



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a **Llywodraeth Leol** **The Communities, Equality and Local Government** **Committee**

Dydd Iau, 10 Hydref 2013
Thursday, 10 October 2013

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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.

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.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Leighton Andrews	Llafur Labour
Peter Black	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Christine Chapman	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Janet Finch-Saunders	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Mike Hedges	Llafur Labour
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Gwyn R. Price	Llafur Labour
Jenny Rathbone	Llafur Labour
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Lindsay Whittle	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Councillor/Y Cynghorydd Jamie Adams	Cyngor Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire County Council
Councillor/Y Cynghorydd Ellen ap Gwynn	Cyngor Sir Ceredigion Ceredigion County Council
Sara Harvey	Cydgysylltydd Rhanbarthol, Canolbarth a De-orllewin Cymru, CLILC Regional Co-ordinator, Central and South West Wales, WLGA
Susan Perkins	Cydgysylltydd Rhanbarthol, De-ddwyrain Cymru, CLILC Regional Co-ordinator, South East Wales, WLGA
Councillor/Y Cynghorydd Dilwyn Roberts	Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy Conwy County Borough Council
Joe Simpson	Cyfarwyddwr, Y Ganolfan Arweinyddiaeth Director, Leadership Centre
Steve Thomas	Prif Weithredwr, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Chief Executive, Welsh Local Government Association

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

Jonathan Baxter	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Leanne Hatcher	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Rhys Iorwerth	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Claire Morris	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod am 09:15.
The public part of the meeting began at 09:15.*

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Good morning, and welcome to the Assembly's Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee. Could I just remind Members to ensure that, if they have any mobile phones, they are switched off, because they do affect the transmission? We have not received any apologies this morning.

Cynnydd o ran Cydweithio mewn Llywodraeth Leol—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth gyda'r Ganolfan Arweinyddiaeth Llywodraeth Leol Progress with Local Government Collaboration—Evidence Session, Local Government Leadership Centre

[2] **Christine Chapman:** This is the continuation of our inquiry into progress with local government collaboration. We are taking evidence first of all from the Leadership Centre for Local Government. I warmly welcome Joe Simpson, the principal strategic adviser. I welcome you very much, Mr Simpson. If you are happy to do so, we will go straight into questions.

[3] **Mr Simpson:** Fine.

[4] **Christine Chapman:** The Members have a series of questions that they want to ask you. Obviously, you did the Simpson report not so long ago, and I know that we will want to talk a little bit about that. I just want to start off. We had a comment last week from the Auditor General for Wales that your report promised an awful lot, but does not seem to have delivered much on the ground. I just wonder whether you could respond to that.

[5] **Mr Simpson:** Could progress have been better? Yes. Then again, one of the things, when we are looking towards a gear change in the way that public service operates, is that, quite often, it is a bit like a tanker; it takes a while to turn. So, yes, I would have been much happier had there been greater progress. I think that the question is whether we are seeing the tanker turn, and I think that there is some evidence that you are beginning to see the tanker turn towards that direction. So, my response to the audit office would be: how do we now develop more momentum, rather than looking back too much at why it took so long to develop the momentum?

[6] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Leighton Andrews is next.

[7] **Leighton Andrews:** You talk of momentum, but what is the real evidence for successful collaboration?

[8] **Mr Simpson:** One of the difficulties, if I look back and see where places are at, is that the change that needs to happen is that collaboration has been about additional areas, what you might call nice-to-have activity, and what has not yet developed is the collaboration in the engine room of local government.

[9] **Leighton Andrews:** What do you see as the key drivers for collaboration?

[10] **Mr Simpson:** There are three things, the first of which is the financial incentive. The decision yesterday on the local government allocation will be an incentive, and, certainly, if I look at the experience in England, which received very large cuts earlier, that has provided momentum. The second thing is the critical size for service delivery, and, depending on the service, that varies. The third point is that you already have the inquiry into public service more widely in Wales, but, if you are looking at the sort of wicked issues, like the health/adult social care interface, you need to be able to plan at a level that parallels the other bit of the system. You cannot plan adult social care in isolation from the way in which the major health facilities are configured. That requires quite a significant bit of local government collaboration. I would hope that the wider inquiry into public services will give that momentum to get people into that space. It is always difficult for people. Collaboration for itself is interesting but not the key thing; it has to be focused on either saving money, delivering a better service, or getting to the critical mass to make sure that you are professionally safe.

[11] **Jenny Rathbone:** One of the problems is getting the balance right between the strategic direction and local service delivery. People are not that bothered about who makes the decision about how the bins are collected, but they are worried about when they are collected. More importantly, with regard to such things as social services, it is much more difficult to get the calibre of people required to deliver safe and quality services, but you really need people at the coalface. So, what is required to ensure that members do not regard that as something that is in some way taking away from their local anxieties?

[12] **Mr Simpson:** You are absolutely right. In terms of children's social services in particular, you need to get to a critical mass to make sure that you have safe services, just in terms of the professional quality. Part of the balance here is trying to get members to focus on what those things are that are still better determined and directed at a very local level, and what elements need to scale up. One of the things about very vulnerable children is that you need a critical mass, but, if you are looking at a wider general early intervention strategy for children, that can be done at a very local level, because you can fine-tune.

[13] What there is not is a right size for everything, and the real difficulty with this activity is that, wherever you are in terms of what you think is the right size, it is the right size for one activity, but not for the range of activities. So, however one configures, it is a slightly blunt instrument, because you need an organisational size that is as good as it can be fit-for-purpose. That is the challenge. The bit that therefore needs to be invested in—. This is not a technical problem; it is about how you get that cultural alignment between different organisations and people so that they have confidence in each other to make those changes. That is tough. You cannot just do it by prescription. You have to put quite a lot of investment in leadership development so that people have the confidence to work together, and can see the wider picture about where the benefits come from.

[14] **Christine Chapman:** What about the barriers to this in terms of people feeling threatened by collaboration? Could you comment on that?

[15] **Mr Simpson:** There clearly are some threats in collaboration, because, if you are building up a size, managerially and politically, frankly, there will be some trading going on.

You have to recognise that, if you are saying that for children's services, for example, you need a critical mass for certain elements, that means that some people in some places managerially will feel under threat. Secondly, there is a problem of councillors understanding that wider leadership of place role, rather than thinking that somehow they are technically directing in great detail on specific services. So, I think that one of the things that we need to do is to get people to change their mindset about what they are trying to achieve. If you ask politicians why they got involved in local politics, it is normally to do something about people and place in their area. Very few people get involved in politics because they have a real interest in the detailed mechanics of how a local— You would be a very sad person if that was the reason why you got involved in politics. So, it is about reminding people that the reason why they got involved in this was to do with people and place.

[16] **Christine Chapman:** I know that other Members want to develop this theme later, so I will leave that for the moment. I will go back to Jenny for the next question.

[17] **Jenny Rathbone:** Apart from getting members to see that they can still be advocates for their local areas while looking at wellbeing more widely, there is also the issue of the way in which you reconfigure services while maintaining the engagement of staff at the front line—the ones who actually deliver the services to individuals. Some of the problems that I perceive with regard to the way in which we have done things so far is that the people who are always chopped are the people at the bottom of the tree, and the managers who are in charge of the reconfiguration, funnily enough, never design the service in a way that means that they lose their own job. How do we get a more bottom-up approach that involves the users and other agencies, like the third sector?

[18] **Mr Simpson:** I will say two things: the first is that there is a need to remind members that they are there to represent people, not organisations, and they need to get back to the perspective of what it looks like to be on the receiving end of it. Secondly, you have to liberate the staff to be able to help to think about a radical reconfiguration of the way in which services operate. I will give an English illustration, sticking with the subject of complex families. I remember well a local authority in Greater Manchester doing a presentation to Ministers showing 220 interventions with one family in one year by a range of seven different agencies, none of which was co-ordinated, at a cost to the public of about £250,000 for that family, with no benefit either to the family or the public in terms of outcome. It said that this is not a sane way to operate. One of the things that came out of that was the liberty to ask how you reconfigure at a local level to radically improve the output. So, that is not putting collaboration as the outcome, but saying that, by thinking differently about how we configure things, we can radically improve the outcomes. It is about changing that mindset so that you are not thinking, 'Oh, God, I've got to do collaboration, because that is the theme of the week this week.'

[19] **Christine Chapman:** A number of Members want to come in on this point. I call on Peter first.

[20] **Peter Black:** It occurred to me, with regard to the last example you gave, that there is long-established case conferencing in terms of interventions on individual cases, so it seems bizarre that that was not followed in that particular instance. However, clearly, there has been a level of collaboration for many years in that regard.

[21] I had a question that I wanted to ask you. When Cardiff Business School came in last week, the witnesses made the point that, in terms of collaboration, there was a crisis of accountability, which can act as a major barrier. Councillors feel that they are not able to scrutinise, there is very little transparency, and they are not able to understand how a service is being delivered in a collaborative way. Would you like to comment on that?

[22] **Mr Simpson:** I read Cardiff Business School's submission and the transcript of the last meeting. I believe it is right. One of the things, therefore, that we need to look at is this: what are the models of accountability in new forms of collaboration? That can be quite challenging. So, once again, using the Greater Manchester illustration, Greater Manchester has now moved towards a formal combined authority that is legally able to do whatever the authorities agree that they want to pass to that combined authority. That has been a mechanism to lock people in so that it can start to make some very difficult decisions in the long term.

[23] One of the other things that the business school highlighted was the problem that, at any one time, a collaborative decision might be more beneficial to one part of an area than another. However, if you are starting to make tough decisions about transport, which is the first area that the Greater Manchester combined authority is looking at, it is about getting to an understanding that it is in the collective interest of everyone to improve the transport infrastructure in a coherent fashion, and to do that through a model that gets a payback so that they can actually reinvest. For the next stage, we will probably need to see the evolution of some more formal combined authority status for some of these activities as we go forward.

09:30

[24] **Peter Black:** Is that not moving towards restructuring as opposed to collaboration?

[25] **Mr Simpson:** With radical top-down restructuring of local government, all of the evidence shows that it costs you more, it takes much longer, and at the end of it everyone has forgotten why they did it. The combined authority is about saying that for very specific purposes we understand that we need things done. This is the way that we make decisions that stick.

[26] **Peter Black:** Okay. It is not top-down but bottom-up, is it not?

[27] **Mr Simpson:** It is a bottom-up model.

[28] **Peter Black:** It is still moving towards a restructuring whereby we will start to combine offices, budgets et cetera in a formal structure.

[29] **Mr Simpson:** To give an illustration and to come back to this point about there not being a perfect geography, we are also now seeing a combined authority emerging in the Sheffield city region in England. For the purposes of the combined authority in terms of its economic remit, that combined authority will involve one district council that is in Nottinghamshire, and two district councils that are in Derbyshire. If you know the geography of Sheffield, you will know exactly why they would be in there in economic terms. However, if you are looking at a reconfiguration of adult social care and health in either Nottinghamshire or Derbyshire, you would have to do that within the counties and not within the Sheffield region. So, one of the reasons why I am not a fan of a radical reorganisation as a solution is that a reorganisation just recreates a different set of problems. So, for different types of services you need a different geographic collaboration, which does not look nice on a map, but does actually reflect the realities.

[30] **Peter Black:** In relation to those two examples of combined authorities, what are the scrutiny arrangements that actually make them accountable?

[31] **Mr Simpson:** At present, the leadership of the combined authority is taken by the leaders of the council. So, the combined authority is formally established with the leaders of each of the councils on there. I think that you are absolutely right that the next stage of that is a matter of asking where you will build in beneath that, for backbench members, a scrutiny

function. All I would say is that this is a kind of evolving territory. The first thing is the work that needs to go in for the people in a place to have the confidence to work together. I will use Greater Manchester as an example. When the metropolitan county councils were abolished in the mid-1980s, Manchester kept its meetings of leaders all the way through that. It took 25 years to get to the combined authority. What we all now need to know, recognising that we will need more of these types of collaborations, is how you do that in 25 months not 25 years. That is the challenge.

[32] **Peter Black:** Perhaps the Government should have imposed it another time. I am just being devil's advocate here.

[33] **Mr Simpson:** The difficulty with the imposed structure is that you do not get the buy-in and you are looking at the map from a national end and not from the end of the citizen. You start getting back to thinking that the solution is a geographic solution. It is about getting to a shared endeavour. That is the challenge.

[34] The shared endeavour of Greater Manchester is that it wants to collaborate in order to get it back to being a world-class city that is a major contributor to the UK economy, rather than an area that underperforms against most European equivalents. So, it has its shared endeavour, and because it has the shared endeavour and understands what it is that it is doing at a combined level, it has started on that track. What is now quite interesting—and I do not want to overplay it—is that having got the confidence to do that, it is now starting to ask some other difficult questions. If you wanted to get into the most political and dynamite-sort of question you can think of, it would be what a hospital configuration in an area should be. I suspect that none of you has ever stood on a platform guaranteeing to close your local hospital, because it is not normally a way to get elected. However, in terms of starting to look at trying to plan that, Manchester is now prepared to start talking now about a really tough decision, which is what the hospital configuration across Greater Manchester will look like in 20 years' time. It has only been able to get to that stage because of the confidence of working together on the economic strategy, which meant that everyone recognised that they had a shared interest rather than a competitive interest.

[35] **Christine Chapman:** Thanks. Just to remind Members that we have less than quarter of an hour and I want to make sure that we give Mr Simpson time to answer, so I ask for concise questions, and I hope to bring all Members in. Janet Finch-Saunders is next.

[36] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Good morning. From evidence that we have already taken, there is a view that, at the moment, there is reluctance within the Welsh Government to be specific on what it is seeking in terms of collaboration. What is your view on that? To what extent do you agree with Cardiff Business School that not much assessment has taken place on the effectiveness of collaborative working in Welsh local government? To be even more specific, there is a view that the Simpson report—a very good report that promised a lot—is not being delivered. Those are three key questions that I would like to put to you today.

[37] **Christine Chapman:** We have already covered that one, Janet, I think.

[38] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Which one?

[39] **Christine Chapman:** That the Simpson report did not deliver.

[40] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Right, okay; what about the other two questions that I have just asked?

[41] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. I am sure Mr Simpson will pick some of those up.

[42] **Mr Simpson:** A university suggesting that there should be more research commissioned—that shocked me. [*Laughter.*] You do want to evaluate what you are doing, but, actually, I think that you have good eyes and ears; you know from your localities whether you are seeing change or not. At some point, you do want the formal evaluation, but having read through the evidence, I thought that there was a moderately shared view that, yes, there needs to be a change of tempo. The Welsh Local Government Association submission is more or less along those lines as well. No-one is disputing that you need more momentum at this point and that it has been too slow.

[43] On the point about the Welsh Government role, one thing that has been developing in England has been the original total-place approach, then the whole-place approach. One of the interesting things about the whole-place model, which is again about wider collaboration on services, is that there has been a fairly active involvement of Government in that local planning. Originally, to be honest, there was quite a bit of scepticism at a local level about what the civil servants would bring to the table. Actually, one of the things that bringing the civil servants and local authority people together did was that they both began to understand why each side was asking the question, because, in locality terms, they were not thinking, ‘Why is that a priority for the Welsh Government?’—or the English Government, in that case, but here it would be for the Welsh Government. Similarly, from the civil service point of view, it was about beginning to understand why, locally, that thing was happening. What I would not advocate is more direction by Welsh local government; I would advocate more engagement by Welsh local government, so that everyone begins to understand what happens in the reconfiguration. It is a bit like a dance; you cannot be on a dance floor and stay still when everyone else is moving. We all have to change if we are going to make a difference and change the quality of service.

[44] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Is collaboration working across Wales?

[45] **Mr Simpson:** Not at the level at which it should be yet. To repeat what I said, I think that the judgment call is whether no effort was made or whether we are at a point where we are beginning to see the tanker turn. I think that we are beginning to see the tanker turn, but now you have to get the gear change. You are now at a point where a gear change would be effective, because you can build some momentum. You do not want to put the momentum in while it is turning, because you would just take it further the other way, if you stick with the analogy.

[46] **Christine Chapman:** I want to move on to Gwyn Price and then Mike Hedges.

[47] **Gwyn R. Price:** Good morning. Do you see any major barriers that could be turned around for more collaboration? You touched on backbenchers in one or two things that you said; do you think that backbenchers are involved or really know what the agenda is on collaboration?

[48] **Mr Simpson:** One of the problems for a backbencher, the more you move into higher things, is that you feel more and more out of the loop; therefore, you get the natural reaction, ‘What on earth is going on? No-one is keeping me in the loop’. Part of the answer to that is to get backbenchers to understand better their role as community champion and advocate. Their job is to say, ‘Fine plan, but the reality of what happens in the street next to where I live is this, and that is not what your fine plan promised’. It is about engaging backbenchers more on that. I think that the corollary of this switch towards a more collaborative model, which necessarily means that cabinet members are more engaged in those discussions, is that you need to enhance the role of front-line councillors in their community-facing role. By and large, we have been very bad at resourcing that part of the councillor’s role.

[49] Local government tends to do a pretty good job with the committee paper solution

approach. As long as you are at a meeting in the town hall, the papers arrive with more than anyone would sensibly want to read in them, but you can keep fully engaged; all of that side of the job is done. In my experience, what less support is given to is this question: ‘Exactly what strategies can you better implement to engage local citizens?’ It is about helping members in that role. Overall, I think that we have not invested to the same level in enhancing that. I see a trade-off deal, where you are saying to backbenchers, ‘Yes, actually, some of these collaborative arrangements mean that the executive will be further involved; however, what you are going to be doing is a much stronger local role, making sure that, from the perspective of citizens in your place, these things are delivering’. That is the trade that I think that we need to get to. At present, a large number of backbench members do not find these emerging new arrangements to be very satisfying because they feel disengaged.

09:45

[50] **Mike Hedges:** I have three questions; I hope that the answer to each of them is going to be ‘yes’. Would you agree that, in terms of collaboration, the old county council functions were, in general, suited to a larger body and that the old district council functions were suited to a smaller body? Would you also accept that restructuring does not bring collaboration and that health has proven that? That is, if you restructure, you do not necessarily make the hospitals and general practitioners collaborate. The third question is: as contracts come to end, should we not be looking to see back-office functions moving into collaboration, especially as every teacher in Wales, for example, is paid in exactly the same way?

[51] **Mr Simpson:** Yes.

[52] **Christine Chapman:** We have about four minutes left, so I want to move on now to Lindsay Whittle.

[53] **Lindsay Whittle:** Thank you, Chair; I was not expecting to be first. It is all very well talking about local government reorganisation, but some of us, for the future direction, are looking at merging health with social services, which would hopefully save substantial amounts of money and provide better services. Have you any thoughts on that and who should be responsible or accountable for those services? Should it be the health boards or local authorities?

[54] **Mr Simpson:** I am strongly of the view that you will get a much better solution by putting quite a lot of that responsibility on local authorities because if you start to look at the demographic time-bomb that we face, it is not just the interface between adult social care and health that we need to look at. One of the specific problems that we have is that although life expectancy is going up at quite a rapid rate—on average, it is going up by one year in every six—life expectancy before disability is going up by only one year in every 10. In the last couple of years, there has been a slight speed-up on that last figure, but that is the general trend. The difficulty is that we will all live longer, but for quite a bit of that time we will be disabled. In order to balance the books, we need to make sure that we are bringing that length of time down, so that the average age before disability tracks the increase in the average age of death. That means a strategy that is not about hospitals and is not about a health model.

[55] We know that some of the causes of that are related to lifestyle, such as fags and booze, but the single biggest indicator for death is isolation. That is not a problem that a health model will solve. That is an absolutely classic thing for which you need a local perspective, looking at the knowledge that you have about where people are isolated. The second thing that we know has a correlation with bad health is unemployment. Again, you are not going to ask the health service to solve the unemployment problem. Therefore, if you are trying to find the solution, you need someone who is going to be the driver on some of those key indicators. Those are the changes that will help to balance the books. Given the

demographics in certain parts of Wales, that is not something that you want to defer for too long. In 2011, it was the first year when a male baby boomer got to 65. We are now on an escalator where, year on year, that baby-boomer group is coming into retirement. It will be a dramatic change over the next decade. Therefore, to get those alignments, my solution would be to go towards a local government focus.

[56] **Lindsay Whittle:** Is that because local authorities are more accountable than local health boards?

[57] **Mr Simpson:** No, it is just that the health boards are not in the business of creating jobs, and they do not talk about loneliness, as such. The things that you can do to tackle loneliness and to try to create jobs et cetera, they are the things that make an effective, vibrant place. To use the jargon, it is about creating social capital and all those sorts of things, and that is a local government function. The health perspective is: you have a disability, and what I am going to do about it? What you have to do is ensure that they do not become disabled in the first place. That is the way to make sure that you can balance the books.

[58] **Christine Chapman:** Rhodri Glyn, did you want to come in.

[59] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd. Bydd angen yr offer cyfieithu arnoch, Mr Simpson.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you very much, Chair. You will need the translation equipment, Mr Simpson.

[60] Rydych yn cydnabod bod angen mwy o gydweithredu a bod yn rhaid inni symud yn gyflymach tuag at gydweithredu. Serch hynny, o wrando ar eich tystiolaeth, nid ydych yn dweud wrthym pwy ddylai yrru'r symudiad hwnnw tuag at gydweithredu. Rydych wedi gwrthod pob opsiwn sydd wedi'i gynnig ichi, neu ddadlau nad yw'r opsiwn hwnnw'n ymarferol. Rydych wedi tynnu cymhariaeth gyda tancer olew. Fodd bynnag, os ydych am droi tancer olew, y peth sylfaenol yw bod yn rhaid ichi gael rhywun i yrru a chyfeirio'r tancer olew neu nid yw'n mynd i droi o gwbl. Felly, pwy sy'n mynd i yrru'r broses hon yn ei blaen?

You acknowledge that there is a need for more collaboration and that we need to move more quickly towards collaboration. However, in listening to your evidence, you do not tell us who should be driving that move towards collaboration. You have rejected every option that has been proposed to you, or you have argued that that option is not practical. You have drawn a comparison with an oil tanker. However, if you are going to turn an oil tanker around, the fundamental thing is that you have to have someone to drive and direct the oil tanker, or it is not going to turn at all. Therefore, who is going to drive this process forward?

[61] **Mr Simpson:** What I was trying to say was that I do not believe that formal direction and straight instruction is an effective model. There are three things that I think will drive this. The first of these is the financial settlement, and therefore the need to change, which comes from the financial settlement. Secondly, it is your ability to create financial incentives towards that change. Thirdly, because a number of these things are cultural challenges about leadership alignment, you need to invest in some soft skills, relating to getting people in the right place with a shared vision. It is one of those situations where, if you do not get that alignment at the beginning, and you try to do the fix technically, that is when it goes wrong. So, what I am saying is that an earlier investment in leadership alignment pays off. I am not saying that you do not do anything. If that is how it came across, I did not mean that. What I am trying to argue is this: you get to a point where you say, 'Things are not moving fast enough. Can I pull a lever that will guarantee that this system changes?' Honestly, if you try the lever model, it will not work.

[62] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Fodd **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** However, you have

bynag, rydych wedi cydnabod nad yw'r symudiad tuag at gydweithio wedi digwydd yn ddigon cyflym, ac rydych yn dal i sôn am broses sy'n esblygu'n naturiol. Ag eithrio'r wasgfa ariannol, nid yw'n ymddangos bod unrhyw reswm arall i'r broses gyflymu. Felly, ai'r angen i sicrhau ein bod yn darparu gwasanaethau yn fwy cost-ffeithiol yw'r unig beth sy'n mynd i symud y broses ymlaen?

acknowledged that the move towards collaboration has not happened quickly enough, and you are still talking about a process that is evolving naturally. Except for the financial squeeze, it does not appear that there is any other reason for the process to accelerate. Therefore, is the need to ensure that we provide services in a more cost-effective way the only thing that is going to move this process forward?

[63] **Mr Simpson:** I am saying that the financial challenges begin to provide you with the burning platform. In England, the level of cuts to local government is a lot higher. Frankly, we are now at a point where, without some changes, by the end of this decade, we could find that some local authorities are insolvent. So, that is certainly a burning platform. You have protected local government better, and I am certainly not suggesting that you should therefore now try to produce as fast a burning platform as England has. However, there is still that financial pressure. The second thing, which I said at the beginning, is about getting people to focus on which outcomes for people collaboration will improve. That comes back to Jenny's point about the very acute end of children's services, where you need a critical mass to be professionally safe. There are two parallel pressures. The third thing is to remind councillors about pride of place—'What is it that you want your place to be?', 'What is it about your place?' and 'What do you want to be remembered for?', not 'How many meetings did you go to in your life as a councillor?' They can say, 'This is what we did'. Quite a number of these collaborations—if I take an economic agenda—are about recognising economic units, which do not equate with local authority units. That requires you to work together and ask, 'How do we make our place a vibrant, successful economy, so that our residents want to live here and bring up their kids here and so that their kids will want to stay here, because they can see that there are jobs?' That is a pretty basic thing. You need to collaborate—there is no local authority that has its economy completely contained within that authority.

[64] **Christine Chapman:** I know that Members will reflect on your evidence, Mr Simpson, so thank you for attending today. We will send you a transcript of the meeting so that you can check it for factual accuracy. Thank you very much for attending.

[65] **Mr Simpson:** Okay, thanks.

09:56

**Cynnydd o ran Cydweithio mewn Llywodraeth Leol: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
gyda Chymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru a Chydgysylltwyr Rhanbarthol
Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru
Progress with Local Government Collaboration: Evidence Session with the
Welsh Local Government Association and the Welsh Local Government
Association Regional Co-ordinators**

[66] **Christine Chapman:** I would now like to invite the next panel of witnesses to the table.

[67] Our next panel of witnesses is the Welsh Local Government Association and the WLGA regional co-ordinators. I warmly welcome Steve Thomas, chief executive of the WLGA, Susan Perkins, regional co-ordinator for south-east Wales and Sara Harvey, regional co-ordinator for central and south-west Wales. Thank you for attending this morning.

[68] You have provided evidence in advance of the meeting and Members will have read the papers, so we will go straight into questions. We have overall themes for the questions; there are some specific areas on which we would like your views. I want to start with a broad question. Last week, the Auditor General for Wales commented on the Simpson report and he said that it promised a lot, but does not seem to have delivered much. Do you have any initial comments on that?

[69] **Mr Thomas:** I think that is a glass-half-full view of the report. The report was signed off last week by the public service leadership group. It is a joint publication between the Welsh Government and the WLGA. There were many things in the Simpson report that have keenly affected local government. I was talking yesterday to the Welsh heads of trading standards and that service is moving to a six-region footprint based on the Simpson report. That is not a huge service—it is a £20 million plus service—but it is a very significant one. There are other things in the Simpson report around civil contingencies, transport, waste management, social services and education on which I think that we have seen significant progress. We had a report back last week from the south-east Wales directors of social services, and as a result of a collaboration that they had done—on common procurement around cases for looked-after children, which was fed into the Simpson report—they have saved £3 million. So, there are some good things in there. Was it the silver bullet for public sector reform? No.

[70] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. I want to bring in Leighton Andrews now with the next question.

[71] **Leighton Andrews:** Mr Simpson referred in his presentation to us about the financial situation providing a burning platform for further collaboration, but is it not the reality that you and other people in the WLGA have been talking about the crisis in public finances facing local government now for several years? So, why has the drive for collaboration not begun earlier?

10:00

[72] **Mr Thomas:** We always saw collaboration as part of the solution, not the whole solution. In factual terms, it is an objective fact that if you look at the savings from collaboration and compare them, for example, to the savings that we have made from the wage freeze in recent years, you will see that we have saved more from the wage freeze. That is inevitable because of the size of the public service workforce. However, we have driven the collaborative agenda as hard as possible in recent years, and it has significantly changed the character of local government, in many positive ways, but in some negative ways. Simpson, as a driving principle, built on previous reports, not least Beecham, and also the Welsh Government's 'Delivering the Connections' report. From our point of view, we have been at the collaborative game a long time and I understand when people say that they are disappointed with the progress made. The Beecham report was in 2006, so it has been a long time.

[73] **Leighton Andrews:** In, I think, April 2010, the then Minister for local government and I attended a meeting with the six north Wales local authorities, which were talking about establishing a regional school improvement service. Three and a half years on, the north Wales education consortium if anything is behind the other three in Wales. So, does that suggest to you that there is a real appetite and desire for collaboration in the system?

[74] **Mr Thomas:** I think there is that desire. I was at that meeting and I remember the message you gave there. However, in terms of the consortia, it is a curate's egg, is it not? We have a really excellent model in the Gwent area; we have a sub-regional model in the south-west, and we have two different models then in south central and north Wales. It has been

slow in terms of getting north Wales up and running, but it is running. The recent ISOS Partnership report talked about the frameworks now being in place. The announcement this week in terms of ring-fencing the school improvement grant within the revenue support grant is a significant agreement, and, clearly, there are penalties now attached to that: if local authorities do not make progress against the national outcomes set out in the Hill review, then top-slicing will occur.

[75] **Leighton Andrews:** I am glad that you mentioned the word ‘penalties’ because is it not the case that people only move forward on collaboration as a result of three things: either incentives, penalties or legal action?

[76] **Mr Thomas:** There are different drivers for collaboration. We would all like to think that incentives are the best way forward. If you take some of the waste collaborations, you will see that they were primarily about the drive as a result of Welsh Government policy. If you take the recycling targets that were set in terms of waste management, you will see that those targets had a huge impact in terms of the way that we deliver services. We both recently attended the presentation from Geoff Mulgan who talked about the behavioural change that has occurred as a result of the waste management recycling targets. We now have the best performance in the UK, and we have things like Prosiect Gwyrdd, which will save £500 million over the next 10 years. So, yes, incentives work. I am not so certain about penalties. It is your prerogative as the Welsh Government, is it not? It is up to you if you think penalties are the way to drive things, but if we can work together in partnership, and push the partnership agenda, I think that more things get done.

[77] **Mark Isherwood:** How do you respond to the statement by Cardiff Business School that not much assessment has taken place of the effectiveness of collaborative working in Welsh local government? We heard from previous witnesses last week that different collaborations have different cost curves and different cost-benefit ratios, that collaboration is not always a magic bullet, and that, therefore, we need analysis in those areas, before, during and after collaboration begins, not only looking at savings, but also outputs and outcomes.

[78] **Mr Thomas:** I will bring my two colleagues in on this, but I would answer that you are all aware of the commission that Sir Paul Williams is currently chairing. Evidence has been gathered for that and a report has gone in to that commission on the effectiveness of shared services. It looks at the whole gamut of the collaborative agenda in Wales. There is evidence out there. In terms of the WLGA, we did a collaboration toolkit. We mapped the collaborations out there—we seemed to go through a rainforest-worth of paper at one time in terms of the amount of papers that we produced. However, in broad terms, I think that there is quite a lot of information out there; it is the veracity and robustness of that information that might be the problem.

[79] **Ms Harvey:** It is also a reflection of the complexity of the different examples of collaboration. We have collaboration ranging from shared legal services to ICT at a regional level and economic regeneration. So, I think that, potentially, there will have been pockets of evaluation for different themes, but it is difficult to bring that all together and say, ‘This is what the benefit has been overall’. There are certainly examples of effective evaluations.

[80] **Mark Isherwood:** I was also thinking about cost-benefit analysis in advance of collaboration to ensure—as you would in other sectors—that, as much as possible, this is worth doing, rather than being something that might not actually deliver the outcome that you want.

[81] **Mr Thomas:** I think that your director general for finance, Michael Hearty, has been putting in place a measurement framework, but it has been very difficult to measure some of the benefits. The social services example that I mentioned is largely an example of cost

avoidance as opposed to pure savings. So, there is that element. I think that one of the problems that we have—again taking some of the smaller collaborations—in terms of some of the savings that have emerged, is not about savings when you talk about trading standards or civil contingencies; it is about the resilience of the service and making sure that small services do not collapse.

[82] **Mark Isherwood:** It is, but if you were in business thinking of investing money in an invest-to-save process or an improved service or product for customers, you would not do it without a detailed cost-benefit analysis in advance, recognising different cost ratios, increasing or decreasing marginal productivity and so on. Is that happening?

[83] **Mr Thomas:** I agree. All of the collaborations that I have seen have detailed business plans attached to them. My complaint, to some extent, was that too much business planning went into it and that the business planning sometimes slowed down the process. So, we talked about that. At one time I recall a letter to the then Minister for local government, Carl Sargeant, about death by consultant, because it did really slow down some of the processes that we had—constantly going through PRINCE2 project management principles, business plans and everything else. I am not saying that you should not have a robust planning process, but we nearly drowned in planning processes.

[84] **Ms Perkins:** I think that the greatest investment, in fact, is in establishing a culture of trust. You have to ensure that that is absolutely sound before you move into any form of business planning. If you have a series of partners that do not have that level of trust—if one feels anxious about another, and if someone feels that someone else is predatory—it is not going to happen. As an organisation, through our regional boards, the WLGA has invested in bringing people together and establishing that level of trust where those candid conversations can happen.

[85] **Christine Chapman:** I want to move on now to a series of questions on governance and accountability, and I want to bring Jenny Rathbone in on this.

[86] **Jenny Rathbone:** The incentive, in my book, is to reshape services to better meet the needs of citizens. There is not a great deal in the evidence that has been provided on paper that you are involving citizens and other stakeholders in the way that you reshape services. Unless you have that bottom-up approach, I do not see how you are going to arrive at that objective.

[87] **Ms Harvey:** The bulk of the evidence that we submitted was around regional working, and I think that it is fair to say that examples like waste management and the sort of strategic planning around social services commissioning and so on are more distant, but in terms of the evidence that you would receive from the local service boards, that is really where it is happening on the ground. There are examples of local authorities working with local partners in health, the third sector and even the private sector, but certainly at a local service board level with further education and so on, where they have engaged with citizens and developed shared services. That might not be included in our evidence because we focused more on regional working.

[88] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. I accept that people are not that interested in how the bin service is organised and how you get around to doing it, just as long as it works. However, in terms of more complex areas, such as social services, how is the collaboration being taken forward without people feeling that it is just being done?

[89] **Ms Harvey:** There are examples of engagement sessions with clients at a local level. I am not certain—they have certainly held stakeholder events. In my experience, the western bay major social services programme is looking at holding stakeholder sessions to actually

engage with the people who will be receiving the services, and that is happening around different themes. It is quite a challenge to do that at that wider strategic level, but my understanding is that where it is happening on specific services—say adult services—they will be engaging with service users.

[90] **Jenny Rathbone:** Are local councillors actively involved in those stakeholder events? Not all citizens want to get involved or will have the time to get involved, but they have their representatives who they have elected. Are those local councillors there as advocates for their communities?

[91] **Mr Thomas:** I attended about two years ago—some Members may have been there—a session with all the councillors across north Wales, and I think the biggest complaint was on the issue of accountability. We have recently put evidence to the public services commission, and we used a quotation from Jeremy Bentham, which is that boards are screens that hide accountability rather than enhance it. There has been significant disquiet from backbench members, particularly within local authorities, about the shift of accountability up to another level into areas that have generally involved executive members as opposed to members involved in scrutiny.

[92] **Jenny Rathbone:** However, you can see that there is a role for both—otherwise, you are not going to get it right. The cabinet members will often be indistinguishable from the senior officers because they spend a lot of time in town halls. How are you going to get that citizen engagement that encourages people to think that change is inevitable, but there is an opportunity to improve things?

[93] **Mr Thomas:** In terms of citizen engagement, I do not think we have got it right, and, from our point of view, one of the things we were hugely conscious of was that, in one sense, a cadre of people in local government were running in front of other people in local government, if you see what I mean. The collaborations are, essentially, set up in the first place by members from the executive, and they are built at a high level. There are more organic collaborations at a lower level within local authorities, but the accountability issue is something that we have not got right, and I do not see any point in pretending that we have.

[94] **Jenny Rathbone:** That is the danger, is it not, that you just have larger structures and the citizen thinks, ‘This is not a responsive service’, but they do not have a clue where to go to complain?

[95] **Mr Thomas:** Again, to go back to my earlier point about social services, does the average citizen in south-east Wales know what the South East Wales Improvement Collaborative is? I do not think they do. I do not think they have a clue. There is a range of social services directors who do excellent work, and they report into local authority structures, but is there a general citizen awareness of that? I very much doubt it.

[96] **Jenny Rathbone:** No, but what they will need to know is, if I am concerned about my neighbour, where do I go?

[97] **Mr Thomas:** Yes, and, if you are, unfortunately, in a position where you have a looked-after child, you will need to know that process.

[98] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, so turning that corner, what work is being done to try to get that sort of broad consensus on the need for change and opportunities for actually improving things?

[99] **Mr Thomas:** I think—and, again, it goes back to the Simpson compact—the social services element of the Simpson compact is all about the Social Services and Well-being

(Wales) Bill, and what we were trying to do was feed into that Bill in terms of priorities. When it comes to citizen engagement, what we were looking to do, particularly in certain areas—to take one example, carer assessments, that is something that we were trying to use the collaborative agenda for, to push much more citizen-focused services at the front end. So, in terms of social services, whether the superstructure above the collaborations is understood by the public or not, I think, in terms of the information that you have coming up, the collaborative work is very much feeding into that legislation.

[100] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, so, in your view, how do you promote the idea in local authorities that, ‘It doesn’t really matter who pays our bill; we are collaborating on improving the service that person is involved with’?

[101] **Mr Thomas:** That is promoted through our management structure. It is a general understanding. We are constantly hit—I do not know whether you would call it a cliché—by the view that people do not care who delivers their services; what they want are joined-up services. I have quoted an example many times of an incident that happened to my father. My father has cancer and he ended up one day with the unedifying spectacle of a social worker refusing to cross his front door because a member of the health service was in the house. That is not joined-up working at the front end. He would not articulate it this way, but what he wants is a seamless service at that front end, and that is where the effort has to go in terms of citizens.

10:15

[102] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. So, what do you think local authorities are doing to address this?

[103] **Mr Thomas:** In social care, it is all about integrated teamwork. You see some of the work that is going on in places like Bridgend and Monmouthshire, where there is some really good work on integrated teams. Again, that will involve occupational therapists, social workers, district nurses and so on. It is about making those services a public service. You know, it is not a health service or a local government service; it is a public service. I think that parts of the work on integrated teams are mini examples of shared services at a local level.

[104] **Jenny Rathbone:** It sounds excellent. How is your role as the WLGA spreading the word on those examples?

[105] **Mr Thomas:** We have the Social Services Improvement Agency, and part of the work that it has done is to have commissioned work from a chap called John Boden, and part of the work has been to push out that integration at a lower level. Again, in terms of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill, you have sections 147, 148 and 149. If that does not happen, the Welsh Government has the power to push that collaboration, and I think that is vitally important.

[106] **Christine Chapman:** I have Peter Black and then Janet Finch-Saunders next.

[107] **Peter Black:** I think that we have done this subject to death, so I will just concentrate on the Cardiff Business School comment last week about a crisis of accountability in collaboration. I think that you, Steve, have said the same thing now about scrutiny. What is the WLGA doing to give guidance to local authorities on how they can improve the scrutiny of collaborative ventures?

[108] **Ms Perkins:** Our improvement team does a considerable amount of work in this area in relation to collaborative scrutiny and, critically, proper, effective scrutiny in individual organisations. As regional co-ordinators, I think that we would like to see much more about

collaborative work being discussed in scrutiny in individual authorities. However, yes, there is a support package that is available through our improvement team.

[109] **Peter Black:** As a councillor myself, I have not seen much of that, but I think that the big problem is that, often, where you collaborate, the bodies that you are collaborating with are very reluctant to send people to scrutiny communities in the local council to give evidence.

[110] **Mr Thomas:** That is something that the Williams commission may want to reflect on.

[111] **Peter Black:** I am sure that it will.

[112] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Good morning. Local service boards, joint authority working and regional partnership boards—a complaint that has been levied to me is that many councillors and staff or officers feel that they are attending a lot of meetings discussing many of the same questions. Do you think is that there is a duplication of process in terms of the effective delivery of collaboration and in being able to scrutinise it when you have those all operating within a small area, if you take north Wales, for instance?

[113] **Mr Thomas:** We were joking at the WLGA that there is a building in Wales called the ‘Welsh Academy of pointless partnerships’, and that is the Metropole Hotel in Llandrindod Wells. There are innumerable partnerships out there, and there is a superstructure of complexity in the Welsh environment that I think is not readily understood, even by practitioners in that environment—and we are as guilty of it as anyone else; the Welsh Government is guilty of it. Going back to the commission, it is certainly looking at that complexity, but I reread the Beecham report recently; it highlighted problems in 2006, and they have got worse.

[114] **Christine Chapman:** May I just ask you something, Mr Thomas? Joe Simpson has just talked about building trust, and now you have talked about these pointless partnerships. To what extent, do you think, you need partnerships to build the trust? Where do you draw the line?

[115] **Mr Thomas:** The two officers next to me know how I rant about this. The problem that we have with partnerships is that, if you go through and you try to map the partnerships that we have, we have partnerships of professional groups, we have joint public services partnerships, we have political partnerships—you know; you can go through them. They all start to accumulate. When we did the collaborative agenda, there was a helpful attempt, although it did not work, by Carl Sargeant to introduce a footprint based on six. The trouble is that that footprint of six was imposed over the top of an existing structure where you had four school improvement consortia, three social services collaboratives, four transport consortia—it is just confusing. One of the things that we badly need in Wales is a partnership cull. There are some really vibrant partnerships out there. There are task and finish group out there, some of which show no sign whatsoever of finishing.

[116] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** My final question is this: numerous questions to the Minister have asked about the collaboration agenda asking about how many shared posts there are, how many collaborative projects there have been and what efficiency savings have been made. I have received reluctant responses, but, when they have come through, it has been very much a case of responses saying that that information is not held centrally. I am amazed, if this is meant to be a strong political agenda and a strong delivery agenda, that we do not have that. This ball has been rolling along for some time now, so why do we not have, within the local government data unit or within the Welsh Government, a bare outline of those figures for the efficiency savings that have been achieved, and shared posts—I know that Carl

Sargeant tried very hard to get some shared posts—and the number of collaborative projects? To find out that that kind of information is not available is quite worrying.

[117] **Ms Perkins:** I can understand that point. Frankly, we have attempted to do this. We have had a collaboration digest, which has been refreshed, and we have tried to put this on to our website, working with the data unit. There are so many things going on, frankly, it is almost impossible to capture. Even now, if I go to meetings with officers, somebody will tell me about something that I had absolutely no awareness of. It happened to me the other day. There is an attempt to set up a south Wales advocacy service, but I had not even been aware of that. However, there is a serious attempt being made to do that from Cardiff all the way across to Swansea.

[118] There are excellent examples of very sensible, pragmatic joint working going on. For example, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council employs lawyers who have higher rights of audience in certain courts. They are now doing work on behalf of other authorities, and doing so very successfully. They are going out there and getting money back through the proceeds of crime legislation. That sort of understanding and ability to do that is not necessarily available in each legal department in Wales. They have that experience and others are benefiting from that very sensible, pragmatic arrangement. That particular authority is also doing human resources and legal representation work for the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, and it has been approached by the service in mid and west Wales to do the same. So, what we are seeing, incrementally—and probably unrecorded—are growing centres of excellence within local government where those services can be offered up to others. I am very pleased to tell you about that example, because it is a superb one.

[119] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Before you respond, Steve, I know of cases where collaboration has failed, such as in relation to highways in Conwy and Denbighshire, where a really good project was getting off the ground and residents were informed that this collaboration was going on and then it failed. We should be learning why it failed, but it just goes quietly into the abyss.

[120] **Mr Thomas:** We have to think about your earlier point on complexity. Let me pose a question that you might not be able to answer: what happens if you reorganise local government in the future and there are 10, 11, 12 or 14 authorities in Wales? We have all of these collaborations, so how does that then work and how will they sit with the boundaries of the new authorities? Or do we say that we will call a halt to all of this, and pull it all back into a smaller number of unitary authorities? We have to be fairly clear shortly about the direction of travel, not least of all after the announcements this week in terms of local government finance. It is bad news and, from our point of view, we need to know at some point where this ship is sailing, and I do not believe that we do at the current time.

[121] **Christine Chapman:** Mark, do you have a question?

[122] **Mark Isherwood:** Yes, very quickly. Each time there has been a failure of service in local government, all Members receive copies of Wales Audit Office documents or we receive statements from Ministers stating that one of the problems has been the failure of backbenchers to provide leadership and challenge, yet a number of backbenchers across Wales are afraid to challenge following examples of members being referred to the ombudsman for challenging and being accused of crossing the line. There have also been instances of audit and scrutiny committees being directed by senior officers on what they should and should not be doing, and the degree to which they should be going public or keeping things confidential. How do we ensure that members in those positions can obtain independent advice on what they can and cannot do?

[123] **Mr Thomas:** It is not just backbenchers, but leaders, is it not? To take a recent

intervention, the response of Peter Fox in Monmouthshire to the Monmouthshire intervention was very honest. Peter said that he was not aware of what was going on. We have done peer reviews in a number of authorities where we have looked at the internal performance management systems, and they are greater works of fiction than Stephen King produces. From our point of view, we have to be in a situation where the internal performance data that are reported to members are robust. The data unit is trying to assist people with robust performance management systems. How many times have we heard, ‘We didn’t know there was a problem’? We have to step up on our performance information in Wales. That is the answer to your point.

[124] **Mark Isherwood:** So, in terms of the audit committee chair who has told the chief executive that he or she cannot and must not do such and such, where does that audit chair go to check?

[125] **Mr Thomas:** In terms of some of the scrutiny systems out there, there are splits in some authorities between officers who advise on scrutiny and officers who advise on the executive. I remember Councillor Lindsay Whittle and Councillor Price when we set up the system in Caerphilly, where there was a big debate back in 2000 when the Local Government Act 2000 came in as to whether we would have dedicated officers working for scrutiny. There is an officer there now who works as the scrutiny officer. However, the resources behind scrutiny is not the resource that you have behind the executive, and everybody knows that; it is a fact of life. The management team, in effect, are the big hitters advising the executive. When it comes to scrutiny, it is more at a middle management level. It can be very career limiting to advise against some of the—

[126] **Mark Isherwood:** Their senior line manager is the person they might be advising against.

[127] **Mr Thomas:** Absolutely.

[128] **Christine Chapman:** I want to move on to another theme. I will call in Gwyn Price.

[129] **Gwyn R. Price:** Ex-councillor Gwyn Price. To you, Steve, on barriers, can you expand on the comment that local authorities have found it easier to make savings through internal budgetary prioritisation services instead of collaboration? Why is this?

[130] **Mr Thomas:** The collaboration agenda depends on willing partners, does it not? Part of that is about the culture of two authorities when they come together. Are they coming together because they absolutely desire to do that, or are they coming together for a variety of other reasons? One of the things that we have clearly seen is that in terms of the big savings emerging from local government, many of them are internalised. If you take the work that Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has done on systems theory in terms of stripping out process in that authority, there have been big savings in terms of things like the disabled facilities grants, revenues and benefits and planning those types of areas. Monmouthshire County Council has, for example, taken a very innovative approach to agile working within the authority by cutting down on its asset base and cost. There have been other dimensions as well where authorities have put in place internal change programmes. That is easier to drive within one authority than across one, two, three, four or five authorities.

[131] That said, there are services, such as waste, where the scale just demanded people to come together. How ridiculous would it have been to create 22 energy-from-waste plants in Wales? That scale pushed that collaboration.

[132] **Gwyn R. Price:** So, you think that you should concentrate on a smaller number of collaborations that could really show the way forward, and then go back to the way that the

councils work.

[133] **Mr Thomas:** What I was hoping when we signed the Simpson compact was that some of the smaller collaborations would just get on and do it. One of the things in the Simpson compact is civil contingencies. The budget for civil contingencies across Wales is £2.3 million, so just get on and do it—go to the four police authorities and base emergency planning on the four police authorities. It is common sense, is it not? You do not need 22 emergency planning services. That was one of the disappointing elements of Simpson, namely that some of the smaller collaborations did not happen. There was a view at one time that some of the smaller services were hiding behind some of the larger services.

[134] **Mike Hedges:** I have two points. One area that is very easy to collaborate on is back office functions—things like payroll. Every teacher in Wales is paid in exactly the same way. Most if not all local authority staff are paid in the same way. I know that the same is true of ICT contracts, et cetera. When ICT contracts come to an end, instead of paying £100 million as Swansea did for a system that partly did not work, what progress are you making for collaborating on systems?

[135] Secondly, looking at health boards, which have GPs, consultants and hospitals, I am not convinced that collaboration is working any better inside health boards than it is between local authorities. Local authorities have a better record of keeping to their budgets.

10:30

[136] **Mr Thomas:** In terms of IT systems, I am personally culpable for this because I was responsible at one time for the IT group of the efficiency and innovation board that was led by Jane Hutt. It has been very frustrating. I think that there have been good collaborations in IT—Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Gwent Police have collaborated on a common data centre. However, we tried at one time to call a moratorium on the building of data centres. If I recall, the number of data centres out there runs into double figures. You could actually have one for the whole of Wales, really, doing what you need it to do—or at least three regionally based ones. In IT, I think that we should have called a moratorium on contracts at some time; that has been a huge area of waste, and we really need to drill down more into IT. I have to say, I think that some of the Welsh Government's strategies on IT have been confusing as well. We have had Cymru Ar-lein, Digital Wales and a range of strategies, and I am not certain about the effectiveness of them.

[137] One of the things that we were tasked to do was to get the public sector broadband aggregation project up and running, which we did through the efficiency and innovation board. The Welsh Government spent £73 million on that. Now, there was some good stuff that came out of it, but many public organisations, when we took it on board, were not using it. That is a huge investment not to be used.

[138] On the health boards, I agree with you; I think that the integration with health is not complete. With secondary and primary care, we talk about the integration of health and social services, and there is a lot of work that can be done there, but the integration in health of acute care and primary care is not complete, and the evidence is all around us.

[139] **Mike Hedges:** And between hospitals.

[140] **Ms Perkins:** Just to make an observation, the back-office services certainly account for less than 2% of local authority expenditure in any event. So, in terms of large-scale efficiency savings, they will not be found in those traditional back-office services.

[141] **Mike Hedges:** But they do account for a substantial amount of capital money.

[142] **Ms Perkins:** Yes, admittedly.

[143] **Mike Hedges:** When you say 2%, you are not counting the borrowing costs, are you? You are just counting the revenue costs.

[144] **Christine Chapman:** We are a bit short of time, so I want to bring in Peter Black and then Lindsay Whittle and Rhodri Glyn Thomas.

[145] **Peter Black:** It occurred to me that we are talking about collaborations as though, once you have them in place, they are there for ever and a day. Of course, collaborations themselves are movable feasts; they often collapse and reappear in different forms. What impact do you think the changes in local government finance in next year's budget will have on the viability of many collaborations where some local councillors might decide that, to save money, they are going to pull money out of this or that collaborative venture and perhaps do it themselves in a different way?

[146] **Mr Thomas:** I am not going to answer that question, in that it goes back to my previous point. We have to know very quickly what the Williams commission is going to say about the future of local government. If I was a director of finance in local government at the moment, I would be very reluctant to enter into collaborations if I knew that there was a different journey being suggested for the future of local government. The Williams commission will report at Christmas. If there is to be local government reorganisation, so be it, but we need to know that. There are collaborations that go on between authorities all the time. I was with Blaenau Gwent yesterday, and Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr are collaborating on their IT. The question, however, is this: what happens if there is local government reorganisation and authorities are based on the boundaries of the local health boards? The Williams commission says that they must not cross the local health board area. Merthyr is in a different local health board area from Blaenau Gwent. So, what is the point of their doing that? So, some clarity on the direction of travel is vital. That is the burning platform, because, unless we get that, we could waste a lot of effort in the next period, and I think that what we have to do is to concentrate on making these savings, but doing it in a very clear direction of travel that we do not have at present.

[147] **Peter Black:** Okay, well, in terms of existing collaborations, then.

[148] **Mr Thomas:** I think that many of them will. You are right; some of them do wither on the vine in terms of processes. However, I think that some of the more resilient collaborations that we have out there, such as the social services collaborations, have been very resilient over time. Leighton will know that the education consortia were in place before we talked about Simpson. They have been there since 2000. So, there have been collaborations in place, but I think that there is a big question mark over the future.

[149] **Christine Chapman:** Lindsay Whittle is next.

[150] **Lindsay Whittle:** Present Councillor Lindsay Whittle, Chair. You will know that I am a passionate believer in local government and all of the good work that it delivers throughout Wales, and I will remain a passionate believer in local government. I am quite disappointed that local government sometimes does not blow its own trumpet. We have heard great examples from Sarah, Susan and, indeed, yourself, Steve. The list is as long as your arm for collaboration. I represent south-east Wales and if I hear 'Gwent frailty' one more time, I will run out screaming because that is all that people ever talk about. There is a lot more going on and we have to highlight that. I am sometimes disappointed that the Assembly does not collaborate more with local government. Perhaps some Assembly back services could be run by local government, but it is a different civil service, I suppose—it is God's chosen few.

There you go, that is off my chest. We are waiting for the Williams report—the commission on public service governance and delivery. I am concerned about Williams setting the agenda. Why does the WLGA not set the agenda first and do something really radical? It could put forward its own proposals for any possible reorganisation. To be honest, I trust that there is far more experience in local government in the delivery of services in local government than there is in this organisation, with respect to it.

[151] **Mr Thomas:** We have put a very detailed submission to Williams. We have argued for a couple of things very clearly, which ties into a report from last week. Our view, for example, is that public health in Wales should be within local government. There is an £81 million budget in public health; there has just been a £2 billion-transfer in England of the public health function. Local government was born out of public health. We used to run the public health service and I am surprised that we have separate trusts organising that. There are things in terms of community services and health that we would like to be examined. I mentioned the integrated teams—district nursing and social workers—that are doing much of the same thing on the ground. Why do we have separate organisations doing that? There is something around that.

[152] We will see what Williams recommends. If it recommends local government reorganisation, I do not think that people are afraid of that. From our point of view, I do not think that we particularly want to get into a numbers game at this point, but if there is a recommendation around that and if there is reorganisation, the one thing that we would ask—which goes back to Joe’s earlier evidence—is that we retain our functional integrity. The clear evidence from England is that the smaller district councils are the ones on the verge of bankruptcy. West Somerset has just gone into an investigation by a House of Commons select committee. If you take those bigger functions away, the resilience of local government is also taken away. Those services are intrinsically local in any case.

[153] **Lindsay Whittle:** You have answered my second question already, thank you.

[154] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rydych yn sôn am awdurdodau yn Lloegr sy’n agos at fethdaliad—gwnaethoch sôn am rai o’r awdurdodau llai. Pa mor agos ydym ni at sefyllfa yng Nghymru lle bydd awdurdodau lleol yn wynebu methdaliad ac yn methu â darparu’r gwasanaethau statudol?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You mentioned authorities in England that are close to insolvency—you mentioned some of the smaller authorities. How close are we to a situation in Wales where local authorities will face insolvency and will not be able to provide statutory services?

[155] **Mr Thomas:** I heard the comments of Councillor Goodway yesterday and I think that they are fair comments. I do not think that there are authorities in Wales that are about to fall over. However, there are huge pressures on budgets. We have worked with a range of authorities, and the WLGA is supporting a range of authorities in looking at medium-term financial strategies at the current time. I suppose that it is the length of the cuts process that will really test the viability of local government. I think that local authorities will get through the next two years—it will be intensely painful, but I think that they will get through it. However, if austerity continues in a deep form over a longer period of time, the sustainability of certain authorities will be in doubt.

[156] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Felly, os na fydd newid o ran y cyd-destun ariannol o fewn y degawd nesaf, byddwn yn wynebu sefyllfa lle bydd rhai awdurdodau lleol yn methu â darparu gwasanaethau statudol.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Therefore, if there is no change in the financial context over the next decade, we are going to face a situation where some local authorities will fail to provide statutory services.

[157] **Mr Thomas:** I think that the short answer to that is ‘yes’.

[158] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rydych wedi cyfeirio at gomisiwn Williams ac rydych mwy neu lai wedi dweud os bydd Williams a'i gomisiwn yn argymhell hyn a'r llall, fod hynny'n mynd i ddigwydd. A ydych yn meddwl bod hynny'n mynd i ddigwydd yn naturiol heb fod unrhyw un yn gyrru'r broses honno yn ei blaen? Os oes angen i rywun yrru'r broses honno ymlaen, pwy ddylai fod yn gwneud hynny?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You have referred to the Williams commission and you have more or less said that if Williams and his commission recommend this, that or the other, then that will happen. Do you think that that is going to happen naturally without anyone driving that process forward? If someone needs to drive that process forward, who should be doing so?

[159] **Mr Thomas:** I do not want to put words into your mouths as political parties, but I suspect that you will have things in your manifestos, as we go towards 2016, about the future shape of local government. That will no doubt drive the direction of travel. My only plea is that if there is an announcement by Williams at Christmas time we do not drag this out too long. You cannot just come out with a number and then hand the sword of Damocles over local government for two or three years. If there is going to be a proposal we need to work out how we plan for that and how we move towards whatever destination of travel is set out for us.

[160] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** So, if Williams recommends restructuring local government, would that be a welcome Christmas present for the WLGA?

[161] **Mr Thomas:** I think that it would be cold turkey, really. We had a debate with our leaders the other day, and I think that there is a general view that the 22-authority structure is subject to such intense questioning that it probably has a great future behind it.

[162] **Christine Chapman:** I will allow two very quick questions now, because we are over time.

[163] **Jenny Rathbone:** I find it very depressing if it is the case that the Williams review is getting local authorities obsessing on structures. We have just heard very clearly from Joe Simpson that there are different structures required for different services. You have also talked about that, across Wales. How are you going to get your local authorities to stay focused on the collaboration agenda, which is about delivering services regardless of which structures we end up with?

[164] **Mr Thomas:** Absolutely. We do not want to see the Williams report leading to us taking our eye off the ball. However, it is there; it is an elephant in the room, is it not? So, let us not ignore it. From our point of view, in terms of the next two to three years, when I look at some of the medium-term financial strategies in authorities, I find that they are very robust. However, there are some incredibly difficult choices in those medium-term financial strategies, and it involves the raising of more income through social care. It involves cutting down hours in terms of public libraries. I live in Blaenau Gwent; there are proposals to close Nantyglo leisure centre, and the Market Hall Cinema in Brynmawr has just closed. We are seeing significant things happening on the ground. So, as a result of that, I do not think that anyone is taking their eye off the ball, but we also need to know. We have a range of complexity out there at the moment and we need more clarity on the direction of travel, because it is proving problematic and there are unanswered questions.

[165] **Leighton Andrews:** How realistic is it to believe that there will be significant and swift action following the Williams review? In practice, I am not convinced that the Williams review will necessarily give you a final view on the number of authorities. Whatever is recommended, it will require legislation. Legislation cannot just happen over night; it will

have to be drafted, consulted on and widely discussed. So, in practice, you are not going to see anything on the legislative front, I suspect, before 2016. My party had a manifesto commitment against reorganisation in this Assembly term. So, I do not see that as being likely. In practice, is there a willingness among local authority leaders, in your view, to voluntarily begin a process of re-shaping local government in Wales in advance of legislation?

[166] **Mr Thomas:** If Abercwmwgwt wanted to merge with Lower Abercwmwgwt at the current time, and they are outside the two different health boundaries, there is no point doing that.

[167] **Leighton Andrews:** Agreed. They might also be two of the weakest local authorities in Wales that are already subject to special measures in the two cases. I know what you are talking about.

[168] **Mr Thomas:** They may indeed. In terms of voluntary mergers, we have seen a general reluctance to do that. I understand the reluctance. There is a turkeys voting for Christmas quality about it, but I think that the voluntary mergers are a possibility. The Assembly also has, within the local government Measure, a power to merge authorities, in effect. I heard what you said about no commitment to reorganise this side of the Assembly term, and I would not expect reorganisation this side of the Assembly term, but you can prepare for it. There are things that can be done.

[169] **Mike Hedges:** While saving for the council tax changes.

[170] **Mr Thomas:** Exactly. I am not advocating reorganisation. I think that it would be very costly, but if it does come we have to be realistic about it.

[171] **Christine Chapman:** On that note I think that we will have to draw this session to a close. I thank the three of you for attending today. Before you go, Mr Thomas, we have had a request from one of the Members as to whether you have any written examples of collaborative scrutiny within the WLGA. If you could send that to us it would be really useful.

[172] **Mr Thomas:** Yes. We can get you that. That would be no problem.

[173] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. We will send you a record of the meeting so that you can check it for accuracy.

[174] We will now break for coffee. I ask you to come back here by 10:55 at the latest.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:45 a 10:56.
The meeting adjourned between 10:45 and 10:56.*

**Cynnydd o ran Cydweithio mewn Llywodraeth Leol: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
gydag Arweinwyr Awdurdodau Lleol
Progress with Local Government Collaboration: Evidence Session with Local
Authority Leaders**

[175] **Christine Chapman:** I welcome you back to the scrutiny session. We are looking at the inquiry into progress with local government collaboration and we have local authority leaders with us. May I welcome Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, leader of Ceredigion County Council, Councillor Dilwyn Roberts, leader of Conwy County Borough Council and Councillor Jamie Adams, leader of Pembrokeshire County Council? Welcome to you all. We

have read the papers that you sent to us, so if you are happy we will go straight into questions.

[176] I want to ask you about the comment that the Auditor General for Wales made last week. He said of the Simpson report that it had promised a lot, but does not seem to have delivered much. Could you comment on that, first of all?

[177] **Ms ap Gwynn:** Fe wnafl siarad yn Gymraeg. Ydy'r meicroffon ymlaen? **Ms ap Gwynn:** I will make my contribution in Welsh. Is this microphone on?

[178] **Christine Chapman:** You do not need to touch the microphones, they will come on automatically.

[179] **Ms ap Gwyn:** Diolch. Bore da ichi gyd a diolch am y cyfle i ddod i siarad â chi. Rwy'n arweinydd cymharol newydd; rwy'n gwybod bod gan Dilwyn lawer mwy o brofiad ac mae Jamie wedi bod yn ddirprwy arweinydd. O'm rhan i, ers blwyddyn a hanner, rwy'n gweld bod cydweithio wedi datblygu dros y blynyddoedd. Mae wedi datblygu o ran Ceredigion, gan ein bod yn y canol, yn ddaeryddol. Rydym yn edrych tua'r dwyrain ac i lawr tua'r de. Felly, mae gwahanol bartneriaethau wedi datblygu dros y blynyddoedd. Mae rhai ohonynt wedi dod cyn Simpson, neu tua'r un adeg, sef y rhai trafniadaeth—Trafniadaeth Canolbarth Cymru yn ein hachos ni—lle rydym yn gweithio gyda Phowys a de Meirionnydd yn y canol. Roedd yr Asiantaeth Priffyrdd ar yr un ôl-troed. Bellach, rydym wedi cael ein cysylltu â'r gogledd, yn hytrach na'r de. Felly, rydym yn edrych y ffordd hynny.

Ms ap Gwyn: Thank you. Good morning to you all and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. I am relatively new to the post of leader; I know that Dillwyn has far more experience and Jamie has been a deputy leader. From my perspective over a period of 18 months, I see that collaboration has developed over a period of years. It has developed from the point of view of Ceredigion, as we are geographically in the centre. We look eastwards and southwards, so there are different partnerships that have developed over the years. Some of them emerged before Simpson, or perhaps around the same time, namely those on transport—Mid Wales Transportation in our case—where we work with Powys and south Merionethshire in mid Wales. The Highways Agency used to have the same footprint. We have now been linked with north Wales, rather than looking to south Wales. So, we are currently looking in that direction.

[180] O ran cydweithio addysgol, rydym yn gweithio â'r canolbarth a'r de-orllewin, ond oherwydd y maint daeryddol, mae'n fwy hwylus i bob un o'r chwe sir weithio mewn *hubs* o ddwy sir ar y tro, fel bydd Leighton yn gwybod.

In terms of collaboration in education, we work with mid and south-west Wales, but because of the geographical scale, it is more convenient for the six counties to work within hubs of two counties at a time, as Leighton will know.

[181] Rydym yn gweithio'n agos iawn gyda Phowys yn y maes addysg. Mae'r gwasanaeth gwella o ran arbenigedd yn cael ei rannu, ond mae'r gwaith ar y llawr—. Rwy'n falch iawn o weld bod y Gweinidog wedi gadael yr arian comisiynu o fewn llywodraeth leol, fel ein bod yn gallu comisiynu yn ôl angen ein hysgolion ein hunain. Ar y llawr yn lleol mae gwneud y gwaith gwella, nid o bellter. Felly, dyna ddwy enghraifft.

We work very closely with Powys in terms of education. The school improvement service in terms of expertise is shared, but the work on the ground—. I am particularly pleased to see that the Minister has retained the commissioning money within local government, so that we can commission according to our own schools' needs. It is at the local level that the improvement work needs to take place; not from a distance. So, there are two examples.

11:00

[182] Buom yn ceisio cydweithio yn agosach a rhannu cyfarwyddwr gwasanaethau cymdeithasol gyda Phowys, ond nid oedd y cynllun busnes yn dangos ei fod yn mynd i fod yn fuddiol inni weithio ar y lefel honno; ar lefel is, efallai, ac ar rai agweddau. Ond mae amser wedi dal i fyny efo ni; ar ôl y *top-slice* llynedd, lle mae arian rhanbarthol wedi cael ei glustnodi, ac mae cynllun pedair sir wedi dechrau datblygu, gyda Martin Palfreman yn ei arwain. Mae elfennau o'r un math o waith roeddem yn mynd i'w rannu gyda Phowys bellach yn cael ôl-troed mwy, efallai. Er enghraifft, pethau fel yr angen ar gyfer pobl sydd ag anghenion dysgu dwys, lle ar hyn o bryd, mae'n ddrud iawn i'w gosod—rhai ohonynt allan o Gymru hyd yn oed. Os gallwn ni gael trefn lle rydym yn gallu darparu yn fwy lleol, mae hynny'n well i'r plant a'r bobl ifanc, a phobl hŷn o ran hynny, ac os gallwn ni ei wneud yn rhatach, mae'n well i bawb. Felly, dyna'r math o waith lle mae angen edrych yn fwy strategol, ac ar y gwaith hyfforddi, datblygu gweithlu ac ati, lle mae modd ei wneud ar ôl-troed ychydig yn fwy.

We tried to collaborate more closely and share a director of social services with Powys, but the business plan did not demonstrate that it would be beneficial for us to be working at that level; at a lower level, perhaps, and on some aspects. However, time has caught up with us; after the top-slice last year, where regional funds have been allocated, a four-county scheme has started to develop, led by Martin Palfreman. There are elements of the same kind of work that we were going to be collaborating on with Powys now having a larger footprint, perhaps. For example, things like the need for people with intense learning needs, it is very expensive to place them—some of them to locations outwith Wales even. If we can have an arrangement where we can make that provision more locally, that is better for the children and young people, and older people for that matter, and if we can do it cheaper, then it is better for all of us. So, that is the kind of work that we need to consider more strategically, and on the training work, the workforce development and that kind of thing, where it can be done with a larger footprint.

[183] **Christine Chapman:** Before I bring in the other witnesses, there are obviously some good examples there and possibly some challenges, but would you not agree then with the Auditor General for Wales's comment that there has not been enough progress?

[184] **Ms ap Gwynn:** Yn fy marn i, rwy'n gweld bod pethau yn symud ymlaen. Mae'n dibynnu beth oedd Simpson yn gobeithio'i weld, ond nid yw pethau'n digwydd dros nos. Mae'n rhaid ichi adeiladu ffydd a hyder yn y naill grŵp o swyddogion a'r llall, ac yn y gwleidyddion. Oherwydd ein bod yn gyfarwydd â gweithio gyda Phowys, mae'r cysylltiad yn agosach, efallai, rhyngom fel dau gabinet, er enghraifft; rydym wedi cwrdd â'n gilydd i drafod tri mater lle rydym yn gweithio'n agos: gwasanaethau cymdeithasol, addysg, gwastraff a pheirianeg. Mae'r partneriaethau hynny wedi'u sefydlu'n dda. Nid yw wedi'i sefydlu cystal lawr tua'r de, ond mae gwaith yn datblygu ac mae'n cymryd amser.

Ms ap Gwynn: In my opinion, I see that things are moving forward. It depends what Simpson was hoping for, but things do not happen overnight. You have to build people's trust and confidence in both sets of officers, and in the politicians. We are used to working with Powys, so the links between us are closer, as two cabinets, for example; we have met jointly to discuss three issues where we do collaborate closely: social services, education, waste and engineering. Those partnerships are well-established. It is not as well-established southwards, but that work is developing, and it does take time.

[185] **Christine Chapman:** I will bring in Councillor Adams and then Councillor Roberts.

[186] **Mr Adams:** Thank you again for the opportunity of being with you, and good

morning. Simpson raised a number of challenges for local government, and I think that it is fair to say, in terms of the collaborative agenda, that, effectively, it was a large wheel that took a long time to start rolling. In terms of the pace of change around the collaborative agenda, I think that has definitely increased, certainly within this term of council; there is a greater clarity in terms of the demands and expectations that members have of officers in order to collaborate further. I think that the successful examples of collaboration are those where there is a real need rather than a want to collaborate. Going back to what Ellen said, the earliest probable example that I would give is that of transportation—the South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium in south-west Wales and TraCC, as Ellen referred to, in mid Wales. That goes back to 1998, so that is quite some time ago, but it has been a very successful collaboration.

[187] Probably for me, one of the newest collaborations that I will throw in as an example is the education hub between us and Carmarthenshire, where we have a joint school improvement service. That was identified as a failing within the authority—of us. There was an identification that there was a need to boost capacity within our neighbouring authority, Carmarthenshire, and we now have a joint post. I think that it was the first in Wales, and within a very short space of time, it is an example of something that has developed very positively and is adding value to outcomes for children.

[188] Simpson, as I said, raised a few challenges for local government. It also raised a number of challenges for the National Assembly, because Simpson did identify the fact that the regulatory capacity of Wales was probably sufficient to regulate the entire UK. Very little has changed in that, and I think that there needs to be some further work to ensure that local government is focused on outcomes rather than process. There is a danger that we are still in that process stage.

[189] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. I will bring in Councillor Roberts, and I know that Leighton Andrews wants to come in then.

[190] **Mr Roberts:** A gaf i, hefyd, ddiolch yn fawr i chi am y gwahoddiad a'r cyfle i fod yma heddiw? Ni fyddaf yn ailadrodd dim byd y mae Ellen a Jamie wedi'i ddweud, ond rwy'n cydweld â phob peth y maen nhw wedi'i ddweud. Mae'r gwaith yn datblygu. Rwy'n credu, yn gydwytbodol, bod y sefyllfa ariannol yr ydym ni a phawb arall ynddi yn gyfle i ni fod yn cydweithio, ac rydym yn manteisio ar y cyfleoedd hynny.

Mr Roberts: May I, also, thank you for the invitation and the opportunity to be here today? I will not repeat anything that Ellen and Jamie have said, but I agree with everything that they have said. The work is developing. I believe sincerely that the financial situation that we, and other people, are facing is an opportunity for us to be collaborating, and we are taking advantage of those opportunities.

[191] Rydym ni, yn sir Conwy, bellach—nid yw'r rhan fwyaf o hyn byth yn dod i'r amlwg, ond rwyf wedi bod yn gwneud tipyn bach o ymchwil dros y diwrnodau diwethaf—yn gysylltiedig efo 130 o wahanol bartneriaethau, neu bethau yr ydym yn cydweithio â nhw neu wedi uno â nhw. Nid oeddwn wedi sylweddoli mai dyna oedd y rhif tan i fi sbïo drwy'r mater yn fanwl—ein bod mewn cymaint ohonynt—er fy mod yn gwybod ein bod mewn llawer iawn.

We, in the county of Conwy—most of this does not come to the fore, but I have been doing some research lately—are associated with 130 different partnerships, or things that we are collaborating on or have joined with. I had not realised that that was the number until I looked through things that we were doing in detail—that we were part of so many collaborations—even though I knew that we were in many collaboration projects.

[192] Mae'r bwrdd gwella addysg wedi dechrau gweithio gyda ni erbyn hyn, hefyd,

The school improvement board has started to work with us now, too, and we have a chief

ac wedi cael prif swyddog. Hefyd, i ychwanegu ochr arall y peth, nid yw pob ymdrech yn mynd i weithio. Yn fy marn i, camgymeriad mawr fyddai dal ymlaen efo rhywbeth sy'n amlwg nad yw'n mynd i weithio, unwaith yr ydych yn gwybod nad yw'n mynd i weithio, dim ond er mwyn ei wneud. Ar ddiwedd y diwrnod, byddai hynny'n costio mwy am wasanaeth salach. Rydym ni'n gydwybodol iawn, pob tro yr ydym yn mynd i gydweithio neu mewn i bartneriaeth, ein bod yn adnabod y cyfle hwnnw i ddod allan o'r cytundeb yn rhwydd pan mae'n amlwg nad yw'n mynd i weithio; rydym wedi gwneud hynny ar ddau achlysur.

officer. Also, to add another dimension, not every effort is going to work. In my opinion, the big mistake would be to hold on to something that obviously is not going to work, once you know that it is not going to work, just in order to do so. At the end of the day, that would cost more for a poorer service. We are very conscious, every time that we enter into collaboration or partnership, that we recognise that opportunity to get out of the agreement easily when it is quite obvious that it is not going to work; we have done that on two occasions.

[193] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. I will bring Leighton Andrews in now.

[194] **Leighton Andrews:** May I ask Councillor Adams how many months after the appointment of the ministerial advisory board in Pembrokeshire it was before he made a joint appointment with Carmarthenshire?

[195] **Mr Adams:** From memory, I believe that it was six months.

[196] **Leighton Andrews:** However, the reality is that those developments only happened after pressure from outside.

[197] **Mr Adams:** In terms of finalising the arrangements, that would be the case, yes.

[198] **Leighton Andrews:** May I ask Councillor Roberts whether he recalls a meeting in north Wales in April 2010 to discuss the setting up of the school improvement service?

[199] **Mr Roberts:** Yes, I do.

[200] **Leighton Andrews:** Would you accept my assessment that the regional consortium in north Wales remains behind the other regional education consortia in Wales, despite having started first?

[201] **Mr Roberts:** I accept your assessment and what you are saying now. However, I also know that there are reasons for that. One was the appointment of the chief officer, and I am sure that you are well aware, Mr Andrews, of the fact that we had to re-advertise because, of the two people who were shortlisted, one pulled out and one accepted another post in the meantime. Also, there were other things of which I was not a part, but, of course, I know what has been going on. Yes, I accept that it could, possibly, have happened sooner. However, I am assured that everything has been put in place so that it will work once it is set up. I would hate to rush into something and find that it was not working.

[202] **Leighton Andrews:** Are you optimistic or pessimistic about further collaboration, or is it now a necessary by-product of the financial situation? That question is for all of you.

[203] **Mr Roberts:** Are we talking specifically about education?

[204] **Leighton Andrews:** No, across the range of services.

[205] **Mr Roberts:** I am optimistic about collaboration, especially, as I said earlier, about

all the collaborations and joint workings that we, in Conwy, are involved with now.

[206] **Ms ap Gwynn:** Nid wyf i mor hyderus bod cydweithio bob amser yn dwyn yr arbedion y mae pobl yn meddwl ei fod yn ei ddwyn. Rydym wedi llwyddo i rannu swyddi, ac mae hynny wedi sicrhau ein bod yn cadw swyddi da yng nghanolbarth Cymru—swyddi arbenigol fel peirianwyr a'r math hwnnw o beth—gyda'r cynllun cydweithrediad seilwaith canolbarth Cymru sydd gennym ni. Mae digon o dystiolaeth wedi ei chyhoeddi ynglŷn â sut mae hynny'n gweithio. Mae hynny wedi rhoi'r gwynnwch hwnnw i'r ddwy sir—Powys a ninnau—ynglŷn â rhannu'r tîm arbenigol hwnnw, sy'n gweithio ar draws y ddwy sir yn eithaf llwyddiannus.

Ms ap Gwynn: I am not as confident that collaboration will always bring forth the savings that people think that collaboration will bring. We have succeeded in sharing posts, and that means that we are retaining good jobs in mid Wales—specialist jobs in fields such as engineering and so on—with the central Wales infrastructure collaboration scheme that we have. There has been plenty of evidence published as to how that is working. That has given a certain level of resilience to both counties—Powys and us—in terms of sharing that specialist team, which works across both counties relatively successfully.

[207] Mae hynny wedi dwyn arbedion yn y ffaith nad ydym yn gorfod mynd allan i ddefnyddio arbenigwyr preifat—mae gennym fwy o arbenigedd yn y tŷ, fel petai. Fel y dywedais, rydym wedi llwyddo i greu swyddi da i bobl ifanc yn lleol. Mae hynny'n rhywbeth pwysig iawn i gadw'r economi i fynd yng nghanolbarth Cymru. Mae edrych lawr tua'r de i mi yn gwaedu asedau allan o'r canolbarth.

That has provided savings in the sense that we do not have to go out and use external specialists—we have more expertise in-house, as it were. As I have said, we have managed to create good jobs for young people locally. That is something that is very important indeed to keep the economy moving in mid Wales. Looking southwards bleeds the assets from the centre.

[208] Rwy'n meddwl bod mwy o arbedion i'w gwneud yn fewnol. Rydym wedi llwyddo i wneud arbedion a byddwn yn parhau i wneud hynny, unwaith y cawn wybod yn union beth yw'r sefyllfa. Pe byddai'r un sefyllfa sy'n ein hwynebu ni flwyddyn nesaf yn parhau flwyddyn ar ôl blwyddyn, rwy'n credu byddai sawl cyngor yn ei ffeindio hi'n anodd darparu gwasanaethau statudol, beth bynnag eu maint, achos mae'n rhaid ichi ddarparu gwasanaeth yn lleol, ac mae hynny'n golygu dros Gymru gyfan. Mae hynny'n broblem ac edrychaf ymlaen at yr etholiad cyffredinol nesaf gan obeithio y bydd newidiadau. Fodd bynnag, yn y tymor byr, rwy'n gwybod ein bod yn gweithio o fewn y bwrdd gwasanaethau lleol o fewn y sir gydag asiantaethau. Mae'r partneriaethau sydd gennym—y bartneriaeth plant a phobl ifanc, y bartneriaeth lles a gofal a phartneriaethau datblygu economaidd, dwyieithrwydd a diogelwch cymunedol—yn cydweithio ag asiantaethau o fewn y sir. Rwy'n cael adroddiadau fel cadeirydd y bwrdd hwnnw ac rwy'n gweld lot o waith da

I believe that more savings can be made internally. We have succeeded in making savings and we will continue to do so, once we know exactly what the situation is. If we were facing, year on year, the situation that we are facing next year, then many councils would find it difficult to provide those statutory services, whatever their size, because you have to provide a service at a local level, and that means services across the length and breadth of Wales. That is a problem, and I look forward to the next general election in the hope that there will be changes. However, in the short term, I also know that we are working within the local service board within the county with agencies. The partnerships that we have—the children and young people's partnership, the welfare and care partnership and the economic development, bilingualism and community safety partnerships—collaborate with agencies within the county. As the chair of that particular board, I receive reports and I see lots of excellent work where we have stripped out duplication and where there is

Ile rydym wedi stripio allan dyblygu a lle mae cydweithio i'w weld. Mae'r asiantaethau yn dod â chanlyniadau da i bobl ar y llawr. Rwy'n meddwl na ddylech anghofio'r gwaith mewnol o fewn siroedd—nid dim ond dros y ffiniau, ond tu mewn.

collaboration. The agencies bring good outcomes to people on the ground. You must not forget the internal work that is happening within counties—not just cross-border work, but internally.

[209] Mae hi wedi bod yn anodd cydweithio â Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Hywel Dda, yn ein hachos ni. Mae'r bwrdd wedi ffocysu mwy ar ddarpariaeth mewn ysbytai, ac nid bob amser yr ysbytai strategol—yn ein hachos ni, Bronglais, sy'n strategol i ganolbarth Cymru ac nid ôl-troed Hywel Dda yn unig. Rwyf wedi dweud hyn wrth Paul Williams pan roddais dystiolaeth iddo. Nid wyf yn credu bod ei strwythur ef yn gweithio, yn bresennol, fel rwy'n credu i mi glywed Steve Thomas neu un o'r tystion eraill yn dweud yn gynharach wrthoch. Dywedais wrth Paul Williams,

It has been difficult to collaborate with the Hywel Dda Local Health Board, in our case. The board has focused more on hospital provision, and not always the strategic hospitals—in our case, Bronglais, which is strategic for the whole of mid Wales, and not just for the Hywel Dda footprint. I made this point to Paul Williams when I gave evidence to him. I do not think that the structure is working, as I believe I heard Steve Thomas or one of the other witnesses saying earlier. I said to Paul Williams,

[210] 'Let's go back to the future; let's have a county medical officer of health; let's have school nurses and community nurses who are answerable to that person within the democratic framework and working closely with social care and social services.' That is the way forward in my view, on a local footprint, where it makes sense to people locally delivering those services. Hospitals are different. You need a national health board to have a strategic view of health needs on a hospital level because, in Aberystwyth, we tend to go to Swansea or Cardiff if we need specialist care, not to Carmarthen or Haverfordwest—sorry, Jamie. So, that is my view. Local authorities could take on a lot more responsibility for services and give them the democratic viewpoint and answerability that is not there at present.

[211] **Christine Chapman:** Leighton, do you want to come back on that point? I see that you do not.

[212] **Mr Adams:** May I add a couple of things to that? Mr Andrews raised an interesting point. There is always a danger of seeing collaboration as the panacea, or the golden bullet, if you like. While I recognise that collaboration gives us a number of benefits, such as capacity and the sharing of expertise when we do not have dedicated expertise in some of the very specialised areas—for example, we utilise the minerals expertise in relation to planning from Carmarthenshire, which provides a service to us in Pembrokeshire and also to the national park—and it gives us an element of service continuity, it does not always save a lot of money. Sometimes it does and sometimes it does not, so that is not an answer in itself to the financial situation.

11:15

[213] There are very good examples within the county. Ellen referred to the LSB. The LSB is working well in Pembrokeshire, in terms of putting a real focus on solutions for the services of the county. Going further than that, it is almost that total place agenda around the county—that of ensuring that there are good links and easy savings to be made, which we undertake currently, for example, with the national park, the local college and the third sector. There is as much or more opportunity within our county boundary than there is beyond it. That is not to say that I do not engage collaboratively beyond it.

[214] **Mr Roberts:** Rwy'n cydweld efo popeth sydd wedi cael ei ddweud, ond rydym ninnau hefyd wedi mynd lawr y ffordd lle mae awdurdodau eraill yn prynu gwasanaeth gennym ni. Mae Ynys Môn yn prynu gwasanaeth cyfreithiol, a sir Ddinbych yn prynu gwasanaeth cyfieithu. Mae hynny ynddo'i hun wedi rhoi arbedion i'r ddwy sir hynny ac wedi ein galluogi i roi gwasanaeth sy'n fwy na'r hyn fyddem angen ein hunain, ac yn ei wneud yn fwy gwerthfawr. Mae hynny yn gweithio'n dda.

Mr Roberts: I also agree with everything that has been said, but we have also gone done the road where other authorities are buying services from us. Anglesey is buying legal services, and Denbighshire is buying translation services. That in itself has provided savings for those two counties and has enabled us to provide a service that is more than what we would have needed ourselves, and to add value to it. That works well.

[215] Rydym hefyd yn mynd lawr y ffordd o uno dau wasanaeth o fewn y cyngor, sydd yn mynd i roi mwy o arbedion i ni na phe byddem yn mynd yn draws-sirol. Rydym wedi gwneud yr adran priffyrdd a'r adran amgylchedd yn un, ac mae hynny'n edrych fel ei fod yn mynd i weithio'n dda. Rydym yn cychwyn trafodaethau eraill ar wneud yr un peth efo dwy adran arall.

We are also going down the road of merging two services within the council, which will provide us with more savings than if we went cross-border. We have merged the highways and environment departments, and it seems that that will work well. We are starting other discussions on doing the same thing with two other departments.

[216] **Christine Chapman:** I have Mark then Janet. I remind Members to ask very precise questions so that we have enough time for the witnesses to answer fully.

[217] **Mark Isherwood:** I will cut down what I was going to say. We have heard from previous witnesses that a different cost occurs for each collaboration—different costs and benefits—and potentially different outcomes. In some cases, bigger organisations or collaborations can deliver more efficiency and better outcomes, however, in some cases, beyond a certain size, the opposite can be the case. How, on the ground, as individual local authorities working with potential partners, do you assess the potential effectiveness of the collaboration in terms of outcomes, rather than simply following the direction to collaborate as an end in itself?

[218] **Mr Roberts:** When I was coming down on the train, I thought that somebody would ask me that question. So, I have written a note here that says, 'Evidence base before we go into it, look into it in detail to see what the options are, to see what the benefits are and what the obstacles are before we start going down the road of saying "yes".' That is certainly looked into in great detail. If we go as far as saying, 'Yes, this is worth a try', we will set up something along the lines of a project board where members and officers work closely together. We will always encourage anything and everything to go through scrutiny, even giving scrutiny the opportunity to set up a task and finish group, if need be, to look at certain things. When it comes to decision making on moving forward or not, we as a cabinet then have the confidence that it has been looked at thoroughly at officer and member level.

[219] **Mr Adams:** Your question is a very fair one, Mr Isherwood, because we all come from slightly different starting bases. Our structures are marginally different, as are our staffing levels and expertise. Age profile is quite an important consideration. Part of the work that we have undertaken is to ensure that we have some sort of succession planning within our considerations as we move forward. Regarding some of the difficulties, I referred earlier to the minerals officer, for example. Some of the disciplines within our council are reaching a point where age is taking that experience away from us. We identify that as an opportunity to engage with another authority, and we literally ask: 'What have you got, what have we got and can we match that up?' That is an important starting point to ensure that, as we move

forward, our disciplines are complementary, rather than collaborating and adding too much capacity in one area and finding that we are having to engage the private sector, for example, to backfill other vacancies that we have. So, part of the starting point is looking at the staff structure and compatibility, and making arrangements to ensure that we have a complete service to offer over a larger footprint.

[220] **Ms ap Gwynn:** When I became leader, one of my first messages to staff was, ‘We need business plans.’ I had made the point previously, when I was leader of the opposition. We need good, solid business plans to prove that it is worth doing. It is a waste of time and effort for the staff if we go down a route that is not going to work. We have good examples of working collaboration. The ways of collaboration is another point that I have not mentioned. On food waste, Powys and we worked together very well. The other counties apparently were not in a position to come with us on that one. However, we have made significant savings by working together on food waste. We are working up another scheme now to get rid of residual waste. We have agreed, as six leaders, regionally, to work together. However, I am afraid that some are lagging behind. We need the savings, so we will be going with whoever comes most quickly with us. So, this depends on the fields that you are talking about. Some work more easily than others. For me, I need a good business case to persuade me that it is worth doing.

[221] **Christine Chapman:** Councillor ap Gwynn, I would like to ask you something. You may have heard the evidence that we took from Steve Thomas. He made the comment that he felt that there were too many business plans and that they were getting in the way of the outcome. Do you have any comment on that?

[222] **Ms ap Gwynn:** I did not hear all of Steve’s evidence; I heard a bit of it at the end. For me, a business case is important if you are going into something big. You as Assembly Members—or rather, it would be the Government—need outline business cases and full business cases before being allowed to move forward and draw down funding. It is the same for us. We have to take that responsibility.

[223] **Christine Chapman:** So, clarity is what you are looking for.

[224] **Ms ap Gwynn:** Yes, it is about having clarity that it is going to work, that you are going to get the outcomes that you want and that you are not going to be side-tracked by further costs that you have not seen, unless you are clear about where you are going.

[225] **Mark Isherwood:** In some cases, you also have to answer to auditors, who ask questions if you have not put those checks and corporate systems in place first.

[226] **Ms ap Gwynn:** Indeed.

[227] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Good morning and welcome. We have heard lots of evidence. We have heard varying opinions on whether the collaboration agenda should be driven and whether there should be more engagement. As Assembly Members, we hear that the partnership council for Wales—which I think is going to be called the public services partnership—facilitates collaboration. For me, this is about how you are supported as local authorities, individually and collectively, when you embark on collaboration, though not on every scheme. How effective is the partnership council in helping to move the collaboration agenda forward? You have touched on some of the problems that you have had, such as the highways one when it was cross-authority, and there can also be reluctance from some agencies; I am well aware of the difficulties with health, community safety partnerships and getting health to the table. When you have those kinds of problems, is there enough support coming from those who are saying that you must collaborate and that there is no option? Do you feel that the support from the partnership council and the Welsh Government is there for the good and the bad parts of collaboration?

[228] **Ms ap Gwynn:** We have two members here; I am not a member.

[229] **Mr Roberts:** I sit on the partnership council, and, yes, I think that the support is there. Definitely, the support is there through the WLGA, and the support through the Ministers, when it is working, and if we need that support. I personally would like to see the partnership council for Wales develop—not so that I have a trip to Cardiff more often, but I would like to see, if you do not mind me voicing an opinion, the council meeting more often.

[230] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** How often does it meet?

[231] **Mr Roberts:** About twice a year.

[232] **Mr Adams:** Once, I think. The reform delivery group sits underneath it, which effectively is—. That would meet quarterly.

[233] **Mr Roberts:** So, when we meet with Ministers there, I would personally like the opportunity to have an input into decisions, like what is happening today, rather than be told after the decision is made. I am sure that Jamie would agree with me. It is something that I have only been involved with in the last 12 months—we have only met twice, I think—but it is something that I think can be developed, and the wish for that to happen is with Welsh Government as well.

[234] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Coming back to the health and local government agenda, while we tend to place the emphasis on the Minister for Local Government and Government Business to get engaged more effectively, should the Minister for Health and Social Services be getting more involved with the collaboration agenda? We talked last week about the integration of social services and local authorities, but when we talk about the collaboration agenda, it is always the Minister for local government. Should there be more collaboration between those two Ministers, to ensure a more cross-cutting collaboration process?

[235] **Mr Adams:** You make a fair point, and furthermore, there are differences in terms of health delivery across county boundaries within the same health board areas, so there is something that needs to be looked at there to get some sort of equity across entire health board areas. Some of those areas are large and geographically different; I understand that. Perhaps the needs of service users within those areas are somewhat different, but there are differences. If I may go back to the partnership council, that is very much, if you like, the standing committee, but the reform delivery group is far more hands on. That underpins the work of the partnership council and, to my mind, does so quite effectively in terms of the responsibility that is placed, through the Minister for local government, on us as regional leads, in terms of the expectation that she has that we engage with our colleagues throughout the sector.

[236] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Finally, if you are not a member of the partnership council, but you are still a local authority wanting to deliver collaboration, do you feel excluded from the process, or do you feel that that partnership council is very relevant to what you are doing?

[237] **Ms ap Gwynn:** The partnership council, for me, is not obviously relevant, but having said that, individual Ministers have supported some of our collaborative work, especially the waste one, where there has been a significant input from the Welsh Government to help go through the process of setting up the scheme. So, there is help from Ministers, but not necessarily from the partnership council. As it happens, I think that Jamie and I are down again on Monday afternoon to meet with the Minister for health and the Deputy Minister together with the health board, so possibly there may be some knocking of heads together—

we shall see. Some Ministers are very proactive in helping collaborative work. They are willing to invest the funds that they have in order to push programmes forward; so, there is support there. The WLGA also has pots of funding that we can use to develop further; the Powys example, with social services, was one of those.

11:30

[238] **Christine Chapman:** May I just clarify? Councillor Roberts made the point about the partnership council, and we have been aware of this for quite a number of years. Are you saying that you do not feel that your voice is heard on the partnership council? To me, it is a partnership of equals. Obviously, the Ministers will have to make their decisions, but you have a responsibility to have an input and to communicate back with your own constituency—I do not just mean your own voters, but the wider WLGA family. Are you saying that you do not feel part of the partnership council?

[239] **Mr Roberts:** Absolutely not—the opposite. I feel, recently, that we are possibly more included than we were when I first became leader five years ago. The other side of that, possibly, is that I, through experience, am making more of an effort to become involved. There are two sides to the coin, are there not? No; I do feel included. The point that I was making there is that, because we have the opportunity of being included, I sometimes feel that I would like more of an opportunity to be more included to develop it. That is on the back of the fact that we must remember, especially in times like these, how lucky we are to have a Government in Wales. We are able, on a regular basis, to meet with our Ministers, which would be virtually impossible if it depended on having to meet with Ministers on a UK level. I suppose that the point that I am making is ‘Yes—thank you for the involvement’. We are willing to be even more involved if it helps the people we are representing.

[240] **Christine Chapman:** We will be discussing this and asking questions of the Minister, so we will raise some of these points. I want to move on now to governance and accountability; we may have covered some of it, but Jenny Rathbone wants to come in.

[241] **Jenny Rathbone:** You made the point earlier that we need business plans and good evidence for doing x or y. However, we have to remain focused on better outcomes for citizens. How are you, as leaders, leading on bringing with you your members and staff in ensuring that everything that we do is outcomes focused?

[242] **Mr Adams:** Shall I start? In terms of the collaborative agenda, it is very difficult—to start with the membership of the council—to convey effectively the advantages over the disadvantages. Many members’ starting point, if you like, is that of an understanding of control of a service. Some—probably more established members—feel the loss of that control through the collaborative agenda. That is a fundamentally difficult point to overcome. As Dilwyn has mentioned, it is only done through good scrutiny arrangements, and the assurance that they will have the opportunity to scrutinise effectively the services that we are providing on a collaborative and regional basis within the scrutiny arrangements of the council.

[243] Part of the difficulty, of course, is that it is an easy line to spin that we have lost control of this service. There is, if you like, a desire to retain everything. You are almost pulling one finger off at a time with some members; as I said, it is not an easy process. However, I think that that ownership is able to be overcome by ensuring good lines of accountability and by ensuring that members’ scrutiny arrangements are still able to impact on the delivery of that service. We now have the opportunity, with the shared education and shared school improvement service, for example, for the manager of that service to be held to account in a number of ways. There is an oversight board, which is the cabinet member, the head of service and the director. Above that, there is also a quarterly meeting between me, as leader of Carmarthenshire County Council, and the two chief executives. They also appear at

every scrutiny meeting, more or less, of both councils. We also bring in headteachers of schools, who come along to ensure that the challenges that Estyn has identified are being looked at effectively. The members, for example, of our children and family scrutiny committee have a number of opportunities to ensure that they are holding that service to account. We are, effectively, commissioning that service from almost a stand-alone body. If you can ensure that line of accountability, that is the only way that is acceptable to all members.

[244] In terms of officers, there are different dynamics. There are worries about job security, the future of the service, where they will be working and whether they will be working. We need to provide clarity to our officers and other members of staff in order to ensure that they understand fully the reasons behind the change and where we are heading. In terms of engagement with staff, we also have full engagement with the unions to ensure that they are fully apprised of the regional and collaborative agenda.

[245] **Christine Chapman:** Just for clarity, Councillor Adams, you have painted a picture of some of the challenges with which we can all sympathise and understand, but whose responsibility is it to ensure that all these things happen? Is it local government or the Welsh Government? I am not quite sure of that.

[246] **Mr Adams:** It is our service in terms of local government; it is that of my council, as for any other leader. In terms of moving forward the opportunities, which is what we are looking for, if there are disincentives to collaboration, sometimes they need to be addressed. Sometimes, those disincentives are overbearing and it simply is not going to work. Let us remember that this is not about collaboration for collaboration's sake. Ms Rathbone is quite correct: it is about service improvement and outcomes. Where those outcomes can be improved through the collaborative agenda, it is down to the leader of the council to ensure that that is driven through.

[247] **Jenny Rathbone:** How much of this is about attitudes of mind, in people's heads? The citizen needs to know where to go to complain or comment on services, just as the councillor, who is responsible for how money is spent in that local area, needs to be certain that they will be able to have an input into services that are being paid for by the citizens they represent. How much of it is about clarity of communication as opposed to the size of the structures for any given service?

[248] **Mr Adams:** That is another interesting point. When it comes to public health, health and elderly care, the majority of citizens are not worried about who delivers their services, but what they are worried about is getting a good service. In terms of the general public, I think that accountability is less focused and it is something that is perhaps more focused in the minds of members at all levels—members of councils, members of the Welsh Government and Members of the National Assembly for Wales, I would imagine.

[249] **Jenny Rathbone:** It is the role of councillors to be advocates for people who may find it difficult to voice their concerns themselves. It is about how we ensure that services are appropriate in size, depending on what we are trying to deliver, without losing that flexibility and accessibility. Social services are a good example.

[250] **Christine Chapman:** Do you have a question there?

[251] **Jenny Rathbone:** The question is: you can have quite a large organisation delivering professionally safe services, but you will always need locally delivered services.

[252] **Ms ap Gwynn:** That was exactly my point earlier. I think that that is very important. However, I would echo what Jamie Adams has just said about our own members: they are

very touchy about local service board partnerships, let alone external partnerships. So, we must ensure that there is answerability and that the scrutiny committees are given the opportunity. In fact, we have written that into LSB work now, because that has been relooked at over the past year. Therefore, each specific scrutiny committee is responsible for different elements of partnership working, be that internally or externally according to the themes that they are individually working on. We have a total of five. So, they are scrutinised, and backbenchers, therefore, are able to get that input to ask direct questions and to make sure that they are happy that the outcomes that we are expecting are being delivered. Similarly, they report back to cabinet. We get reports and minutes from all of the partnerships so that we can keep an eye on what is happening. We also have regular meetings between the cabinet and the senior staff to keep an eye on how things are moving forward. I hold open cabinet meetings, so any member of the council is allowed to come in to listen and to question us. We regularly get that scrutiny from backbenchers during cabinet meetings.

[253] **Jenny Rathbone:** There has to be a limit to the partnerships. With 130 partnerships, is it one of your aims to abolish some of them?

[254] **Mr Roberts:** Some of them have been looked at recently. If there is no need for them, they go. If they are not performing, they are scrutinised in order to be looked at properly to see whether there is further work to be done, and so on. Yes, we are certainly looking at them. There was a time when the number was higher than that, to be honest with you, as Janet Finch-Saunders will know, having been a member there.

[255] To go back to your original question about how we get information out and how we share information, another forum that we use is the informal council, where no decisions are made. We just have presentations to the members to inform them. Something that I have always been very conscious of is that whenever there is something new or different happening, I make sure that the staff are well informed, and not just the senior officers but the staff. In Conwy, there are 80 members of staff for every elected member, and they will come into contact with people probably far more often than we will. So, it is important. They will be asked the same questions as we are when they are out and about, so it is important that you give whatever information you can give on a regular basis, as Jamie was saying. I do believe that that is very important.

[256] Another thing that happens, as we have done with finance now, when we are setting a budget, the finance portfolio holder has set up his own committee of cross-party members who have been sitting down with every department in the council to look for new ideas as to how things can be done more efficiently. That seems to have gone down very well and is working well. It helps when it is on a cross-party basis, because the information is then within every group.

[257] **Peter Black:** You have obviously set out some good practice in terms of scrutiny of collaboration today, and that is very helpful, but all of the previous witnesses have effectively affirmed the comment by Cardiff Business School last week that there is a crisis of accountability in terms of collaboration of local government, which acts as a major barrier to joint working. In other words, a lot of backbench members—although it may not be true in your authority—do not feel that they are able to properly scrutinise collaboration, and they feel disempowered and disillusioned because of that, and that that prevents, if you like, this agenda from being taken forward. What are your views on that?

11:45

[258] **Ms ap Gwynn:** I can sympathise with that view. It does not happen with us. As I have already explained, we have an open-door policy, and everything is above board and open to backbenchers as well as cabinet members. It might be easier for us, because I am

leader of quite a large coalition—we have only eight members in the opposition. So, that might make it easier for me to do that compared with some of the counties down in the south. I think that Cardiff is probably more aware of what is happening in south-east Wales than we are aware of what is happening in our areas.

[259] **Mr Adams:** I do not have a lot to add, but if you asked a number of members in our council that question, inevitably, depending on how the question was asked, you would have a number of people saying, ‘Yes, I do feel disenfranchised’. Effectively, they do have the opportunity to engage.

[260] **Peter Black:** The other point that I wanted to make—and I made this point to the WLGA—is that a lot of collaborations are not permanent; a lot of them fluctuate depending on the needs of the council, particularly the budgetary needs of the council. Sometimes, a council might review its collaboration and decide that it can do things better by taking that service back or it might decide to collaborate further. What do you think the impact of the local government settlement is going to be on the collaborations that you currently have? Do you feel that you need to do more? Are there going to be cases where you might have to pull back from this, because of the cost?

[261] **Mr Roberts:** With the collaborations, if they are working, if the service to the people that we represent is better and it is at no extra cost, or is of less cost, we would do everything possible to continue that. As I mentioned earlier, with other efforts to collaborate and work jointly, after a certain amount of time trying to establish that, it became obvious that the service would not be as good and it would cost more. So, we immediately, anyway, took the exit strategy and decided that it was not the right thing to do between the two partners. That has happened on two occasions. You have to be strong enough to say ‘yes’, which is probably quite easy in the climate that we are in, if there are benefits there, but you also have to be strong enough to say ‘no’, because we are responsible for delivering that service to the people.

[262] **Mr Adams:** Clearly, some of the services that we currently provide on a non-statutory basis might be discontinued as a result of not just the current draft settlement, but the medium-term financial plans that all authorities will have. If there is something that it is felt can be delivered in another way, or not at all, or by somebody else, if that is affected within collaboration, it will have to be given consideration.

[263] In terms of the settlement, I think that we understand within local government that we have a role to play in these straitened times; it will inevitably change the face of many of the services that we provide as local authorities. Some services will disappear. I have questioned for a number of years whether we are actually the best people to deliver some services, and there are people better placed, for example, the third sector, in some cases. However, in terms of how the settlement will affect collaboration, I think that it does bring greater clarity. Your point is well made with regard to that, but it will bring a greater clarity about ensuring that the services are appropriate from now and going forward, rather than what has largely been the historical catch-all of local government to date.

[264] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. Time is running very short now. Janet, did you want to come in?

[265] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I have asked many witnesses this question. In local authority areas, you have regional partnership boards, local service boards and cross-authority working. I know from when I was in Conwy and from comments that I have had since, that that is a lot of duplication, because you have officers and members sitting on similar—. It has been picked up by Steve Thomas today, but do you think that we need to look at some kind of streamlining, so that people know exactly where and who they are collaborating with rather

than all these different formats?

[266] **Mr Roberts:** If I could start, Chair, Conwy has been mentioned, and the most recent example of stopping this duplication is the fact that Denbighshire and Conwy have joined up to form one local service board, which makes sense, because police and health have to attend two LSBs that are probably dealing with the same thing. So, we are doing this as one and we are very conscious of that.

[267] **Christine Chapman:** Did you want to come in, Councillor ap Gwynn?

[268] **Ms ap Gwynn:** We have rationalised in mid Wales. Before I became leader, there was a central Wales partnership board and a south-west Wales partnership board, which is perhaps the reason why there are so many different footprints. They have now been amalgamated, so we meet as one regional partnership board, as leaders. When you talk about duplication, different cabinet members are responsible for different areas of work and sit on the governance structures of other partnerships, so it is not the same people you are talking about. In fact, we are trying to rationalise—. I was talking about the engineering partnership—the Central Wales Infrastructure Collaboration programme or CWIC, as we call it, and the waste one with Powys and TraCC. What we are trying to do is at least get them to meet on the same day so that they do not have to travel twice. We are trying to do that to help people, but there is no doubt about it, it is a huge footprint to work in. I went down to meet with Jamie Adams and Bryn Parry-Jones last week; it is a two-hour journey for me down to Haverfordwest, as far as it is to come to Cardiff.

[269] **Christine Chapman:** Have you ever used video-conferencing?

[270] **Ms ap Gwynn:** That is a good point; I think we will next time. [*Laughter.*] When it is once in a while—. Once you get to know people, it is easier to work through video-conferencing. I did work on that footprint when I was a member of the arts council, so I am quite used to it, but there are still huge distances, and a huge time involvement and cost involvement, when you work on these big footprints. So, that is one message that I would give about collaboration: be careful that it does work for the geographical area being served.

[271] **Jenny Rathbone:** Do your staff use Twitter to share good practice and problems that they want to help solve?

[272] **Ms ap Gwynn:** It is developing. Twitter is not as developed as I would like to see it. In fact, I was keeping up with the Minister's statement on Twitter the other day because I had been asked to do an interview, and that was the only way that I could get an up-to-date feed about what was happening. So, it is important that we develop social media in order to make our lives easier; I take the point.

[273] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Thank you. I will move on to Gwyn Price now.

[274] **Gwyn R. Price:** Good morning to you all. Do you agree with the WLGA's comment that local authorities have found it easier to make savings through internal measures rather than through collaboration? We touched upon it, but I wonder whether you could expand on that.

[275] **Ms ap Gwynn:** Having spent the last few months looking in detail at our budget and the possible cuts we are going to have to make until they are absolutely confirmed—as Jamie said, we have our mid-term financial review as well—I think there is definitely more potential, according to the reports that I have seen of the savings made in the collaborations we are already involved in. Waste is one that is giving us dividends, and that is why I want to move on the residual waste one more quickly in order to get that as part of our savings, but,

on the whole, from what I have seen of where savings are likely to be found, they are internal rather than external, yes.

[276] **Mr Adams:** Undoubtedly, I would add to that that there are opportunities for savings, certainly among senior staff, for example. We now have corporate directors who undertake a number of functions; our heads of service also undertake a number of functions, and not just within the council; we have two heads of service who provide some capacity to FRAME, which is a third sector organisation that you may be aware of and which assists us with our recycling programme. It is also able to engage in our cultural agenda, and it is an organisation that employs those with certain physical or mental disadvantages. We are able to effectively add capacity to that organisation through that programme, which I think is very important.

[277] **Gwyn R. Price:** So, as you were saying before, collaboration is not the be-all and end-all. If you can find savings in ways other than through collaboration, you would look down that way, but, if collaboration saves you money, by all means, you will sign up to it. Is that correct?

[278] **Mr Adams:** Absolutely.

[279] **Ms ap Gwynn:** It is another tool in the box, is it not? We need to look at everything.

[280] **Mike Hedges:** I have two points; I hope to get a 'yes' to the first one. Collaboration was not invented by Simpson. There was an awful lot of collaboration taking place in local government previously. I would like Councillor Jamie Adams to confirm that we had things like the South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium and the South West Wales Economic Forum well before Simpson started producing reports. The second question that I would like to ask is on back-office functions. Every teacher in Wales is paid in exactly the same way. I know that you have IT and software contracts. However, are you thinking about moving to collaboration on payroll, for example, as these contracts come to an end? I know how expensive it is to replace hardware and software. One in a region might save a lot of money, if only in debt charges.

[281] **Mr Adams:** The point is a fair one until we scratch beneath the surface. As you will probably be aware, Mr Hedges, most councils have just gone through pay and grading, which is not the most pleasant of experiences, as far as the leader of the council is concerned, I can assure you. In terms of that, were we to merge further with other authorities on different pay and grading scales, one of the outcomes would be that we would have to revisit the entire pay and grading situation. It is very difficult to do that.

[282] **Mike Hedges:** They are paid on different pay and grading amounts, but they are still paid on the same scale, either on the APTC scale or on the Salisbury scale, are they not? So, they are paid on those scales, but at a different point on those scales, and it does not really matter what point you are paying someone on when you run the computer programme.

[283] **Ms ap Gwynn:** Are you talking specifically about teachers?

[284] **Mike Hedges:** I am talking about teachers and all local government employees. All local government employees are paid on the APTC scale.

[285] **Ms ap Gwynn:** But all of us do not use the same grading.

[286] **Mr Adams:** We have different grades.

[287] **Ms ap Gwynn:** We have just gone through job evaluation and it has created a very bad atmosphere among the staff. I have been to about 25 staff meetings with the chief

executive in order to explain the transformation process that we have gone through. They were not worried about the transformation process and the changes to the senior staffing structure, but they were worried about job evaluation and the hits that some of them have had because of that. It is not easy because each of us has different staffing structures that work in different ways. I take your point about IT. We have looked at it, in fact. I have been asking for years for amalgamated pay structure and pay and HR software to be used. We are looking into that. They have been looking at sharing, but it does not seem to be cost-effective as far as we can see up to now, and I think that we will have to go out on our own to get something that is suitable for us, going forward.

[288] **Mr Adams:** If it encourages you further, Mr Hedges, the reason that Ellen and the chief executive of Ceredigion came to Pembrokeshire was not for high tea. It was to ensure that we looked at aligning some of our back-office functions and providing some opportunities—opportunities that Ceredigion can offer Pembrokeshire and vice versa.

[289] **Mike Hedges:** I will not take this any further, but I would like to write to the three of you. There are other points that I would like to make, but that I am sure the Chair would not want me to take up time to make them.

[290] **Mr Adams:** Fine.

[291] **Lindsay Whittle:** I thank the three leaders for coming along today. There are a number of ex-leaders of local authorities and cabinet members in the room. We know the phenomenal amount of time that you put into your local authorities. You are what I would call ‘Nessun Dorma’ councillors: ‘none shall sleep’. That is to your credit. I would have said that even if my old friend Ali Thomas was sitting here as well. We are all eagerly awaiting this Christmas present, the Williams Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery. I do not mind opening the present. I just hope that when we open the card, there is money in it, like the card from your rich auntie. I am not so sure about that. Do you believe that the WLGA should have set the agenda on local government reorganisation? This august Senedd has only been going since 1995, whereas local government has been going since 1895, I suppose. Should local government have set the agenda, or should the Senedd have done it?

12:00

[292] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** The Senedd did not do much between 1995 and—[*Laughter.*]

[293] **Lindsay Whittle:** Well, whatever. It is 1999, is it? Sorry, I was thinking of local government reorganisation. [*Interruption.*] I have never been good with dates. That has always been my excuse for missing birthdays and anniversaries.

[294] **Christine Chapman:** Councillor Roberts, do you want to start?

[295] **Mr Roberts:** The answer is ‘Yes, I do think that’, because the experience is there. There are experienced council leaders. I have had five years, but there are people with more experience than I have. They could have shared a lot of that experience. There is a lot of talk about what could happen, but we do not know. We have had experience in north Wales with the health board, for example, where going big does not mean better. I would hate to think that, because of a decision that is not necessarily correct, somebody in years to come is going to have to rectify that again. So, if there is an opportunity, I would certainly want to see the Welsh Government scrutinise the recommendations that are made by this commission thoroughly before any instructions go out to local government. I have faith and confidence that the Welsh Government will do that. I can understand why new ideas are needed, but I sincerely hope that the Welsh Government will scrutinise that.

[296] **Christine Chapman:** We asked Steve Thomas earlier about the WLGA coming up with its own plan and proposals. I am sorry if I have missed this, but it is possible for it to do that and you are part of the WLGA, as you are a representative. However, are you saying that you are not involved in discussions? You could have discussions.

[297] **Mr Roberts:** We are involved in discussions.

[298] **Christine Chapman:** Right. Okay. I go back to the fact that this is an equal relationship, and this is what we would like; it is about your voices. So, I am wondering why it has not happened.

[299] **Ms ap Gwynn:** It is our voice, and it has been given to Paul Williams. The WLGA council met with us all last week or a fortnight ago. Following that, some of us met as leaders of groups with Paul Williams, and I went on behalf of Dyfed Edwards, as it happens, to meet with Paul Williams and the commission in the afternoon. So, we have had that exchange. Individual councils have also replied, so there has been an input. However, the first time we met with Paul Williams, the first thing he said was that this is a review of public services, not specifically local government. That is the point that I made earlier about where community health and local services fit together, because I know that they said that they are not going to look at boundaries of health. Well, sorry, but according to what we have heard and seen, they are not working, so why cannot we or why cannot you as Members here look at them? It is the services that you should be looking at, and whether they are being delivered most effectively on the ground.

[300] Some of you may remember that I was in the middle of a flood a year and a bit ago, and had to react to that. What that experience brought home to me was the myriad of different agencies one village had to deal with in order to get itself out of that. According to local people's perceptions, it was the council's responsibility, but no, it was not. The Environment Agency, as it was then, was responsible for one river up as far as the bridge in the village. The council, since the previous April, was responsible for the tributaries and the river up into the mountain. We had the trunk road coming over the bridge and right through the village, which was the responsibility of the Minister. Side roads were the responsibility of the council. It is a mess. Then you had Dŵr Cymru on top of all this responsible for sewage. It is difficult for local people to understand the plethora of services delivered by a plethora of organisations. It was bad enough for me: Dŵr Cymru had one arm coming up from Carmarthen and another coming down from Dolgellau. I was just—I do not know.

[301] You have had to deal with it as well in Conwy. It just brought it home to me that you really need to dig a lot more deeply than just looking at local government and the size of local government. You need to look deeply at public services in Wales and how they are best delivered, because there is an overlap and there is duplication at the moment. The setting up of this new body—sorry, but again that is going to bring more duplication in, I think, although it is supposed to be stripping it out. We shall see.

[302] So, I would join with Dilwyn in saying, those of you with local government experience, look in depth at what they tell you, because if they really analyse public services and come up with a new pattern of working, then fair enough, but if they are just going to rejig the old jigsaw because you want 22, 13 or however many authorities, remember this time around that you have not got district councils underneath that level. We are doing it all. In people's perception, it is the council's responsibility—that is where it lies. So, that council needs to make sense to people on the ground. From a Ceredigion point of view, we have been there for centuries and I think that we can carry on for a few more centuries, so I will leave it there.

[303] **Mr Adams:** I have a couple of points. Ellen has raised, quite sensibly, a little clarity

around responsibility, and it is something that Jenny referred to earlier with regard to citizens. The first point of contact is the local council, and, as the leader of a council, I will give you a very personal view, which is that if we do not maintain the functions that we currently do—and I think there may be functions that could be added, for example, public health and trunk roads—we have to have a critical mass in order to function. There is no question about that, and I think that that is a point I would be surprised if Steve did not make—he probably did make that point. However, in terms of whether we actually undertake all those functions ourselves, that is a different matter. I am happy to be held to account for those functions and to commission them from Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire or wherever else. However, in terms of ensuring that we do not have a democratic deficit, we need to maintain that local base, and that local accountability, so that citizens can knock on my door at 10 pm and know who to speak to. That is something that must not be lost through the commission. I would just re-emphasise that it is about all public services. Quite why it is not about health, I am unsure also.

[304] **Christine Chapman:** Rhodri Glyn, did you want to come in?

[305] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Dim ond un cwestiwn sydd gennyf, oherwydd rwy'n sylweddoli bod amser yn mynd yn ei flaen. Mae'n glir o'ch tystiolaeth eich bod yn credu bod modd gwneud nifer o arbedion o ran effeithlonrwydd cost yn fewnol. Rydych yn gweld bod partneriaethau a chyfleodd i gydweithredu sy'n codi yn naturiol, a bod hynny yn fodd i symud ymlaen yn hytrach nag edrych am bartneriaethau ffurfiol neu ailstrwythuro. Mae'n rhaid inni ystyried hynny yng nghyd-destun y ffaith fod Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru wedi dweud bod y sefyllfa o ran darparu gwasanaethau statudol yn argyfyngus, a bod cynghorydd sir o Gaerdydd, Russell Goodway, sydd â phrofiad eang, wedi dweud ei fod yn rhagweld sefyllfa lle bydd awdurdodau lleol yn mynd yn fethdalwyr, ac yn methu darparu gwasanaethau statudol. A ydych yn hyderus y byddwch yn gallu dod ger ein bron a dweud mewn 10 mlynedd eich bod yn parhau i gynnig y gwasanaethau statudol hynny, os yw'r wasgfa ariannol bresennol yn parhau, fel sy'n debygol, am y degawd nesaf?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I have only one question, because I realise that time is running on. It is clear from your evidence that you believe that there is a way of making a number of savings in terms of cost efficiencies internally. You see that there are partnerships and opportunities to collaborate that arise naturally, and that that is a means of moving forward rather than looking for formal partnerships or restructuring. We have to consider that in the context of the fact that the Wales Audit Office has said that the situation in terms of providing statutory services is in crisis, and that County Councillor Russell Goodway from Cardiff, who has broad experience, has said that he foresees a situation where local authorities will become bankrupt, and will not be able to provide statutory services. Do you feel confident that you will be able to come before us and say that in 10 years that you are still offering those statutory services, if the present financial crisis continues, which seems likely, for the next decade?

[306] **Ms ap Gwynn:** Pwy a wŷr? Nid ydym yn gwybod hyd a lled y wasgfa ariannol. Mi all fod cyngor mor fawr â Chaerdydd yn cael ei wasgu yn galed—bydd pob un ohonom yn cael ein gwasgu. Nid yw'r ffaith ei fod yn fawr yn golygu y bydd yn gallu parhau i ddarparu gwasanaethau os nad yw'r arian ganddo. Rydym yn gweld hyn yn datblygu yn Lloegr yn awr, lle maent wedi cael gwasgfa ers pedair i bum mlynedd a oedd llawer gwaith nag a gawsom ni, ac mae rhai o'r cynghorau llai yn mynd i'r wal,

Ms ap Gwynn: Who knows? We do not know what the scale of those financial pressures could be. A council as large as Cardiff could suffer a significant financial squeeze—it will happen to each and every one of us. The fact that it is a large council does not mean that it will be able to continue to provide services if it does not have the funds available. We are seeing that developing in England now, where they have faced financial pressures far worse than we have for four to five years, and some of the

mae'n ymddangos. Felly, os na fydd y Llywodraeth bresennol, neu ba Lywodraeth bynnag ddaw ar ei hôl, yn tynnu yn ôl o'r wasgfa—y sychder ariannol hwn—bydd unrhyw wasanaeth statudol o dan lywodraeth leol, o ba faint bynnag, o dan fygythiad. Nid oes dwywaith am hynny. Mae hynny'n bwynt gwleidyddol pur, achos hyd y gwelaf i, mae bwriad pwrpasol i wasgu cymaint ag y gallwn o wasanaethau cyhoeddus i'r sector preifat neu i'r trydydd sector. Dyna sut yr wyf i'n darllen y sefyllfa. Nid wyf yn hapus â hynny, achos rwy'n teimlo bod elfen o wasanaeth cyhoeddus ddylai gael ei chadw yn gyhoeddus er lles pobl yn ein cymunedau. O'r man hwnnw y byddwn yn dod, ac rwy'n gobeithio yn fawr, fel y dywedais yn gynharach, y bydd y droed yn cael ei rhoi yn ôl ar y sbardun ariannol rywfaint i wneud yn siŵr bod gwasanaethau hollol hanfodol statudol yn cael parhau ar gyfer ein pobl a'n cymunedau ni.

[307] **Mr Roberts:** Mae'n mynd yn anoddach. Mae'n anodd, ond mae dyletswydd arnom. A gaf roi rhywbeth yn y *mix* nad wyf wedi ei wneud cyn heddiw? O ran y penderfyniadau anodd yr ydym yn eu cymryd, ac y byddwn yn gorfod eu cymryd, yr hyn sy'n hanfodol bwysig yn fy marn i yw ein bod yn ystyried yr effaith y bydd hynny'n ei gael ar yr iaith ac ar y diwylliant Cymreig. Mae'n ddyletswydd arnom i gyd—yn enwedig o ran yr hyn rydym wedi ei weld yn ddiweddar—i ystyried hynny bob tro yr ydym yn gwneud penderfyniad.

[308] Mae'n ehangach na hynny, onid yw? Mae gennym y gwasanaethau statudol, ac rwy'n cydweld yn union â'r hyn y mae Ellen wedi ei ddweud, ond pan fyddwn yn gweithio ar draws siroedd, yr un fath ag y mae'r chwech ohonom yn y gogledd, yr ydym yn gweithio'n dda gyda'n gilydd ac yn cefnogi'n gilydd. Er enghraifft, gyda'r carchar sy'n dod i Wrecsam, bu i'r chwe sir gefnogi Wrecsam i gael hwnnw, achos roeddem yn teimlo pe byddem yn cefnogi dwy sir, byddai'n gwanychu beth oedd gennym ni.

[309] Mae gennym *enterprise zones* i'r chwith ac i'r dde i sir Conwy—y naill yng Nglannau Dyfrdwy a'r llall yn sir Fôn. Rydym yn cefnogi hynny ac rydym am ffitio i mewn i hynny. Un peth yr ydym wedi ei

smaller councils are going bankrupt, it would appear. So, unless the current Government, or whichever Government succeeds it, draws back from the cuts—this financial austerity—then any statutory service delivered by local government, of whatever size, is going to be under threat. There is no doubt about that. That is a purely political point, because as far as I can see, there is a deliberate intention to squeeze public services and push them into the private sector or the third sector. That is how I see it. I am not happy with that at all, because I feel that there is an element of public service that should be retained as a public service for the benefit of people in our communities. That would be my approach, and I sincerely hope that, as I said earlier, the foot will go back on the financial accelerator just a little to ensure that crucial statutory services continue to be delivered for our people and our communities.

Mr Roberts: It is getting harder. It is difficult, but there is a duty on us. Can I just put something into the mix that I have not done before today? In terms of the difficult decisions that we are taking, and will have to take, what is crucial in my opinion is that we take into account the impact that that will have on the Welsh language and culture. It is a duty on us all—especially given what we have seen recently—to consider that every time we make decisions.

It is broader than that, is it not? We have the statutory services, and I agree with what Ellen has said, but when we work across county borders, as the six of us in north Wales do now, we work well and we support each other. For example, with the prison that is coming to Wrexham, the six counties supported Wrexham in getting that, because we felt that if we supported two counties, that would weaken what we had.

We have enterprise zones to the left and to the right of Conwy county—one on Deeside and the other on Anglesey. We are supportive of that and we want to fit in with that. One thing that we have done in the county of

wneud yn sir Conwy yw datblygu twristiaeth, ac rydym wedi gwneud llawer o hynny drwy baratoi cyfleusterau ar gyfer digwyddiadau, megis Parc Eirias a Phorth Eirias, ac mae pethau eraill yn digwydd yn awr. Mae'r lleoedd diwydiannol yn gweld hynny yn beth pwysig iawn i'w wneud, er mwyn medru dod â diwydiant a gwaith i'r ardaloedd hynny, a bod rhywbeth i'w fwynhau yng ngogledd Cymru. Fel y mae'n mynd yn awr, mae'r wasgfa yn mynd i fod ar y rheini, ac rydym ni fel sir yn mynd i deimlo'r wasgfa honno ar ochr hamdden. Rwyf yn teimlo bod weithiau angen ystyried, ar blât ehangach, pa effaith y byddai hynny'n ei chael ar draws gogledd Cymru. Rwy'n meddwl fy mod yn gwneud fy hun yn glir a'ch bod yn dallt beth rwy'n ei feddwl. Er ei fod y tu allan i'r gwasanaethau statudol yr ydym yn gorfod eu paratoi, nid yw hynny'n tynnu dim oddi ar ei bwysigrwydd i economi ac i iechyd pobl gogledd Cymru.

Conwy is to develop tourism, and we have done much of that by preparing amenities for events, such as Parc Eirias and Porth Eirias, and there are other things happening now. The industrial areas see that as a very important thing to do, to bring industry and work to those areas, and to have something to enjoy in north Wales. As it goes now, the pressure is going to be on those things, and we as a county are going to feel that pressure on the leisure side of things. We feel that we sometimes need to consider, on a wider level, what impact that would have across the whole of north Wales. I think that I am making myself clear and that you understand what I am saying. Although it is outside the statutory services that we have to deliver, it does not take anything away from its importance to the economy and health of people in north Wales.

12:15

[310] **Mr Adams:** I would just add something very quickly, because I understand the time constraints. Dilwyn has touched on a very important point about leisure. A cut in leisure services is going to be a ticking time bomb for the health of this nation. We need to look seriously at how leisure services are funded and whether there is some opportunity to fund elements of that from health. We currently have the GP referral service that we undertake in our leisure centres, and that works very successfully, but, of course, that is almost too late; something needs to happen before the GPs refer. We want to get people into healthy habits. This is something that we have been working on quite successfully in the county. Going forward, and to answer your point, Mr Thomas, a number of things will help us: flexibility to provide the services that are needed within our county, less prescription about the process or the delivery of those services, more of a focus on outcomes, less duplication of regulation—which is the point that I made at the start—and an ability to be freethinking and innovative. That is how local government will survive and provide services for the future.

[311] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. On that note, I have to draw this session to a close. It has been a very good session. Thank you very much for answering Members' questions. We will reflect on what you have said and it will help us in our short inquiry on collaboration. We will send you a copy of the transcript of the meeting so that you can check it for factual accuracy. Thank you, once again; we are very grateful to you for attending this morning.

[312] Would Members please stay for a few minutes as there are a couple of things that I want to discuss very quickly once our witnesses leave?

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12:16.
The meeting ended at 12:16.*