



Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales

# Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a  
Chymunedau](#)

[The Equality, Local Government and  
Communities Committee](#)

25/05/2017

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi 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**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| John Griffiths<br><a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>     | Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor)<br>Labour (Committee Chair) |
| Sian Gwenllian<br><a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>     | Plaid Cymru<br>The Party of Wales                         |
| Huw Irranca-Davies<br><a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a> | Llafur<br>Labour  |
| Bethan Jenkins<br><a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>     | Plaid Cymru<br>The Party of Wales                         |
| David Melding<br><a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>      | Ceidwadwyr Cymreig<br>Welsh Conservatives                 |
| Jeremy Miles<br><a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>       | Llafur<br>Labour  |
| Jenny Rathbone<br><a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>     | Llafur<br>Labour  |

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| John G. Rees  | Rheolwr y Bil, Llywodraeth Cymru<br>Bill Manager, Welsh Government   |
| Carl Sargeant | Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros<br>Gymunedau a Phlant)<br>Assembly Member, Labour (The Cabinet Secretary<br>for Communities and Children) |
| Katie Wilson  | Cyfreithiwr, Llywodraeth Cymru<br>Lawyer, Welsh Government   |

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

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Jonathan Baxter | Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil<br>Research Service |
| Chloe Davies    | Dirprwy Glerc<br>Deputy Clerk            |
| Steve Davies    | Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol<br>Legal Adviser  |
| Naomi Stocks    | Clerc<br>Clerk                           |

Elizabeth Wilkinson      Ail Glerc  
Second Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:17.  
The meeting began at 09:17.*

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

[1] **John Griffiths:** Welcome, everyone, to this meeting of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, where we will be taking evidence from the Cabinet Secretary and his officials. This is our final evidence-taking session with regard to the right to buy and associated rights (Wales) Bill. Our first item today, though, is introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest. We have apologies from Gareth Bennett, Janet Finch-Saunders, Joyce Watson and Rhianon Passmore. David Melding is substituting for Janet Finch-Saunders and Jeremy Miles and Huw Irranca-Davies are substituting for Joyce Watson and Rhianon Passmore. Sian Gwenllian, a member of the committee from north Wales, is joining us by videoconference from north Wales.

[2] **Sian Gwenllian:** Bore da.

[3] **John Griffiths:** Bore da. Welcome, everyone.

09:18

**Bil Diddymu'r Hawl i Brynu a Hawliau Cysylltiedig (Cymru): Sesiwn  
Dystiolaeth 7—Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant  
Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill:  
Evidence Session 7—Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children**

[4] **John Griffiths:** We will move straight into item 2, which is the Cabinet Secretary and his officials giving evidence in our evidence-taking session 7 on the legislation. Would you like to introduce your officials for the record, please, Cabinet Secretary?

[5] **Carl Sargeant:** Bore da, Chair. Good morning, committee. I'll ask John to introduce himself, and then Katie.

[6] **Mr Rees:** Good morning. I'm John Rees. I work in the housing policy division of the Welsh Government, and I'm the bill manager.

[7] **Ms Wilson:** I'm Katie Wilson from legal services.

[8] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Perhaps I could begin by asking the first question today, Cabinet Secretary. With regard to the evidence that the committee has received in this legislative scrutiny, we've heard about positive and negative aspects of the right to buy in terms of the way they affect communities. How would you respond to the view that the right to buy has actually enriched the lives of many and freed them, really, from intergenerational housing dependency?

[9] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you, Chair. We've watched the committee proceedings as you've taken evidence and I would suggest that, in our view, overwhelmingly the evidence that you've received has been in support of the ending of the right to buy and the right to acquire. It is working with our principles in mind—and I acknowledge the statement that you've just made, but it would also be fair to say that we are not ending the opportunity for individuals to have home ownership. We have other schemes that are available. At the time of the introduction of the right to buy, those schemes weren't available. So, we're in a very different timescale from where we were then to where we are now. So, we don't believe we're stemming the opportunity for people to move into home ownership should they wish to do so.

[10] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thank you for that initial answer. We will now go to Sian Gwenllian in north Wales, who has further questions.

[11] **Sian Gwenllian:** Diolch yn fawr. Mi ges i'r cyfle i fynd i Gaergybi i siarad efo tenantiaid yn y fan honno, a gwir yw dweud bod y mwyafrif o blaid y Mesur yma. Y brif broblem oedd yn dod allan ganddyn nhw oedd yr angen i adeiladu mwy o dai cymdeithasol. Nid yw hwn, yn ei hun, yn mynd i wneud hynny, wrth gwrs, nac ydy? Mae'n mynd i ddiogelu'r stoc i'r dyfodol, ond ni fydd yn taclo'r brif broblem sydd yn dod allan, sef yr

**Sian Gwenllian:** Thank you very much. I had the opportunity to go to Holyhead to speak to tenants there, and it's true to say that the majority were in favour of this Bill. The main problem that they raised was the need to build more social housing. This, in and of itself, is not going to do that, is it? It's going to safeguard stock for the future, but it won't tackle the chief problem that arises, which is the need for more social

angen i gael mwy o dai cymdeithasol, housing, and also the problem that ac hefyd y broblem bod cyflwr tai yn the state of housing in the private y sector breifat yn tueddu i fod o rented sector tends to be of a lower ansawdd is na'r stoc tai standard than the social housing cymdeithasol. stock.

[12] **Carl Sargeant:** Bore da, Sian. The Member's right. This doesn't, in itself, add value to the amount of stock that is being built, but what it does do is give confidence and protect stock of historic and future investment as well. And what we've seen is registered social landlords and local authorities having more confidence there to invest finances to build more properties. I accept the premise that there isn't enough social housing stock, and that's why our investment of 20,000 new homes across our term of Government is an important principle, but also is a part of the jigsaw that protects the social investment that we are making in our communities.

[13] **Sian Gwenllian:** Diolch. Mi **Sian Gwenllian:** Thank you. One oedd un tenant yn benodol eisiau tenant specifically wanted to cael prynu ei dŷ. Roedd yn byw mewn purchase his house. He lived in a part rhan o sir Fôn lle mae'r prisiau tai yn of Anglesey where house prices are uchel iawn, lle mae llawer iawn o dai very high, were there are very many haf. Nid oedd o yn gweld ffordd allan second homes. He couldn't see a way iddo fo ei hun, hyd yn oed o fewn y out for himself, even in the packages pecynnau sydd yn cael eu cynnig ar that are on offer currently. He hyn o bryd. Nid oedd o yn gweld couldn't see a way for him to ffordd allan iddo fo ei hun. Ond, proceed. But, I do accept the iawn, rwy'n derbyn y dystiolaeth evidence that you've just given. rydych chi wedi ei roi.

[14] Symud ymlaen i fater y Moving on to the issue of the disgownt. Ydych chi wedi meddwl, yn discount. Have you considered, hytrach na diddymu hwn yn llwyr, rather than abolishing this in its lleihau'r disgownt ymhellach, fel bod entirety, reducing the discount hynny'n cael effaith ar y sefyllfa? further, so that that could have an impact on the situation?

[15] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes, we did consider that. We reduced that by half. The consultation that we went through was around reduction, but there was always the principle of our consideration of manifesto commitments as well, around the ending of the right to buy. So, it was just a staged approach to reduction to the end. It's a bit of false accounting, really. If we were to

reduce the reduction down to £1 or to zero, it's the same as the ending of the right to buy, in effect. So, we are looking to protect the housing stock for the future. This ends the ability to lose stock into the system.

[16] **Sian Gwenllian:** Diolch.

[17] **John Griffiths:** Are you happy, Sian?

[18] **Sian Gwenllian:** That's fine, thank you. I understand that.

[19] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Could I just ask, further to that, Cabinet Secretary, in terms of reducing the maximum discount down to £8,000, and the impact of that, was an assessment made, to inform this particular piece of legislation, of the impact of that reduction?

[20] **Carl Sargeant:** In terms of the consultation process that we went through in terms of the initial reduction down to £8,000, the assessment of last year's sales indicates that the average reduction for sale was around about £15,000, which would indicate that people applied prior to the reduction of the discount. So, we're still in the system of significant reductions in the scheme. We did look at the impact of that, and there is a timeline, I suppose, of lag between the maximum amount and the £8,000. But we are of the belief that ending the right to buy is our principle aim and that's what we are seeking to do.

[21] **John Griffiths:** Okay. David.

[22] **David Melding:** I wonder if I can press the Cabinet Secretary: it strikes me that the best thing that we could do for social housing at the moment is accept the alternative projection of housing need contained in Professor Holmans' report—regrettably the late Professor Holmans—which the Welsh Government commissioned. You could accept that projection and still leave your immediate targets in place. You could plausibly say, 'Well, we need to build up the levels of skills before we can advance robustly towards meeting the demands of the alternative projection'. But it seems to me, in terms of public policy, the overwhelming need we have now, and from now until the early 2030s, is to build more houses—more social houses—in line with the alternative projection. Why is the Welsh Government not doing that?

[23] **Carl Sargeant:** We've disagreed on the figures on several occasions, and I think what we've been very clear about is our commitment to invest

into 20,000 units as we move forward over this term of Government. That is based upon the fiscal ability to pay for those properties and the ability to make sure that we are able to develop them in what we believe is the timescale that is allowed. It's still going to be very challenging, but we are moving to house build. I do accept the Member's points regarding the need to build more houses, but while we are building them, we are still haemorrhaging them in terms of the right to buy, and that can't continue. In fact, it stands to reason that the more properties we build—newer properties are more attractive to people under the right to buy scheme. So, that is two parts of the jigsaw that are interlinked: build more homes—we are doing that—and end the right to buy—we are seeking to do that.

[24] **David Melding:** You know that I'm just testing the balance of this argument, but on the 20,000 target—which, compared to the performance of the last Welsh Government, we're not likely to meet—I genuinely hope that we at least meet the 20,000 target for additional social homes. But that's only 2,500 above previous plans over a five-year period, which is roughly the equivalent of the number of homes currently purchased over a five-year period under the various rights to buy. You're not transforming the situation; you're not even starting the journey, are you? It's a strange thing for you, as a Government, to focus on this very small aspect of what you see as the problem, rather than the huge bit about how we set up society to accept and start to prepare to build a lot more homes.

[25] **Carl Sargeant:** I'm not sure I should take any lessons on building council properties or social housing from a Conservative Member. The fact of the matter is that we are ambitious: 20,000 units will be very challenging for authorities to do, but we are committed to doing that. Again, the 20,000 units that we are investing in aren't the only housing properties that will be built in Wales—there will be others such as private sector stock. We do have products enabling people to get on to the housing market ladder. So, Help to Buy, the homebuy scheme, and the rent-to-own product, which we will be introducing later in the year, are all additionalities to give people flexibility in the housing market, subject to what they wish to do.

[26] **David Melding:** Thank you, Chair.

[27] **John Griffiths:** Jenny.

[28] **Jenny Rathbone:** Just following up on that, private house builders are sitting on substantial blocks of land. What conversations have you had with

them to tell them to get on with it?

[29] **Carl Sargeant:** I have regular conversations with developers and the Home Builders Federation. There is a planning process that they go through. I'm trying to encourage the house builders to be more flexible in their approach to development so that they are not always building the high-end, very profitable networks that they build and try to move into a different market. So, I think there's a great opportunity for small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales to build units of new and different types of quality. But it's a planning issue, which is a process, and that's why the 20,000 units that we're seeking to build is ambitious, because of the system we're in—you've got to go through planning systems, LDPs and all of those issues. So, it's going to be challenging whatever we do.

09:30

[30] **John Griffiths:** Jenny, I think you've got questions on other matters.

[31] **Jenny Rathbone:** Just looking at one of the specifics of the Bill, which is to treat new-build homes differently, the legislation prescribes that new social housing dwellings would, in most cases, not be eligible for right to buy for two months after it becomes a law. I just wondered if you could tell us what estimate you've made of the number of properties involved in this and the number of families that might be involved.

[32] **Carl Sargeant:** We believe the numbers will be very small because of the actual new homes coming through the system. In any case, we believe that the majority of tenants that enter into those new properties wouldn't be eligible for the right to buy anyway. So, this is more of a technical issue in terms of the introduction. There are two elements: that we can move quickly to protect our housing stock, and it gives confidence to developers as well to build new properties. We've seen local authorities and RSLs building already. Flintshire have just introduced 74 new social housing homes, and they've got mixed tenancy, some from historic tenants that have got the right to buy, effectively, and others that haven't. We know in Carmarthen—I think it's Carmarthen—where the suspension is in place, for every one social housing placement available, there are seven people on the waiting list. So, it goes hand in hand. That's why protecting the stock as quickly as we possibly can is what we believe is reasonable.

[33] **Jenny Rathbone:** Sticking with the status of people living in newly let

dwelling, some people argue that this is a marginal consideration and therefore these homes should be given the same status as all the other homes. Could you tell us exactly how many people are potentially—I mean, not exactly, but a rough ball park?

[34] **Carl Sargeant:** I can't give you a number on that, but I will give that some further consideration and write to the committee if I can. It is all dependent on how many homes will be built in that period of time and how many tenants are related to having the right. We'll have some assessment on that, but I don't have the figures for you today, unfortunately.

[35] **Jenny Rathbone:** The Welsh Government's own research found there was no correlation between the existence of right to buy and related rights and the development of new social housing over the last decade. Do you think you could comment as to, therefore, why you felt this—*[Inaudible.]*

[36] **Carl Sargeant:** The discussions I've had with local authorities and RSLs are suggesting—and I gather you will have heard evidence from those sectors—they're saying that for them to have confidence to build, they need to have closure on the ending of the right to buy, because it's false investment. It's investing in good-quality stock and what tends to happen is people seek to purchase the better quality stock of RSLs first, so they will be prime property for people to purchase. As I've said in the past, it's not easy to replicate—from the sale of the property—to build a new one with the funding that comes back. It's just not comparative.

[37] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Are you happy with that, Jenny?

[38] **Jenny Rathbone:** Yes, happy.

[39] **John Griffiths:** David—oh, sorry. Did you have a question, Jeremy?

[40] **Jeremy Miles:** Just in terms of the six-month period for the qualification, why was six months the period that was chosen rather than three months or nine months or 12 months?

[41] **Ms Wilson:** Six months was chosen for a couple of reasons: partly to ensure that any refurbishment the local authority or RSL was doing of a property—if it was substantive and therefore it hadn't been let for a substantial period of time, say six months—then that would count as new stock when it came into being let. It's also to capture, then, any new builds

or new properties purchased. That would all be caught. Six months was also chosen because there are voids in social housing where tenants change position and places. So, just to ensure that nothing was caught where it was only a normal change of tenant. Say if it was empty for a month while some cleaning was done or something like that—we didn't want that to be caught with new stock; we only wanted the stock that had substantial refurbishment or renovation to be caught as new stock to protect that investment by social landlords. So, we thought that six months was a reasonable amount of time to deliver those aims.

[42] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay, thank you.

[43] **John Griffiths:** Thank you. David.

[44] **David Melding:** Thank you, Chair. You said earlier that you've been closely following our evidence gathering and our sessions and that, in your view, the overwhelming amount of evidence is in favour of the Bill. I would suggest that, as far as tenants are concerned, it is much more conflicted than that. Indeed, from the various focus group-type events we've had, we've found that, when discussed, opinions sometimes move more in the direction of preserving the right. The wider the survey, the more evidence there is of substantial numbers of tenants supporting it and younger tenants tending to support it. So, I suspect that if you weighed all of this up, you'd still probably have a majority who'd say that they're comfortable with the central purpose of this Bill, but it's not overwhelming—not the way I would use the word 'overwhelming'.

[45] One area where there has been overwhelming opinion expressed is that we need to look very carefully at the rights of tenants in suspended areas compared to those tenants who will be first captured, really, under this Bill. That's come across very firmly—there's a very firm view that, for instance, the grace period should be available across all of Wales, including the areas under current suspension. I just wonder, if you've been following this closely—. You would've noticed that it's not just tenants—organisations like Shelter Cymru and a couple of other key ones, as I recall, have said that this is an area that could cause some difficulty and is, perhaps, troubling.

[46] I notice in your letter to us that you justify the discrimination on the following grounds: you say, and I quote, that

[47] 'Tenants will also have been consulted upon suspension and have had

the opportunity to buy the bricks and mortar in their homes, prior to suspension taking effect.'

[48] That's your letter of 22 May. But, currently, tenants who would be affected by this Bill and weren't affected by suspension get the same opportunity to buy prior to a decision to abolish the right to buy, because that's what we're doing now. The law has not changed—you've proposed a change in the law, we're going through full scrutiny and the eventual outcome may be that this Bill becomes an Act, but we're not at the point of decision. After the point of decision, if that decision is to abolish, then there will be a year of grace for those tenants, but a similar year of grace, or period of grace, was not available to those in suspended areas after the point of that decision being taken. This does seem to me to be discriminatory, and it's clearly been picked up across the housing sector, it has caused trouble to most of it and some feel this is an area where we should have an amendment—certainly, many tenants have said that. So, have you rethought this particular part of the Bill?

[49] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you for your questions, David. Can I take the two points? First of all, your consideration about the evidence base that you've—. Again, it's all about interpretation of that, and we have looked at that very closely. You mentioned that there was a little bit of angst with tenants in terms of their views on the Bill. There were, I understand, two tenants' associations that gave evidence to you, and TPAS, which is one of the tenants' associations, was fully supportive of the Bill. So, I don't recognise—

[50] **David Melding:** They told us they liked the idea of the suspension. You or your advisers need to read it more carefully.

[51] **Carl Sargeant:** They support the aim of the Bill to abolish the right to buy. Therefore, I don't recognise the issues that the Member raises so strongly.

[52] The other part around the suspension—the Member is right to raise this. I'll start the process in terms of—. The suspensions have been approved where evidence shows that there is a substantial imbalance between demand for social housing and its supply in line with the legislation. If I may, Chair, there just doesn't appear to be any logic in the principle of removing the suspension. To lift the suspension would only exacerbate the imbalance that we have evidence for, and undermine the purpose of the Measure that was taken and supported through the Assembly in 2011. You've heard the

evidence from Carmarthen. I mentioned it earlier on: for every one social housing space, there are seven people waiting in the system. It just seems illogical. When we recognise there is an evidenced pressure of housing supply in an area where we have sought to suspend, then why would we lift that pressure? Because the pressure hasn't changed.

[53] **David Melding:** Well, perhaps I could help you and give you a categorical reason: it's because in those areas the right to buy has been suspended, not abolished. But they're going to go automatically to it being abolished without any chance of exercising a right in the knowledge of that situation. So, it's a huge difference.

[54] **Carl Sargeant:** The exercise of their rights was allowed up to suspension. Therefore, we believe that is completely reasonable.

[55] **David Melding:** So, this Government sees no distinction between suspending property rights and abolishing them.

[56] **Carl Sargeant:** The consultation on suspension was on suspension; the consultation on abolition was on abolition. They're two very different things, but both fully consulted.

[57] **David Melding:** Well, I'm trying to get you to reflect on the fact they're two different things. You've elided them completely and said that you could justify those in suspended areas not getting this right to a period of grace because, basically, they've already been through the full process. I've said to you that, whatever the process was, full or not, it was for suspension, not abolition.

[58] **Carl Sargeant:** Well, there are several processes in this. There was the White Paper, which was heavily consulted on, there was the manifesto commitment that was both in the Labour Party manifesto and also in the Plaid Cymru manifesto. There is no surprise to people about our introduction of abolition, and there was never a point in time where we said suspension would automatically be lifted and continued in that process. We have always maintained our position of the Government policy. Governments of all ilks should be allowed the passage of opportunity to introduce their manifesto commitments. We're no different to any other government, and our commitment is to introduce the ending of the right to buy.

[59] **David Melding:** So, there's no discrimination in your approach, in your

view, between these two classes of tenants.

[60] **Carl Sargeant:** No.

[61] **John Griffiths:** David, before you go on, could I just bring in Huw on this point?

[62] **Huw Irranca-Davies:** In genuine curiosity within this intervention, in the policy intent determined at a local area by an individual local authority to suspend, the policy intent is quite clear: within the powers that they have available to them, they can temporarily suspend. But there is a clear policy intent: it's recognising that there is this imbalance between demand and supply and that they need to take action. Have you considered the alternative of following through on the manifesto commitment, exercising the powers that you have for full abolition if this Bill were to be passed, but then to allow the local authorities to, in effect, continue this suspension, to continue with that policy intent, right up until the point that this Bill becomes not simply law, but the date it is enacted, the date it takes effect? So, local authorities could say, 'We have a clear policy intent, it streamlines with the Cabinet Secretary's and with the Welsh Government's, we will continue that suspension right up until the day that abolition takes effect.'

[63] **Carl Sargeant:** Most of the suspensions that have taken place are in the time frame of—well, there's plenty of time, whether this Bill is introduced or not. There's a five-year period, and the longest, I think, is two and a half years or three years after they've been introduced. So, there's another two years to run anyway. So, if the Bill is successful, it will catch that anyway. The situation between the areas that are suspended and those that are not is very different: there is an evidence base and a consultation process that has taken place within that local area of demand, which says there is a housing pressure. There is a robust piece of work that took place in order for that to receive approval for suspension.

[64] **Huw Irranca-Davies:** So, just to clarify—and it is important in terms of David's point—there is a recognition that there is a difference between suspension and abolition, but based on the consultation that has been carried out within those areas, you are seeing this abolition as giving express legal intent to what that consultation has made clear—that the suspension should mutate into full abolition.

[65] **Carl Sargeant:** Indeed. That's correct.

[66] **Huw Irranca-Davies:** David.

09:45

[67] **David Melding:** Thank you, Chair. I have to say, I don't take quite such an arbitrary approach to law making, and I see the legal adviser is looking a bit nervous as well, and wants to intervene.

[68] **Carl Sargeant:** Chair, I don't accept that comment by the Member. It is on the record, and my legal adviser doesn't look nervous at all.

[69] **David Melding:** Okay, sorry. She's now indicating she's not nervous, but I thought she wanted to intervene in response to the point that was made.

[70] **Carl Sargeant:** That's a different question, but I'd rather you didn't make inferences like that.

[71] **John Griffiths:** No, I think it doesn't assist us in any way, David.

[72] **David Melding:** Okay, I apologise. If there's no discrimination taking place, why, in your letter, do you draw our attention to the fact that the European convention on human rights does not provide for a free-standing right to non-discrimination?

[73] **Carl Sargeant:** I will, at this point, ask my legal team to give more details.

[74] **Ms Wilson:** Article 14 of the convention is a right to non-discrimination, but it was simply explaining that it's only a right to non-discrimination in giving effect to the rights of the convention. It's not a right to non-discrimination in all matters; it's only linked to those convention rights. So, normally, we say it's a parasitic right, in that it has to be linked to one of the other convention rights.

[75] **Carl Sargeant:** May I suggest your legal adviser is agreeing with us? *[Laughter.]*

[76] **John Griffiths:** Cabinet Secretary—

[77] **David Melding:** You now seem to have repeated the error—[*Inaudible.*]

[78] **John Griffiths:** I must say, yes, if I admonish David Melding, I must admonish you as well, Cabinet Secretary.

[79] **Carl Sargeant:** I apologise, Chair.

[80] **John Griffiths:** I don't think we want to spend this session trying to interpret facial expressions. Could I just bring Sian Gwenllian in on this point? Sian.

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| <p>[81] <b>Sian Gwenllian:</b> Ar y pwynt yma o 12 mis o gyfnod lle byddai'r hawl i brynu yn cario ymlaen, beth mae rhai tenantiaid wedi sôn wrthyf i ydy y buasai'n well ganddyn nhw weld y cwbl yn gorffen, i gyd ar yr un pryd, a bod yna beryg i ganiatáu cyfnod o ras: peryg y byddai yna <i>rush</i> mawr gan bobl i brynu, a gan ddatblygwyr i roi pwysau ar denantiaid i brynu ac wedyn gwerthu ymlaen iddyn nhw. Mae hynny'n ochr gwahanol iawn i beth mae David Melding yn mynd ar ei ôl.</p> | <p><b>Sian Gwenllian:</b> On this point of the 12-month period where the right to buy would remain in place, what some tenants have told me is that they would prefer to see the whole thing coming to an end, all at the same time, and that there is a risk, in allowing that period of grace, that there would be a huge rush from people who wanted to buy and from developers putting pressure on tenants to buy and then sell on to them. That is a very different side to what David Melding is pursuing.</p> |
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[82] **Carl Sargeant:** I recognise the point the Member makes. The grace period was a difficult one in terms of seeking what we believe is fairest and reasonable—for tenants to have the ability to purchase properties should they wish to do so—but also recognising the pressure that will put on the system, as well. We recognise that there will, of course, be a spike in the system following Royal Assent, but in terms of fairness, we are at a wall of where we can go on this. The rules in Scotland were longer. We've decided that we think 'reasonable' is 12 months. There is no legislation around this, of what would be considered reasonable. If the committee believed it should be shorter, that may be a view of the committee.

[83] **John Griffiths:** Sian, are you content?

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| <p>[84] <b>Sian Gwenllian:</b> A oes posibil rhoi unrhyw fath o reolau i mewn yn</p> | <p><b>Sian Gwenllian:</b> Would it be possible to put any rules in place during that</p> |
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ystod y cyfnod 12 mis yna, fel na fydd sbeic yn digwydd? A ydych chi wedi ystyried efallai fod angen meddwl o ddifri am y cyfnod 12 mis yma, a'r peryglon sydd yna, ac a oes yna fesurau y medrai'r Llywodraeth eu rhoi mewn grym i nadu rhyw fath o *rush* ddigwydd yn y cyfnod yna?

12-month period so that there isn't that spike? Have you considered that perhaps you need to think in earnest about that 12-month period and the risks involved, and are there any measures that the Government could put in place in order to prevent any sort of rush during that time?

[85] **Carl Sargeant:** We did look at considering a reduction in the amount of subsidy that was available, but again, we'd have to go out to consultation on that as well, so I just think we'd have two things running side by side with an end date that is very similar. So, we've just recognised and come to the conclusion we're going to have to take this process through, where there is going to be a spike in the system. But I'm sure the committee may have some views on that.

[86] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Bethan.

[87] **Bethan Jenkins:** I was just wondering what conversations you'd had with those in the suspended areas and those outside the suspended areas to try to satisfy yourself that they are content that they would not be consulted further. Because, of course, the reason why you are looking to abolish the right to buy is because, I would imagine, that you see that the suspension in those areas has worked and therefore you would want to emulate what's happening in those areas in the rest of Wales. So, if we're getting animated about the rights of those individuals, can we understand if you've made efforts to understand if they would want to have the same style of consultation as would be afforded to other people in the areas where it's not currently suspended so that they fully understand that they have had the opportunity previously?

[88] **Carl Sargeant:** Well, the areas of suspension went through a vigorous consultation process in terms of those particular areas, and there are still some authorities coming through the system as well. As I said earlier, the scenarios are very different, where those areas are under significant pressure of housing. Of course, I get letters now from areas of suspension where tenants—in their opinion it's unreasonable that we have a suspension in that place because they want to exercise their right to buy. But because of the housing pressure and need, we introduced the Measure. The Measure was always a process of consultation, reducing the amount of subsidy and then

moving, as appropriate, subject to the Government being elected, to ending the right to buy. So, it was a process for us, and it was very clear. In terms of the consultation on abolition, even suspended areas—they're not unable to have a view on that.

[89] **Bethan Jenkins:** You said you've had some e-mails. If the numbers are low, to be devil's advocate, what would be the worst-case scenario if you did extend it to them? Because, of course, if it was going to, like Sian was saying, lead to a massive increase, I could understand your view, but if it was going to mean that it was one or two, it wouldn't actually make much of a difference if you did allow for those areas to apply as with all other areas of Wales.

[90] **Carl Sargeant:** I don't have those numbers in terms of cause and effect. The e-mails I get are generally ones that really want to pursue this. But I suppose most people who are in those areas, when they're seeking the right to buy and they say, 'There's a suspension', people go, 'Yes; okay, then', but actually, not many people follow that up with a letter. But what we do know is that we're losing around 350 homes per year and we cannot continue to haemorrhage that type of stock. As I said earlier, it sort of defies logic where we know that there is housing pressure. Carmarthen is a great example. Why we would lift that, even to lose one, two, three or four houses in that area? It has an impact—a long-term impact—and I believe we've got to protect that.

[91] **John Griffiths:** Jenny.

[92] **Jenny Rathbone:** I just want to raise the issue, as I represent an area where the right to buy is suspended, in Cardiff. We've had various—

[93] **Carl Sargeant:** Not yet, it isn't.

[94] **David Melding:** It's not.

[95] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. I just want to understand how the Government assesses the human rights of people who find it more difficult to make their views known. It is noticeable that the TPAS events—you know, there were 33 participants in south-west Wales, from 13 different local authorities, and the one that was organised in Cardiff had 12 people from six different local authorities. Had I gone down to Adams Court—the homeless accommodation—or the Huggard centre, I know that there wouldn't be many

advocates for delaying the abolition of the right to buy. So, how does the Government balance up the human rights of those who haven't got the bus fare, who haven't got access to a computer, whose voices haven't been captured in this consultation?

[96] **Carl Sargeant:** I think there's a general principle of consultations, as the Government rolls those out, that it is always difficult to reach out to individuals. But the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 puts a duty on public bodies now to make sure that we consult and engage. Now, what I can do for the committee, if it's helpful—if you haven't received this—is provide a detailed response about our consultation process, if that would be helpful, during the consultation on abolition. Maybe that would give you some more detail on what our principles were on this itself.

[97] **John Griffiths:** I think that would be very useful, Cabinet Secretary, thank you. Okay, we return to David Melding.

[98] **David Melding:** I just want to pursue this point of human rights. The period of grace is referred to under the section on human rights in the explanatory memorandum—and I think many times we've referred to the explanatory memorandum, which is a bit of a model of its kind, I would say, in terms of the summary of available evidence and the range of opinions, and I think it has aided scrutiny considerably. So, I'm pleased to praise you—and you for instructing your officials to produce such a document.

[99] Anyway, on the period of grace, you've said—and I'm quoting you directly now—well, I assume it's you; it's the explanatory memorandum:

[100] 'The Welsh Government considers this period strikes the necessary fair balance between the rights of the tenant and the wider public interest in safeguarding the stock of social housing'.

[101] Now, there is a balance to be struck, and, of course, human rights law is framed in that manner. But I think it urges governments to be cautious or generous—let's put it that way—when striking that balance. Now, if you've come up with a policy that's mitigated by this one-year period—and I think you could argue perhaps it should have been two, but it's one year to express the intention and then follow it up, so, you know, there's a bit of flexibility there—if you've extended that generosity because of your reflections on the potential wider rights issues and fairness, and it's contained under the section on human rights, 3.33, why have you been so

brutal about your treatment of those in the suspended areas in not getting this right? They've never had it; they've never had this one-year period of grace. I'm surprised you don't find that troubling on the grounds of fairness and non-discrimination and the like.

[102] **Carl Sargeant:** The choice of language that is used by the Member about being 'brutal' as a Minister is offensive, and I don't believe that we are being brutal at all. I think we're taking through reasonable, fair legislation. In terms of the specifics on the human rights, that's why I've bought my senior team with me today to explain, so I don't get us into hot water. We can explain the finer detail of human rights and the issues that the Member raises, if I may, Chair—

[103] **David Melding:** I think I understand the issues, because I've read your letter as well. The Welsh Government believes that what you are proposing is not necessary, but you think, in terms of general fairness and, obviously, recognising that people do have property rights, even if you don't believe the Bill would infringe them, you're being generous. Why aren't you extending that to those in suspended areas? I understand that you believe you can do this and still observe human rights law, and you've provided the reasons for that. It's much more political fairness—. You know, you meet these tenants, as well, presumably—it's not just us—who are in suspended areas and feel very bitter about this discrimination.

[104] **Carl Sargeant:** Well, I'm grateful that the Member, now, after his previous question—

[105] **David Melding:** I don't necessary agree that it doesn't infringe human rights. I acknowledge that you have gone through the trouble of getting explicit legal advice on this, and you've given it to us—or parts of it, anyway.

[106] **Carl Sargeant:** I think, as I've said right the way through committee and in our previous evidence sessions, Chair, we believe we are acting reasonably in the circumstances. Our manifesto commitment was very clear, and we are pursuing that through the appropriate channels. Our legislation, we believe, is within the competency of this Assembly, and therefore, while it's on the record, I think, that David Melding and myself have differing political views on this, we believe, until challenged otherwise, that we are acting appropriately and fairly, to introduce a piece of legislation that, clearly, David Melding doesn't agree with.

[107] **David Melding:** I think I've gone as far as I can productively go. There often are fundamental political disagreements, but I've tried to focus on what tenants have said to us and relate to very specific issues in terms of that one-year period.

10:00

[108] Can I just say, finally, on the Bill—? In your previous evidence session, you said you weren't, as a matter of principle, against the right to buy, but you've reflected on the way it's operated for getting on for 40 years, and you felt that it's a policy that, at least for the foreseeable future, is not going to add to the social housing goals as you see them. The whole argument for suspension, obviously, was based on, 'You don't remove the right, but you suspend it'. I just wonder whether you'd thought further on the sunset clause, because you again said that you would be prepared to look at this. I just wonder if you don't feel something along the lines of a 10-year period after which the Assembly, for instance, would have to review, or the Welsh Government and the Assembly would review and then repeal or just extend the Act, so not a sunset clause in that there would be automatic repeal, or it would cease, but there would be a review—. Now, that's the approach you took for suspension. Why aren't you taking a similar approach, given the level of support amongst many tenants for the right to buy? Obviously, we have 130,000-plus homeowners out there who exercised the right to buy, so, however you judge it, it's been a popular policy. Don't you think you might be able to get a wider consensus if you put in a clause like that?

[109] **Carl Sargeant:** I said to you I would consider a sunset clause, but it would be one that I considered in the long term. The effect of housing is a long journey. We cannot just switch on housing today and, in three years, you can have a discussion about the levels of housing investment. I'm reluctant to want to bind a future Government into any situation of making a decision on this, but if committee come back to me with a potential sunset clause of 30 years, then I would probably agree with it.

[110] **David Melding:** I could pursue this in terms of whether that's, in effect, a real, meaningful clause, but my suggestion, obviously, was looking at the current legislation in terms of suspension. As I said, you could do a sunset clause that actually allows review and then, basically, a vote in the Assembly to ensure the Act remains operational. It doesn't mean going through the whole process and starting again. But I sense that that's not a direction you're likely to go in.

[111] **Carl Sargeant:** The Member would be right.

[112] **David Melding:** Okay. Thank you.

[113] **John Griffiths:** Huw Irranca–Davies has some further questions around information for tenants and other matters.

[114] **Huw Irranca–Davies:** Thank you, Chair. Could I just ask, quickly—? As a supplementary to David’s last line of questioning, if a future Government, whether Labour, Liberal, Plaid Cymru or whatever, or a coalition, decided they wanted to introduce a new policy of right to buy, they could do it in five years, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years or 30 years.

[115] **Carl Sargeant:** Indeed, and repeal this Bill.

[116] **Huw Irranca–Davies:** Okay. I’d like to turn to the issue of information for tenants and prospective tenants. My question is to do with whether the Government has taken an approach of, ‘Do what I say, not what I do’. Because we notice that the Welsh Government is stipulating within this proposal that it must take all reasonable steps to provide every qualifying landlord with a copy of the information. That sounds fair and proper—‘all reasonable steps’. However, the duty on landlords is absolute. Why?

[117] **Carl Sargeant:** I know where this is going. There is a technical reason, as you would expect me to say. There are some landlords living outside of Wales, English–based landlords, who have properties in Wales. We don’t have those contact details. We don’t have a direct relationship with them. The relationship is an English relationship and, therefore, we are relying on data supplied by a third party for us to make sure that we can take reasonable steps to inform them. ‘Reasonable steps’ is quite a strong piece of legislation, and that’s why we cannot be absolute in terms of making contact with all of them. We would seek to do that, and take all reasonable steps to do that, but we are basing our information on a third party, whereas in Wales, we do have contact with all RSLs and landlords.

[118] **Huw Irranca–Davies:** Okay. That’s a sound explanation. The same doesn’t apply in reverse, though, to landlords who may have cross–border portfolios of property.

[119] **Carl Sargeant:** Well, that would be a matter for the landlords, because

we have landlords here that we would know about. Do you mean English RSLs?

[120] **Huw Irranca-Davies:** A landlord that might actually have properties that are shared across borders. Do they exist?

[121] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes they do, but we are aware of those landlords in Wales.

[122] **Huw Irranca-Davies:** Right, okay.

[123] **Carl Sargeant:** We would have that registered, whereas the English element we don't have.

[124] **Huw Irranca-Davies:** So it is quite practical, quite workable, to put an express, absolute duty on landlords to provide this information.

[125] **Carl Sargeant:** Indeed.

[126] **Huw Irranca-Davies:** Thank you, Chair.

[127] **John Griffiths:** Jeremy, did you want to come in at this stage?

[128] **Jeremy Miles:** Yes. Just on that point, on the question of the level of obligation of the Welsh Government, it could be the case, then, couldn't it, that the Welsh Government could accept an absolute obligation in relation to Welsh-based RSLs, but a more qualified obligation in relation to those outside Wales.

[129] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes.

[130] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay, thank you. On the question of the obligation on landlords to disseminate information to their relevant tenants, there isn't anything in the Bill that addresses the specific needs of particular tenants, for example in relation to literacy issues. What is the comfort that we will get that that information is provided in a way that is meaningful and intelligible for tenants, regardless of their particular needs?

[131] **Carl Sargeant:** We shouldn't underestimate the challenge that RSLs and local authorities would have. But they are in direct conversations with those tenants, often on a daily basis or a regular basis, so they do that very well in

communications. So, what I'd be happy to do—I think we did send you a draft copy of the information that we would seek to inform tenants with, to give advice to RSLs. But the direct relationship between RSLs and tenants is very good, and I would hope that they are able to manage their tenancies well, whether that's linguistically or otherwise. So, I'm confident that they'll be able to disseminate the information.

[132] **Jeremy Miles:** And are you expecting to give any kind of statutory guidance around the format of that information, which gets us nearer to that consistency across the board?

[133] **Carl Sargeant:** We're going to consult on the information, and I think that's an important part. That's why we've offered our early draft to committee about information that you deem would be effective in terms of making sure that this information is, importantly, disseminated with the tenants. But we're really relaxed about what that looks like, and that's why the information coming back from yourselves and from the consultation will be important—what do people need?

[134] **Jeremy Miles:** Just to be clear, does that also relate to the information that you will provide to registered landlords, or just the information that they would provide to tenants? Are you expecting to provide it in a range of languages, for example?

[135] **Carl Sargeant:** We won't be stipulating that—what it should look like. As I said earlier on, the relationship between the RSLs and the tenants is a close one, and I would hope that they fully understand what their tenancies are.

[136] **Jeremy Miles:** I mean more the information that you're providing as a Government, rather than that the RSLs are providing.

[137] **Carl Sargeant:** We will provide guidance to the RSLs on what we would expect them to disseminate, yes.

[138] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay. Thanks.

[139] **John Griffiths:** Jenny.

[140] **Jenny Rathbone:** During our evidence gathering, we've heard quite a lot of evidence that people who've taken up the right to buy have had an

incomplete picture of their responsibilities, and have struggled to pay service charges or for repairs that affect their neighbours. So, I just wondered how clear you're going to be in the advice you're going to ensure gets to all tenants that, both to emphasise the responsibility of being a homeowner, as well as the clause that stipulates that, were somebody to exercise the right to buy, if that arrangement breaks down, the social landlord has first option on buying it back. Because this is a hugely important issue, in an area where there's such a massive disconnect between the level of housing benefit versus the price of private housing, which is driving up homelessness at a scary rate. We don't want to see the vultures coming in to think they're going to make a killing out of the one-year grace period.

[141] **Carl Sargeant:** The Member raises a really important point, and the draft guidance that we shared with you has a piece in there around financial and mortgage advice, and long-term advice, and making sure that people seek professional advice on that. Obviously, there are several elements of advice services that we support already. We support Citizens Advice and we've been in discussion with them about what that looks like and advice services that may be available. For leaseholders, there's a leaseholder helpline as well. All of these things, I think, should be part of that information pack that is given to tenants early on. I'd also give some further consideration—and the committee may want to do this as well—to trigger sales. So, once a tenant triggers the information sought for the right to buy, then maybe there should be some sort of different support, supported by the authority, about making sure that they are very clear about, 'You must seek independent advice on this issue.' You can tell people as many times as you want, but if a deal is too good to be true, it generally is. But, we can guide people in the direction, to give them the right advice and the right places to go for advice, and I'd like to be sure that RSLs and local authorities were in that space once there was a trigger sale, if you like.

[142] **John Griffiths:** And Huw.

[143] **Huw Irranca-Davies:** It is pursuant to Jeremy's question earlier on about the information that social landlords provide to their tenants. You were clear here today, as you've been clear previously, that you have a high expectation of them providing the right information, in the right format for their tenants, responding to local needs. Shelter Cymru, however, have noted that social landlords across Wales are far from consistent in the way that they communicate with their tenants. And if this consistency is not achieved, we could end up, possibly, I would put to you, with legal challenges. Now, on

that basis, what thought have you given to statutory legal guidance?

[144] **Carl Sargeant:** I certainly wouldn't be comfortable with issuing legal guidance to tenants, but I would be—

[145] **Huw Irranca-Davies:** To landlords. Statutory guidance to landlords that makes clear not simply their duty, their overarching duty, but what is entailed within that duty, and what is expected of them.

[146] **Carl Sargeant:** And that's where we are in consideration about what that should look like. I'm very comfortable, again, to take advice from committee, if they see fit, about what are the things that should be in there that we should be telling them, and what should the landlords be telling their tenants. I'm really comfortable with that, because we'll have our view on this, but I'm sure Shelter Cymru and others will also be able to aid in that support.

[147] **Huw Irranca-Davies:** So, you are content to look at proposals coming forward on more clarity around statutory guidance to landlords.

[148] **Carl Sargeant:** Absolutely.

[149] **Huw Irranca-Davies:** That's great.

[150] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Bethan.

[151] **Bethan Jenkins:** My first question is following on from what Huw Irranca-Davies is saying, because in paragraph (a), at the end of that, it says

[152] 'information as it considers to be relevant to them.'

[153] This is in the part about the landlords. Is 'them' the landlords, or is 'them' the tenants? Because if it's the landlords, what they deem to be information that's relevant may be very different to what the tenants deem to be relevant. So, it may be around how that's worded, because they could decide that they wouldn't particularly want to advertise certain advice structures because it may conflict with some that they have themselves. But then, tenants might not want to seek advice from the housing association because they don't feel comfortable with that. So, it's about giving the tenants the tools to be able to feel confident to go where they wish to go, as opposed to feeling that the landlord would skew their view in one way or another.

[154] **Carl Sargeant:** In terms of your first question, the ‘them’ relates to the landlord [correction: tenants].<sup>1</sup> In terms of the broader question, as I said earlier, Chair, I’m happy to take suggestions. We’ve got a view on this and that’s why we provided a draft for you of information, but if you have supporting information about what else we should contain in our advice to landlords, and landlords to tenants, then I’m more than happy to take that on board.

10:15

[155] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, because one of the other suggestions from tenants was the fact that, as you said right at the beginning, other options are available in terms of home buying. There are links, but there is no detail. Perhaps that would be something to add. Also, some of the tenants said that you’ve put here that there’s information on a website, but some of them are calling for a national campaign or adverts on television or radio so that they would be able to understand that, because some people might not have access to a website and some people might not want to read the long document that you’ve provided. Would that be something—would there be money there to do some sort of national campaign?

[156] **Carl Sargeant:** It’s not our intention to do that. As I said, I’m not sure if there is anybody out there who doesn’t realise that we’re pursuing the ending of the right to buy. The manifesto positions were very clear. I’m not intending to do a large publicity campaign. We are using social media throughout the passage of the Bill, and information sharing. Again, as you’ll be aware, modern technology seems to be hitting home, rather than television adverts, at the moment. So, it isn’t our intention to do that. We’ve based our views on what happened in Scotland, and we believe that we’re going well beyond what happened in Scotland in terms of their information sharing.

[157] **Bethan Jenkins:** My other question is: have you raised the issues regarding support for tenants in terms of where they are approached by people who want to take advantage of them in relation to finances, if they

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<sup>1</sup> The Government wishes to note the following: ‘In the Committee appearance the Cabinet Secretary referred to the “landlord”. However, the Bill places a duty on qualifying landlords to provide relevant tenants with such of the information as they consider relevant to their “tenants”.’

want to purchase their homes? Have you raised that with the financial inclusion group that you have within Government? You mentioned Citizens Advice and chats with them about what they could do. Do they have the capacity? Because I know that Citizens Advice have suffered from severe cuts in the last few years and I wouldn't want for this obligation to be passed on to them if they do not have the capacity or the skills—well, I'm sure they have the skills, but whether they have the capacity to be able to deal with everything that they may have in relation to this one area, when they have lots of different benefits advice to be giving out as well.

[158] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course. Given the conversations that we've had, I'm confident that the advice services do have capacity to deal with this. We're talking historic numbers of 350 sales a year. If we get a spike in that service, there will be up to 500, possibly, across Wales, and not all of those are going to be seeking advice services. I would suggest that, actually, there'll be more information for those tenants who are seeking to purchase during the abolition period—the 12-month grace period—than has probably been available before. So, we are in a position of offering advice services and signposting, and the advice services, we believe, are able to cope with that, if there is a spike in the system.

[159] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, what would you say to Steve Clarke's argument, from the former organisation Welsh Tenants, who came in and said that a new, independent body would need to be set up to give advice to those tenants?

[160] **Carl Sargeant:** I'm not surprised by Steve's response, that's all I'd say.

[161] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay, but do you have a view on whether that would be something that—

[162] **Carl Sargeant:** I do have a view: I don't believe that's necessary. We've considered other areas of advice lines et cetera. We believe that the system that is in place is able to cope adequately with the new, potential pressures that may—may—come from the ending of the right to buy.

[163] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Jenny.

[164] **Jenny Rathbone:** I just want to come back to the information available to tenants around the right to sell the property on. Because in the draft that the Government has provided, it doesn't include the fact that if you want or

need to sell the property, the existing social landlord will have a 10-year first option. I wondered if you were thinking of including it, just as a one-liner. If not, how would tenants be made aware that this would restrict their right to sell it on the open market?

[165] **Carl Sargeant:** I think that's one line already for your list of things that you might want us to have included in the document.

[166] **Mr Rees:** If I can come in there, it's a matter of detail, in a way, how much the document contains on the right to buy. There are a lot of detailed rules on the right to buy. For example, if you live in a rural area, there could be a covenant for you to sell to a person who's lived or worked in that area for the last three years. That's designed to encourage affordable housing in rural areas. Now, we could put that in the document, but, of course, it would add to the length then—the same as the rights of the landlord to have the property offered back to them. So, in a way it's a question of balance—how long the document is, for people to give it their attention, and how much detail it goes into.

[167] **Jenny Rathbone:** Indeed, but I think the issue of living in a restricted rural area is actually mentioned.

[168] **Mr Rees:** We'd certainly be grateful for the committee's comments on that document.

[169] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Are there any other questions? No. Well, may I thank the Cabinet Secretary and his officials for coming in to give evidence this morning? You will be sent a transcript to check for factual accuracy. Diolch yn fawr.

10:21

### **Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note**

[170] **John Griffiths:** We move on to item 3, which is papers to note. Paper 1 is correspondence from the First Minister to me as Chair of the committee regarding the scrutiny of the First Minister committee and some deliberations it undertook in relation to poverty. We will, in fact, be returning to this letter when we consider our future work on poverty, so I would suggest that we deal with it at that stage if Members are content.

[171] Paper 2 is a letter from Wrexham County Borough Council regarding some further information on the right to buy and right to acquire. Happy to note that?

[172] Paper 3 is my letter to the Cabinet Secretary for communities regarding this legislation, the Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill. Happy to note that also? Okay. Well, thank you all very much for that.

10:22

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 (vi) i Wahardd y Cyhoedd o Weddill y Cyfarfod**

**Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Remainder of the Meeting**

*Cynnig:*

*Motion:*

*bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y exclude the public from the cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).*

*17.42(vi).*

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.*

*Motion moved.*

[173] **John Griffiths:** Item 4 is a motion under Standing Order 17.42 to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting. Are there any objections? No. Okay, we will move to private session.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.*

*Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10:22*

*The public part of the meeting ended at 10:22.*