore based on the Care Act. Cari would like to replicate this service in Wales, which would represent the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

Cari proposed a working group to discuss this further.

Megan Thomas agreed to follow this up.

9. PRESENTATION: Equal Power Equal Voice – Shaun Bendle

Equal Power Equal Voice is a mentoring programme for underrepresented communities across Wales to increase diversity of representation in public and political life in Wales.

It is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and Welsh Government. The programme will launch in October 2023 and run to June 2024.

It is a partnership programme between Disability Wales, Stonewall Cymru, Women Equality Network Wales, and Ethnic Minorities & Youth support team Wales.

Who can apply for the programme? Any person aged 18+ living in Wales, who identifies:

- Black, Asian or ethnic minority person
- Person from the LGBTQ+ community
- Disabled person
- Woman
- Any combination of any of those identities

Applicants must be interested in increasing their impact in public or political life and commitment to their own development.

The scheme includes:

- One to one mentoring
- Training sessions
- Peer to peer support

10. AOB

Mark Isherwood MS informed the group that one of his roles in the Senedd includes chairing the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee and one of the pieces of work they are currently conducting is an enquiry into public appointments.

Yesterday, they took evidence on the record from Daniel Bridgeman who declared publicly that he has cerebral palsy and has tackled the barriers and worked his way successfully to sit on various public bodies. He talked about the barriers he's encountered and what disabled people in general encounter which is very much part of the enquiry.

Mark Isherwood MS invited the group to access the committee record on the Senedd website which provides a full transcript of what Daniel Bridgeman said.

Mark Isherwood MS reported that he led another debate proposing that the Senedd supports a BSL Bill. Once again he won votes both in this term and last term. However, he still needs to win the ballot to bring forward a Private Member's Bill before he can take it further.

ACTIONS

1. Megan to share the list of the taskforce subgroups with Cari.
2. Megan to follow up the Scrap the Charges group with the aim of replicating this in Wales.