



The Scottish Parliament Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Parliamentary Year 3, No. 40, Session 6

Meeting of the Parliament

Tuesday 31 October 2023

Note: (DT) signifies a decision taken at Decision Time.

The meeting opened at 2.00 pm.

1. Time for Reflection: Micheal Matovu, Commercial Director, Radiant and Brighter, led Time for Reflection.

2. Topical Questions: Questions were answered by Ministers.

3. Revision to Business Programme: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved 6M-11042—That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for—

(a) Tuesday 31 October 2023

after

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Scottish Government's Provision of Information to the COVID-19 Inquiries

delete

5.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

5.10 pm Decision Time

(b) Thursday 2 November 2023

after

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Early Childhood Development Transformational Change Programme

insert

followed by Appointments of the Chair and Commissioners of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

The motion was agreed to.

4. Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan: The Minister for Housing (Paul McLennan) moved S6M-11027—That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan that will support the Scottish Government's ambition to deliver 110,000 affordable homes, of which 10% will be in rural and island areas and help attract people to, and retain people in, these communities; recognises that the action plan complements a range of other vital work being taken forward to support sustainable economic growth and to deliver for rural and island communities; considers that it marks an important step in tackling challenges to deliver and retain more homes of all tenures and puts in place the systems and support for the delivery of the right homes in the right place, and believes that achieving delivery of ambitions will require the Scottish Government to work collaboratively with a wide range of partners, including local authorities, registered social landlords, community organisations and Scottish Government agencies, to deliver committed and coordinated action that will support thriving rural and island communities.

Rachael Hamilton moved amendment S6M-11027.1—

As an amendment to motion S6M-11027 in the name of Paul McLennan (Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan), leave out from “of which” to “marks” and insert “but regrets that only 10% of these homes will be delivered in rural and island areas to help attract people to, and retain people in, these communities, which comprise 17% of Scotland's population; recognises that depopulation has been a longstanding problem for Scotland's rural and island communities, due to a consistent lack of government action; notes that the current rural development programmes, despite being extended, have not been fully utilised; recognises that the plan must deliver on its objectives and promote rural and island areas as good places to live and work; acknowledges that the plan is”.

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to ((DT) by division: For 55, Against 65, Abstentions 0).

Mark Griffin moved amendment S6M-11027.2—

As an amendment to motion S6M-11027 in the name of Paul McLennan (Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan), leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert “notes the publication of the Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan, which aims to support the Scottish Government's ambition to deliver 110,000 affordable homes, of which 10% will be in rural and island areas; believes that an interim target should be set for 5,500 houses to be completed in rural areas by 2026; is concerned that, without sufficient economic support from the Scottish Government, the strategy will not provide the infrastructure needed to allow

local authorities, registered social landlords, community organisations and Scottish Government agencies to successfully attract people to, and retain people in, these communities; considers that the depopulation of rural areas should not be seen as the status quo, and notes the Scottish Labour Party's commitment to put economic prosperity at the front and centre of ensuring that Gaelic-speaking communities can survive and thrive; notes that this rural housing crisis is, in some part, due to local people being priced out of the area by the acquisition of second homes; calls on the Scottish Government to take further action to ensure that houses in rural areas are affordable and good quality, and that existing homes are a vital part of the housing stock; agrees that the Scottish Government should give local authorities powers to introduce an escalating council tax surcharge on empty homes in the next Budget, to be launched in 2024-25, as was supported by the responses to the Scottish Government's recent consultation on Council Tax for Second and Empty Homes, and calls on the Scottish Government to take decisive action to tackle fuel poverty and damp, poor quality housing in rural areas, to improve transport infrastructure, and to support the economic lifeblood of small rural communities by delivering skilled workforces, supporting small businesses and ensuring a just transition that delivers community energy benefits."

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to ((DT) by division: For 22, Against 96, Abstentions 3).

The motion was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 69, Against 53, Abstentions 0).

5. Ministerial Statement: The Deputy-First Minister (Shona Robison) made a statement and answered questions on Scottish Government's Provision of Information to the COVID-19 Inquiries.

6. Committee Membership: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-11043—That the Parliament agrees that—

Ivan McKee be appointed to replace Stephanie Callaghan as a member of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee;

Stephanie Callaghan be appointed to replace Ivan McKee as a member of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee; and

John Mason be appointed to replace James Dornan as a member of the Social Justice and Social Security Committee.

The motion was agreed to (DT).

7. Substitution on Committees: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-11044—That the Parliament agrees that—

Emma Harper be appointed to replace Christine Grahame as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee; and

James Dornan be appointed to replace Stephanie Callaghan as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Social Justice and Social Security Committee.

The motion was agreed to (DT).

8. Decision Time: The Parliament took decisions on items 4, 6 and 7 as noted above.

9. Fire Service Cuts: The Parliament debated S6M-09705 in the name of Katy Clark—That the Parliament notes, with concern, reports that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has ordered the temporary withdrawal of fire appliances at 10 stations across Scotland, including Greenock Community Fire Station in the West Scotland region; understands that the Fire Brigades Union has expressed deep concern that this reduction will risk the safety of both firefighters and the wider public; further understands that the SFRS is expected to receive a flat cash budget settlement from the Scottish Government over the next four years, and that the service claims it must make £36 million in cuts as a result; believes that this follows a decade of cuts, the reported loss of 1,100 firefighter jobs, and, it understands, a 14% increase in average response times per incident; notes SFRS Chief Officer Ross Haggart's comments that there is also a £630 million backlog in the service's capital investment; further notes reported freedom of information (FOI) findings that 75% of buildings in Scotland's fire estate are assessed as being of "bad" or "poor" suitability, and that around 45% are assessed as being in either "bad" or "poor" condition; believes that the combination of withdrawn appliances and what it sees as a dilapidated fire estate puts firefighters, who are exposed to health risks from encountering dangerous fire contaminants in their job, at further risk; further believes that firefighters work hard to ensure the safety of people in Scotland's communities; notes the view that firefighters deserve to be well-equipped, well-resourced, well-protected and well-paid to do the job that they do, and further notes calls for the Scottish Government to come forward with emergency funding for both day-to-day spend and capital budgets, in order to prevent further cuts to staff and equipment, and to modernise the fire estate.

10. Motion without Notice: Katy Clark moved without notice that, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.

The motion was agreed to.

The meeting closed at 6.29 pm.

David McGill
Clerk of the Parliament
31 October 2023

Appendix
(Note: this Appendix does not form part of the Minutes)

Committee Reports

The following report was published on 31 October 2023—

Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee, 61st Report, 2023 (Session 6): Delegated powers in the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 (SP Paper 458)

Subordinate Legislation

Affirmative Instruments

The following instruments were laid before the Parliament on 30 October 2023 and are subject to the affirmative procedure—

Colleges of Further Education and Regional Strategic Bodies (Membership of Boards) (Scotland) Order 2023 [draft]

laid under section 60(2B) of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 and section 34(4)(ca) of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005

Quality Meat Scotland (Amendment) Order 2023 [draft]

laid under section 97(8) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

Negative Instruments

The following instrument was laid before the Parliament on 30 October 2023 and is subject to the negative procedure—

Rural Support (Simplification and Improvement) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 (SSI 2023/308)

laid under section 2(3) of the Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Act 2020

Other Documents

The following documents were laid before the Parliament on 27 October 2023 and are not subject to parliamentary procedure—

Freedom of Information (Scotland Act 2002 – Report on exercise of section 5 power (SG/2023/244) laid under Section 5 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002

Heat in Buildings Strategy: 2023 progress report (SG/2023/186) laid under Section 62(2) of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009

Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland - Annual report 2022-23 (SG/2023/254) laid under Section 18(2) of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003

Scotland's Population 2022 - The Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends (SG/2023/201) laid under Section 1(4) of the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965

Scottish Animal Welfare Commission - Annual report of SAWC activity 2022-2023 (SG/2023/257) laid under Regulation 14 of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission Regulations 2020

Scottish Parliamentary Pension Scheme Annual Accounts and Report 2022/23 (SPCPF/2023/01) laid under Schedule 1, Part S, Rule 102 (2) (b) of the Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Act 2009

The following documents were laid before the Parliament on 30 October 2023 and are not subject to parliamentary procedure—

Annual Report 2022/23 of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland (CES/2023/01) laid under section 25(1) of the Scottish Parliamentary Commissions and Commissioners etc. Act 2010 as amended

Highlands and Islands Enterprise Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 (SG/2023/253) laid under Section 30 of the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990

Scrutiny report on draft Regulations: the Disability Assistance for Older People (Scotland) Regulations 2024 (SCoSS/2023/04) laid under sections 22 and 97 of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018

The following documents were laid before the Parliament on 31 October 2023 and are not subject to parliamentary procedure—

Draft Report by the Scottish Ministers in exercise of the power in Section 1(1) of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021 for the reporting period 1 September 2022 – 31 August 2023 and the intended future use of the power under Section 1(1) in the upcoming reporting period 1 September 2023 – 31 August 2024 (SG/2023/264) laid under Section 11(1)(a) of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021

Scottish Funding Council Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 (SG/2023/187) laid under Section 22(5) of the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000

Scottish Government: The Scottish Civil Estate 2022-23 - The thirteenth report on the performance and environmental sustainability of the Scottish Civil Estate (SG/2023/204) laid under Section 76 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009

Scottish Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2022-23 (SHRC/2023/01)
laid under Section 15 of the Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006

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