



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Safonau Ymddygiad](#)

[The Standards of Conduct Committee](#)

15/11/2016

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd. Lle y mae cyfranwyr wedi darparu cywiriadau i'w tystiolaeth, nodir y rheini yn y trawsgrifiad.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included. Where contributors have supplied corrections to their evidence, these are noted in the transcript.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Jayne Bryant Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor)
[Bywgraffiad](#) | [Biography](#) Labour (Committee Chair)

Paul Davies Ceidwadwyr Cymreig
[Bywgraffiad](#) | [Biography](#) Welsh Conservatives

Llyr Gruffydd Plaid Cymru
[Bywgraffiad](#) | [Biography](#) The Party of Wales

David J. Rowlands UKIP Cymru
[Bywgraffiad](#) | [Biography](#) UKIP Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Gerard Elias CF/QC Comisiynydd Safonau Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
National Assembly for Wales Commissioner for
Standards

Syr/Sir Roderick Evans

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

Enrico Carpanini Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol
Legal Adviser

Claire Griffiths Dirprwy Glerc
Deputy Clerk

Meriel Singleton Ail Glerc
Second Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9:24.
The meeting began at 9:24.

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau
Introductions, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

[1] **Jayne Bryant:** Good morning, everybody. It's nice to see you all here. I'd like to welcome the commissioner, with us today. I'd also like to welcome a new Member, Llyr Gruffydd, to the committee, following his election to replace Dafydd Elis-Thomas. Just to remind you that Members are able to speak in Welsh or English, and there are translation and amplification sets available. Just to remind you that we take a strong rule here on electronic devices: if they go off here, you're sent out of the room. There are no substitutions for this meeting.

**Lobïo: Trafod Papur gan y Comisiynydd Safonau
Lobbying: Consideration of Paper from the Commissioner for
Standards**

[2] **Jayne Bryant:** So, the first item on the agenda is lobbying, consideration of the paper from the commissioner for standards. So, I'll move over to the commissioner. Perhaps you could introduce your paper, commissioner.

[3] **Mr Elias:** Thank you, Chair. I've put a note before the Commission resulting from discussion at the last meeting, which invited my comments on possible areas of consultation in relation to the committee's review of the arrangements in place for lobbying. And I have, as the paper indicates, visited my counterpart in Westminster at the House of Commons, and we have had communication with the standards department in Scotland, as the paper indicates, both of whom, of course, have set up a register of lobbyists of sorts.

[4] When one asks what's the purpose of the register, and we've asked the question both in Scotland and in England, the answer, essentially, but not exclusively, is: because we believe the public needs to know more about what Government Ministers and Government officials are doing with lobbyists, rather than, if you like, what your average Assembly Member or average Member of Parliament is doing with lobbyists, although that is a factor. And it is, really, to seek to make that more transparent that the legislation has been aimed at in particular.

[5] What's apparent both from the Scottish experience and the

Westminster experience is that there is a not insignificant cost of raising a register—a department in Westminster, and, certainly, an official in the clerk's office in Scotland, both to raise the register and then to police it. This is not going to be without cost, and without perhaps significant cost. So, with the greatest respect, it seems to me, as I hope my note indicates, that, for the committee, at least at first, perhaps one of the issues is going to be proportionality. Transparency is very important on the one hand. On the other hand, the cost of bringing in such a regime is going to be quite significant.

[6] As I say in my note, I have had no complaints relating to lobbying activity throughout the six years less two weeks that I've been in the role that I hold. That doesn't mean to say that a register is not the way forward—perhaps it is—but I say that for what it's worth. I did put in my note also my findings on the last occasion, four years ago now, not, as I say, necessarily because they're still valid, but perhaps some of these issues are matters that the committee will wish to bear in mind if it's moving to change a regime to one where a register is thought to be appropriate.

[7] But, certainly, evidence from the new registrar in London will deal with matters of resources and the sorts of costs that will be involved, as well as indicating precisely which lobbyists, as it were, they are catching. In Scotland, they seem to have taken a rather neat step of ensuring that it is only paid lobbyists who fall within the need to register, thereby largely, but not exclusively, leaving charities out of that particular loop, which we may think is a good thing. But, obviously, there are still difficulties in the interpretation of who is a lobbyist, as there were four years ago. And they're still finding that in both Scotland and in England.

[8] So, that, as I say, is a very preliminary skirmish with some of the issues that you'd have to face, but I hope will assist the Commission and my successor in determining routes that may be taken to see whether evidence should be brought before you to help resolve the issues that I've tried to raise.

[9] **Jayne Bryant:** Thank you, commissioner, and I really appreciate the time that you've taken. I know it's been quite a tight timescale to go and speak to members in Scotland and in Westminster, so we're very much appreciative of the work that you've put in. And I think we all hear your message of the importance of transparency and proportionality within the note that you've made, and I think particularly around the time that some of

these policies perhaps haven't bedded in to know the full extent of what's actually happening. Does anybody have any questions? Paul.

[10] **Paul Davies:** You mention that, obviously, introducing a regime like this here would probably cost quite a substantial amount. Did the other legislatures give you an indication of what the costs were involved there?

[11] **Mr Elias:** No, because my connections had been with the standards department, and in England they have set up a separate registrar's office. So, we would have to go to the registrar herself, I think it is, in order to find out the costs of that, and the annual running costs, and so on.

09:30

[12] I believe they are significant. Similarly, in Scotland, it's in the Clerk of the Parliament's office that the—I don't think they do call it a registrar, but the official who is responsible for the register is to be found, and my suggestion is that those two individuals, certainly through, perhaps, the new commissioner, could be asked to give some indications of what the costs of set-up may be and the annual running costs and so on, so that the committee will have those sorts of figures.

[13] **David Rowlands:** Just one thing: first of all, can I thank you for this? It's a brilliant explanatory document for us to work on, and I read through it. Thank you very much for that. You've just mentioned quarterly, half-yearly or annual, what might be—you know, for actually putting in, well, what's been happening during the—? Would you say annually would be adequate?

[14] **Mr Elias:** Sorry, but what—?

[15] **David Rowlands:** You say possibly a practical and proportionate measure that the committee may wish to consider is a recommendation that the industry in Wales, comprising professionals and charities, actually publish in a register or something quarterly, half-yearly or annual accounts of what their operations have been.

[16] **Mr Elias:** I would have thought at least annual accounts.

[17] **David Rowlands:** Annually, yes.

[18] **Mr Elias:** At least annual accounts, but the committee may take a view

that there would be greater transparency with more frequent publication. But, of course, that's probably a matter for negotiation and consideration.

[19] **Jane Bryant:** Okay, thanks. Llyr.

[20] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Rwyf jest eisiau gofyn cwestiwn yn Gymraeg, os caf. Mae ystyriaeth cost yn bwysig, wrth gwrs, ond, ar ddiwedd y dydd, y brif ystyriaeth i ni yw gwarchod rhag unrhyw amryfusedd a sicrhau safonau.

Llyr Gruffydd: I just want to ask a question in Welsh, if I may. Cost considerations are very important, of course, but, ultimately, the most important thing is to safeguard against any irregularities and maintain standards.

[21] **Mr Elias:** Would you forgive me?

[22] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Of course.

[23] **Mr Elias:** I'm so sorry, I'm not on the right channel.

[24] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Ocê? A ydy hwnnw'n gweithio? Ydy. Mae cost yn ystyriaeth, wrth gwrs, ond, fel rwy'n siŵr y bydd y comisiynydd yn ei gydnabod, gwarchod rhag amryfusedd yw'r flaenoriaeth, beth bynnag yw'r gost ar ddiwedd y dydd. Ac felly, y cwestiwn i fi, i bob pwrpas, yw: pa mor gymesur y byddai lefel y gost yn erbyn lefel y risg? Nawr, mae'n gwbl glir o'r dystiolaeth rŷm ni wedi ei derbyn nad oes yna achos wedi cael ei godi gyda'r comisiynydd presennol, na chwaith, hyd y gwelwn ni, yn y gorffennol ers sefydlu'r Cynulliad. Felly, mae'r awgrym yn eithaf cryf i fi nad oes yna lefel o risg sy'n gwarantu efallai gam sylweddol o safbwynt creu rhyw strwythur newydd, ond, wrth gwrs, rŷm ni hefyd yn ymwybodol bod Bil Cymru ar y ffordd, ac mae hynny'n mynd i

Llyr Gruffydd: Okay? Is that working? Yes. Cost is a consideration, of course, but, as I'm sure the commissioner will acknowledge, safeguarding against breaches of standards is our priority, whatever the cost ultimately. That's the important thing. So, the question from me, essentially, is: how proportionate will the cost level be against the level of risk? Now, it's entirely clear from the evidence that we have received that the case has not been raised with the present commissioner, or with past commissioners since the establishment of the Assembly. So, that would strongly suggest to me that there isn't a level of risk that perhaps warrants the significant step of creating a new structure, but, of course, we're also aware that the

y chwanegu at y cyfrifoldebau, yn enwedig o safbwynt trethiannol ac yn y blaen. Felly, byddwn i jest yn licio clywed gan y comisiynydd i ba raddau y mae e'n credu y bydd y cynnydd yna yn lefel cyfrifoldebau'r Cynulliad yn arwain at sefyllfa efallai lle mae'r risg o amryfusedd—dyna'r gair rwy'n ei ddefnyddio—yn uwch?

Wales Bill is on the horizon and that that will add to responsibilities, especially in terms of taxation and so on. So, I would just like to hear from the commissioner to what extent he believes that that increase in the level of the Assembly's responsibilities will lead to a situation where perhaps the risk of a breach—that's the word I'm going to use—is higher?

[25] **Mr Elias:** I'm grateful for the question, really, because, if I may respectfully say so, I think that is precisely the issue. Proportionality: I mean, it's easy to put it that way. Proportionality is, of course, the vital thing here, but standards are not to be risked, and if we need to spend money, we will spend money, no doubt, in order to maintain appropriate standards. If you were asking me the question at this moment, 'Would I change my views to that which I gave four years ago?', without further evidence, my answer is 'No, I haven't really changed my view.' The committee, on the other hand, is undertaking, as I think it was suggested should happen three or four years ago, a review of where we're at. There are going to be, as Llyr is saying, further responsibilities for the Assembly over time. Will that increase the risk of misbehaviour by lobbyists? Well, it might, but I suppose my tendency would be to say that, if there is a risk, it's a greater risk involving Government Ministers than, again, if I dare say it, your average AM, or your backbench AM, if you like. So, it's very difficult, I think, to say that there is necessarily an increased risk.

[26] We need to be vigilant in the area all the time, as Presiding Officers and I have now said over six years, as you will know particularly. I think it's impossible to say there is a greater risk because there is greater devolution, if you like, but there are more opportunities, inevitably. Do we have a robust system in place? Do we have the criminal law in place in relation to certain aspects of this? We do, but I can't make up the committee's mind for it, as it were, but it doesn't seem to me, with great respect, that, necessarily, the time is now to bring in a register, as a statutory register, with all the expense that that would involve. But that's only my view.

[27] **Jayne Bryant:** Thank you, commissioner. I think we'll have to agree then, as a committee, the next steps that we'll take on this. Is this something—? Llyr.

[28] **Llyr Gruffydd:** A gaf i ofyn, mae'n amlwg, rwy'n meddwl, o'r sgyrsiau mae rhywun yn eu cael yn anffurfiol y tu allan i'r pwyllgor yma, gyda'r cyhoedd a chyda phobl sy'n ymwneud â'r maes yma, mai'r consŷrn pennaf yw yng nghydestun Gweinidogion a'r Llywodraeth, fel rŷm ni wedi ei glywed. Hynny yw, byddai creu cyfundrefn i Aelodau Cynulliad, heb greu cyfundrefn gryfach, neu gyfatebol, i Weinidogion, rwy'n meddwl, yn—mae gwastraff amser yn rhy gryf, ond yn sicr ddim yn dod â'r budd gorau i'r sefydliad a'r sefydliadau sydd gennym ni fan hyn.

[29] Felly, y cwestiwn yw: i ba raddau y gallwn ni ddylanwadu ar y sefyllfa fel y mae hi, o safbwynt y cod gweinidogol? Oherwydd mae wedi cael ei godi lawer gwaith yn y gorffennol nad yw hi, efallai, yn sefyllfa ddelfrydol lle mae'r Prif Weinidog—i gyfieithu idiom Saesneg—yn farnwr, yn rheithgor ac yn ddienyddiwr, efallai. Mae'n rhaid inni drïo dylanwadu ar y broses yna, rwy'n meddwl, fel pwyllgor, ond, wrth gwrs, nid wyf yn glir iawn ynglŷn â pha hawliau a beth yw'n rôl ni yn y cyd-destun yma, a dweud y gwir.

[30] **Jayne Bryant:** I think you raise a really important point there, Llyr, because there is a difference between what we're talking about with the ministerial code, and what we can achieve as a committee, and making sure that we're vigilant against any lobbying within the Assembly as Assembly Members. Commissioner, would you be able to enlighten us a bit or—?

Llyr Gruffydd: May I ask, it's clear, I think, from the discussions that one has informally outwith this committee, with the public and with people involved in this particular field of endeavour, that the main concern is in the context of Ministers and the Government, as we've already heard. That is, creating a regime for Assembly Members, without creating a stronger, or corresponding, regime for Ministers, would, I think be—well, a waste of time is too strong, but wouldn't bring the best possible benefit to this institution and the institutions that we have here.

So, the question is: to what extent can we influence the situation as it stands, in terms of the ministerial code? Because it has been raised several times in the past that it's not, perhaps, an ideal situation where the First Minister—to translate—is judge, jury and executioner. We have to try to influence that process as a committee, but, of course, I'm not entirely sure about what rights and what our role is in that context.

[31] **Mr Elias:** Well, I did want to say this, in the light of what Llyr has just said: when I carried out the consultation on the last occasion with Assembly Members, which was quite extensive, in relation to lobbying, and my report on the last occasion, it would be right to say that a large number of Members—probably most of those who I consulted—raised the question of whether there should not be greater transparency as between Government Ministers and lobbyists and the public knowledge in that area, and that if we were seriously moving to a register, what about that aspect of matters. That was certainly raised by a large number of Members. And I can't say that it's a matter that is brought to me by the public, because there haven't been complaints, and it's not an issue that I think the public would necessarily raise with me in that way. But, certainly, through Members, it was raised quite extensively. And it is a matter that I have raised in various forums in the Assembly over the years. But, obviously, as you know, I have no part to play in the ministerial code and so on.

[32] **Jayne Bryant:** Certainly. Okay, thank you for that. What would you suggest as a committee? We've got a few options. Could we perhaps start a written consultation? Would that be something that committee members are interested in, with a view to taking evidence, perhaps, in the spring? Or would you want to defer the option of looking at this? Any thoughts? Paul.

[33] **Paul Davies:** I think Llyr's point about consistency is very, very important, because, obviously, if we are looking to introduce standards for Assembly Members, then those standards should also apply to Government Ministers as well, and to the Government. And I'm just wondering whether, as a committee, we would be able to work with the Government on this issue, to see whether we could actually introduce a consistent regime.

[34] **Jayne Bryant:** Yes, we can write to the Government on that, and I think that's a valid point, what you're saying. Llyr.

[35] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Jest i ategu'r pwynt yna, a dweud y gwir, rwy'n weddol gyfforddus gyda'r sefyllfa bresennol o safbwynt Aelodau Cynulliad unigol. Nid wy'n gyfforddus gyda'r sefyllfa o safbwynt y cod gweinidogol. A fyddai modd inni, felly, fel pwyllgor, gael trafodaethau gyda'r bobl berthnasol, o safbwynt y

Llyr Gruffydd: Just to underline that point, really, I'm quite comfortable with the current situation in relation to individual Assembly Members. I'm not comfortable with the situation in relation to the ministerial code. Can we perhaps, therefore, as a committee have discussions with the relevant personnel, in relation to the

Llywodraeth, i weld a fyddai modd inni edrych ar y cyfan gyda'i gilydd? Oherwydd, waeth inni heb â diwygio un heb fod o ddifri ynglŷn â diwygio'r llall. Ac os gallwn ni ddod i ryw ddealltwriaeth bod hynny yn faes addas inni edrych arno fe, yna fe fyddwn i'n falch iawn inni wneud hynny. Ond heb ein bod ni mewn sefyllfa i gael clust yr awdurdodau o safbwynt y cod gweinidogol, nid wy'n meddwl mai dyna fyddai'r defnydd gorau o'n hamser ni, a dweud y gwir.

Government, to see whether we can look at the situation as a whole? Because there's no point looking at amending one without seriously looking at amending the other. And if we can come to some sort of understanding that that is an appropriate area for us to look at, then I'd be very pleased if we could do so. But if we're not in a situation to have the ear of the institutions in relation to the ministerial code, I think that might not be the best use of our time.

[36] **Jayne Bryant:** We can explore options with the Government on that. I think we have to be clear, though, it is two separate points, because I think we can easily get caught up in something that—you know, the commissioner has gone out to look at what's happening with the new legislation, which is how we started this, that's coming in Westminster and Scotland, and I think that that's where we've got with that issue of lobbying, but that is quite separate to a ministerial code. And whilst we can look at—. I understand your points about making sure that we're not doing one without the other, but whether we need to do something about this point is, perhaps, a good place to start. Would you want to look into lobbying? I take your point, Llyr, as somebody who has been on this committee before and you've heard the evidence that we've had, and we're newer members here, but would we want to start with a written consultation on lobbying in light of what the commissioner has brought to us?

[37] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Mi ddywedaf i yn blwmp ac yn blaen: o safbwynt y dystiolaeth sydd ger ein bron ni ynglŷn â lefel y risg, nid wy'n meddwl bod y galw yna i ddiwygio'r sefyllfa lobïo bresennol o safbwynt Aelodau Cynulliad, yn fy marn i.

Llyr Gruffydd: I will say quite clearly: in relation to the evidence before us, in relation to the level of risk, I don't think that the demand is there to amend the current lobbying situation in relation to Assembly Members, in my opinion.

[38] **Jayne Bryant:** Okay. Anybody else?

[39] **David Rowlands:** Sorry, I think we ought to define what we're trying to

achieve here with any movement that we make with this committee. It's been put to us that it seems to be transparent enough, and I suppose it's transparency we're looking for with regard to this, rather than the consequences of what might happen. We're just looking for clarity on the organisations that might be involved in lobbying and who it is they are lobbying and to what extent they are lobbying. That's what we're trying to achieve, I think, in this. And I think the regime that we have at the moment seems to be working well enough, apart from, perhaps, this suggestion that's come about, which is to have a register of the name of the lobbying organisations. But then the costs of that we have to balance against—

[40] **Jayne Bryant:** Commissioner.

[41] **Mr Elias:** Could I just mention the fact, when Mick Antoniw was Chair of this committee, he and I—I'm going to say it was during the consultation process on the last occasion, he and I approached PAC, Public Affairs Cymru, as the lobbying body, if you like, in Wales, with a view to inviting them to produce a voluntary register. Part of that, if they were prepared to produce a voluntary register, may of course answer some of the issues that have been raised by the committee today, because perhaps they would be indicating which Ministers they were involved with—nobody could prevent them from doing that, if they were minded so to do, and the register might, a voluntary register of that kind, might produce some of the information that is currently, by some, anyway, thought to be missing.

[42] We were, as it were, rebuffed. Having gone some way down the line thinking that there might be scope for a voluntary register to be produced, we were rebuffed at the last moment with that, as it were, so no voluntary register was forthcoming, but it does occur to me that another approach, perhaps, by you with the new commissioner to see whether that, independently of whatever else the committee may do, may produce the result that we couldn't produce on the last occasion. It doesn't have the resource implications, of course, although it may have minor resource implications for them.

[43] **Jayne Bryant:** Thank you, commissioner. I think that's really helpful as well. I think what you've talked about, and we've mentioned it before, is about vigilance on standards, and I think it's good practice to, perhaps, look back at things—where there have been changes, it is good practice to look and see if there's anything we can move with and, perhaps, as you've suggested, that there is an appetite now, perhaps, for the PAC to see if they

would introduce some voluntary register. We can explore that, if the committee's in agreement to explore that.

[44] **Mr Elias:** I'm sorry, just to add this, forgive me for intervening again, but one of the issues in London, for example, is that there is a cost to register, and that cost is £8,000. Now, if PAC know that, but know that they have the option of providing information themselves, that that is likely to be the level if we have a statutory register, and if they can do it themselves somewhat more cheaply and without those sorts of costs, they may think that's not a bad route to take.

[45] **Jayne Bryant:** I think that, if we've got—with the changes that you've explored, and I see what the committee feels on this, and I do understand, but with a written consultation, perhaps we can explore some of these issues as well as—. I see what Llyr has said—that he feels that we've gone down that route, but seeing as there have been changes, perhaps we could input that, the voluntary register, into that written consultation. How do Members feel about that?

09:45

[46] **Llyr Gruffydd:** What's the written consultation about, sorry?

[47] **Jayne Bryant:** It's to look at the developments that the commissioner has come back with that have happened at Westminster and in Scotland and see if there are any changes that we can make and then feel if a voluntary register, as David suggested—if there's an appetite, maybe, for a voluntary register, to push that through. How do you feel about that?

[48] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Jest i fod yn glir, **Llyr Gruffydd:** Just to be clear, what felly, beth rydym ni'n mynd i'w wneud yw mynd mas i gael written consultation to see whether ymgynghoriad ysgrifenedig ar a oes there is a need to amend the current angen diwygio'r gyfundrefn regime and, as part of those bresennol ac, fel rhan o'r considerations, to what extent some astudiaethau hynny, i ba raddau y kind of voluntary approach would be byddai rhyw ddynesiad gwirfoddol yn one way of solving any—if there is un ffordd o ddatrys unrhyw—wel, os something to be solved. So, the oes yna rywbeth i'w ddatrys. Hynny voluntary approach would be one yw, bod dynesiad gwirfoddol yn un consideration worth looking at. ystyriaeth, efallai, sydd werth edrych

arni.

[49] **Jayne Bryant:** Yes, that's what I had in mind.

[50] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Rydw i'n **Llyr Gruffydd:** I'm very comfortable
gyfforddus iawn gyda hynny. with that.

[51] **Jayne Bryant:** And in that, we've talked previously—I think in the last report, as well—about the revolving door, which would come into some of the—. I think you discussed that in the last report, and perhaps we could look into that with this written consultation, if people are content. That takes on some of the issues, maybe. Paul, did you want to come in? Sorry, I didn't know if you wanted to come in.

[52] **Paul Davies:** No, the points have been covered, actually,

[53] **Jayne Bryant:** Fine, okay, thanks. So, are we happy to have the written consultation? We can produce a paper for the next meeting along those lines. Do we agree? Brilliant, thank you. Hopefully, we've covered those issues, and thank you, commissioner, for your guidance on that as well.

09:47

Sesiwn Ymadawol gyda'r Comisiynydd Safonau Valedictory Session with the Commissioner for Standards

[54] **Jayne Bryant:** Right, we'll move on to the next item, the valedictory session with the commissioner for standards, and we'll be sorry to see you go, commissioner. But over to you.

[55] **Mr Elias:** I can hardly believe, Chair, that, all bar two weeks, six years have passed since first I was appointed. There have been three chairs of this committee and, I think, 12 members in total, in various changes of committee. I suppose my aims from the beginning, when I got my feet under the table and saw how the system operated, were to streamline the processes for the benefit of the public and for Assembly Members, certainly to provide greater transparency, particularly for the public, but, at the end of the day, the aim of it all was to give confidence, both to the public and to Assembly Members, that we have in place a robust and efficient standards regime, and I believe that we do. I'm delighted, as I have said, at the last meeting—I won't labour the point, and I put it in my report, too—but I am delighted that one

of my aims, which was to put everything that relates to standards and the procedures into one handbook—and we have that now. I'm extremely grateful, as I've said before, to all those who played a part in producing it, but I do think it's a very useful tool for the Assembly Members as well as for the public.

[56] But, of course, the role has been wider for me than dealing with admissible complaints. I spend quite a lot of time assisting members of the public who have come to me with apparent complaints that involve grievances, but which can't be dealt with by the complaints system, because it does seem to me that, simply, as it were, batting them away would not do the reputation of the place any good at all. So, I do spend time dealing with people who come with grievances that can't be dealt with through this system, but I seek to point them in another direction, or to help them, or occasionally to contact AMs who may be able to help them through their offices.

[57] I liaise on a regular basis with the standards commissioners and departments in other jurisdictions in the rest of the UK, in Ireland, and in Jersey, and we have regular meetings and seminars, one of which was held—the last but one, I think—in Cardiff. That has been a very valuable learning tool. Again, we have learnt a lot from each other, and we apply it to our own processes, and I think it's been a benefit us here in Wales.

[58] I instituted, as you will know, Chair, the biennial standards commissioner lecture, which I believe my successor will continue with. That's been important. In my view, it broadcasts to Wales that standards in public life matter. When we've had two lord chief justices in office coming to tell the public that—that's been an important way of broadcasting that fact to everybody in Wales who is involved in public life. It's been produced under the concept, as I've titled it, of the Assembly being the beacon of standards in public life, because that's what we should aspire to, in my view, and I hope that Members will agree with me.

[59] I've taken Wales out, too. I've been to show the way that we do things here in Scotland and in Ireland, but I've also been to Westminster and, I hasten to add at my own expense, to Washington and to Wellington in New Zealand. We've compared, in those places, the way we do things with the way they do things. And I'm very pleased and proud to say, Chair, that our systems and our procedures in all those places that I've mentioned—and particularly our induction courses, which were demonstrated in May of this

year—these are very much admired everywhere that I've taken them and discussed our systems with those who are responsible in those countries. The term, 'the gold standard' is perhaps much overused these days, but I do believe that, in Wales, we have something approaching the gold standard in relation to our system that deals with conduct.

[60] Why do we have this gold standard? Why do we have the quality that we have now? If I may say so, I think it's because we've had—and this is absolutely fundamentally important, in my view—a series of committees; committee men and women and chairs, who obviously and robustly relegate party politics from any discussion on standards, and that is so fundamentally important in my view, if I may say so. I've been supported very strongly by a succession of Presiding Officers, by party leaders who recognise the importance of standards and of the effect they have on the reputation of this place. And, of course, I've been greatly assisted by all Members who treat adherence to standards not, in my experience, as a nuisance, but as a necessity. All of this, of course, is vital, but the other vital ingredient, which I know will be carried on by my successor, is that the commissioner has his or her independence. That's absolutely fundamental to the whole of the system.

[61] The number of complaints that I've received over the six years has been relatively constant. It's in the range of two to three dozen—24-ish to 36-ish. Few of these complaints, as the committee will know, reach the position of being admissible or involve matters that are very serious. We've had one or two, but very few over the six years. I think this is credit to Members of the Assembly over that period of time—for their appreciation of how important it is that the reputation of the National Assembly for Wales is not sullied by the conduct or misconduct of a Member or Members.

[62] In carrying out my tasks, I've been assisted immensely by the Commission, by Claire Clancy and her team of officers and staff whose support and confidence I have enjoyed every day of my time in this role. I would also like to say that I believe the remuneration board and the work that it's done over these years has also been a very important ingredient in smoothing the path and ensuring that we don't have more complaints, particularly on the financial side. As I've said many times and in my reports—and I am touching wood when I say it—we've had no financial scandals of the kind that have bedevilled other institutions and I believe that's, in large part, down to the remuneration board.

[63] May I say on a personal note that, when I set off in office six years

ago, I was assisted, on a part-time basis, as I have been throughout, by staff, but by Helen Finlayson in the first instance, who was outstandingly good for me, but in recent years by Jonathan Thomas and Buddug Saer, who have helped me in carrying out the day-to-day tasks?

[64] As I've said many times and in many reports that I've now written, it's the reputation of this place that matters, by which I always felt that I would be judged when I started—is the reputation of this place good or better than it was when I started? I'm proud and honoured that, for six years, I've had the opportunity to play a part in both raising the standard and ensuring that it always continues to fly high. And I believe that that is where we're at: that we do now have a gold standard, which I hope the Members, as well as I, can be proud of, and I would wish my successor, Sir Roderick Evans, as much fulfilment and happiness in the role as I have had over these last six years. Thank you very much, Chair.

[65] **Jane Bryant:** Thank you very much, Commissioner. Certainly, I, as a new Member, am very grateful for that codified document that you've brought in, and I think other Members are as well. It's been very, very helpful. And thank you so much for all the work that you've done over the past six years. There's no doubt in the way that the Assembly's reputation has gone on—as you mentioned, the gold standards—and we're very proud that we're up there with the best. You've done an excellent job at building and establishing the role as an independent commissioner, particularly your achievements with that document and establishing the lectures on public life, which I think have been particularly helpful and very good.

[66] I'm looking forward to working with your successor, Sir Roderick Evans, who is here today. So, welcome. I'm sure we'll be seeing much more of you in the coming months, and we look forward to working with you to move the agenda that this commissioner has set. There's a lot to live up to, I think, but thank you very much, Commissioner. Any questions, or anybody else like to raise anything? No, I think we're all very happy and very grateful for your work.

[67] **Mr Elias:** Thank you very much.

[68] **Jane Bryant:** Thank you, Commissioner, and wishing you all the best for the future.

09:56

**Ethol Cadeirydd Dros Dro yn Unol ag Adran 10.2 o'r Weithdrefn Gwyno
Election of a Temporary Chair in Accordance with Section 10.2 of the
Complaints Procedure**

[69] **Jane Bryant:** Okay. Shall we move on to item 5, which is to elect a temporary Chair in case of a complaint against the Chair? So, this is an administrative procedure that would apply that there is a complaint against me, in which case, someone would need to stand in for me to ensure the commissioner had someone to liaise with. So, I invite nominations.

[70] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Rwy'n hapus i **Llyr Gruffydd:** I'm happy to nominate gynnig Paul Davies, os yw e'n barod i Paul Davies, if he is willing to accept. dderbyn.

[71] **Paul Davies:** Diolch yn fawr iawn.

[72] **Jane Bryant:** Paul Davies, brilliant. So, there are no other nominations. No. So, we agree that Paul Davies is the nominated Member. Congratulations, Paul. Let's hope you don't ever have to sit in this Chair, that's all I'm going to say. [*Laughter.*] Brilliant. The date of the next meeting is 29 November. Thank you very much.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 09:57.
The meeting ended at 09:57.*