



The Scottish Parliament Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Parliamentary Year 3, No. 80, Session 6

Meeting of the Parliament

Wednesday 21 February 2024

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

The meeting opened at 2.00pm.

1. Portfolio Questions: Questions on Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands and then NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care were answered by Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers.

2. Improving Access to Primary Care: Alex Cole-Hamilton moved S6M-12214— That the Parliament notes the Scottish Government's longstanding commitment to recruit an extra 800 GPs by 2027 and the views of bodies, including the Royal College of General Practitioners and Audit Scotland, that it is not on track to meet this target; regrets that there is still insufficient access to mental health practitioners working alongside GPs and the £30 million in-year cut to the mental health budget, which Scottish Government documents show will affect primary care; understands that rural and remote communities are among those being severely impacted by high levels of workforce vacancies, presenting barriers to diagnosis, referrals and treatments, and potentially exerting greater pressure on other parts of the NHS, such as accident and emergency, and calls, therefore, on the Scottish Government to rewrite the failed NHS Recovery Plan to get recruitment and retention back on track and to build stronger local health services by expanding the range of services and specialists available, including in mental health and physiotherapy, to meet demand.

The Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care (Neil Gray) moved amendment S6M-12214.2—

As an amendment to motion S6M-12214 in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton (Improving Access to Primary Care), leave out from “the Scottish

Government's" to end and insert "that, every day, public services continue to face the aftermath of the biggest shock faced since the establishment of the NHS - dealing with the combined impact of a pandemic, Brexit, which Scotland overwhelmingly rejected, and a cost of living crisis, amplified by catastrophic UK Government mismanagement; recognises that, in the face of over a decade of UK Government austerity, the Scottish Government's draft Budget will invest over £2.1 billion in primary care to improve preventative care in the community; welcomes that the Scottish Government's commitment to NHS staff has meant that Scotland is the only part of the UK not to lose any days to strikes; further welcomes an increase of 271 additional GPs in headcount terms since 2017, and a record expansion of GP speciality training, which will see over 1,200 GP trainees in Scotland in the next year; recognises the unique challenges that rural and island communities face and therefore welcomes the Scottish Government's intention to publish a Remote and Rural Workforce Recruitment Strategy by the end of 2024; welcomes the expanded primary care multi-disciplinary team workforce, with over 4,700 staff working in these services, including physiotherapy, pharmacy and phlebotomy; notes the doubling of mental health spending in cash terms from £651 million in 2006-07 to £1.3 billion in 2021-22, and that, as a result of that investment, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) staffing has more than doubled; highlights the investment of over £100 million in community-based mental health and wellbeing support for children, young people and adults since 2020; acknowledges that the Scottish Government has exceeded its commitment to fund over 800 additional mental health workers in numerous settings, including over 350 in GP practices; welcomes the ongoing £1 billion NHS Recovery Plan to increase capacity and deliver reform, and pays tribute to, and thanks, the entire health and care workforce for its unstinting efforts to provide services through a very challenging period."

Sandesh Gulhane moved amendment S6M-12214.3—

As an amendment to motion S6M-12214 in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton (Improving Access to Primary Care), after "emergency" insert"; notes with deep concern that the number of GPs per thousand people has decreased significantly in the last decade; recalls that investment in new treatment centres was central to the Scottish Government's NHS Recovery Plan and its promise to improve primary care access; condemns the recent decision to cancel investment in new projects for undermining these promises; strongly urges the Scottish Government to adopt the proposals put forward by the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party in its paper, Modern, Efficient, Local: A new contract between Scotland's NHS and the public, including, critically, the pledges to recruit an additional 1,000 general practitioners and to digitise primary care appointment bookings".

After debate, amendment S6M-12214.2 was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 63, Against 53, Abstentions 0). As a result, amendment S6M-12214.3 was pre-empted.

Paul Sweeney moved amendment S6M-12214.1—

As an amendment to motion S6M-12214 in the name of Alex-Cole Hamilton (Improving Access to Primary Care), insert at end “; is concerned that health professionals are not meaningfully involved when the Scottish Government is taking decisions on service delivery, patient safety and workforce planning, and calls for the establishment of a statutory national clinical council, which would empower clinical experts and improve services for patients.”

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to ((DT) by division: For 53, Against 62, Abstentions 1).

The motion, as amended was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 63, Against 53, Abstentions 0).

Accordingly, the Parliament resolved that—

That the Parliament notes that, every day, public services continue to face the aftermath of the biggest shock faced since the establishment of the NHS – dealing with the combined impact of a pandemic, Brexit, which Scotland overwhelmingly rejected, and a cost of living crisis, amplified by catastrophic UK Government mismanagement; recognises that, in the face of over a decade of UK Government austerity, the Scottish Government’s draft Budget will invest over £2.1 billion in primary care to improve preventative care in the community; welcomes that the Scottish Government’s commitment to NHS staff has meant that Scotland is the only part of the UK not to lose any days to strikes; further welcomes an increase of 271 additional GPs in headcount terms since 2017, and a record expansion of GP speciality training, which will see over 1,200 GP trainees in Scotland in the next year; recognises the unique challenges that rural and island communities face and therefore welcomes the Scottish Government’s intention to publish a Remote and Rural Workforce Recruitment Strategy by the end of 2024; welcomes the expanded primary care multi-disciplinary team workforce, with over 4,700 staff working in these services, including physiotherapy, pharmacy and phlebotomy; notes the doubling of mental health spending in cash terms from £651 million in 2006-07 to £1.3 billion in 2021-22, and that, as a result of that investment, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) staffing has more than doubled; highlights the investment of over £100 million in community-based mental health and wellbeing support for children, young people and adults since 2020; acknowledges that the Scottish Government has exceeded its commitment to fund over 800 additional mental health workers in numerous settings, including over 350 in GP practices; welcomes the ongoing £1 billion NHS Recovery Plan to increase capacity and deliver reform, and pays tribute to, and thanks, the entire health and care workforce for its unstinting efforts to provide services through a very challenging period.

3. Crisis in NHS Dentistry: Willie Rennie moved S6M-12215—That the Parliament believes that there is a crisis in NHS dentistry; considers that it is deeply concerning that people are finding it increasingly difficult to see an NHS dentist locally, if at all, and in some cases are resorting to DIY dentistry; notes concerns that changes to the payment system, which came into force on 1 November 2023, will do little to stop the exodus of NHS dentists; recalls that the Scottish Government committed in 2021 to abolishing all dentistry charges by the end of the current parliamentary session, but that charges for NHS patients have since increased

substantially and been expanded to cover emergency appointments and denture repairs; believes that there must be decisive action to resolve this crisis, and calls, therefore, on the Scottish Government to rewrite the failing NHS Recovery Plan to prioritise workforce planning, boost the number of dentists taking on NHS patients and increase the number of appointments available.

The Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care (Neil Gray) moved amendment S6M-12215.2—

As an amendment to motion S6M-12215 in the name of Willie Rennie (Crisis in NHS Dentistry), leave out from first "believes" to end and insert "recognises the significant challenges in dental services, compounded by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, high inflation, and Brexit on public services, dentistry and the available dental workforce across the UK; welcomes that the Scottish Government has confirmed the sustainment and improvement of access to NHS dentistry as a strategic priority; acknowledges that payment reform, as introduced on 1 November 2023, is the most significant change to NHS dentistry since its inception and the most meaningful intervention to realise the Scottish Government's ambition at this time; recognises that payment reform correctly prioritises public resources on securing access to NHS dentistry by incentivising delivery of NHS care through improved fees; is confident that the changes are the appropriate basis for further reforms to NHS dentistry, which will be focused on improvements in workforce and access to services across Scotland, and thanks NHS dentists and all staff working across Scotland for their continued commitment to the sector and provision of a vital service to the people of Scotland."

Sandesh Gulhane moved amendment S6M-12215.3—

As an amendment to motion S6M-12215 in the name of Willie Rennie (Crisis in NHS Dentistry), after "resolve this crisis" insert "; notes with great concern that the number of people able to see an NHS dentist in Scotland fell by over a third in just one month in December 2023, as dental practices abandoned NHS work in droves; stresses that registration rates with dentists in no way indicate satisfactory dental service provision if registered patients are unable to get an appointment; regrets that the Scottish Government has failed to do what is necessary to restore NHS dentistry activity levels to at least pre-COVID-19-pandemic activity levels; expresses concern that people in rural and more deprived areas will likely suffer disproportionately negative oral health consequences from these failures".

After debate, amendment S6M-12215.2 was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 63, Against 53, Abstentions 0). As a result, amendment S6M-12215.3 was pre-empted.

Paul Sweeney moved amendment S6M-12215.1—

As an amendment to motion S6M-12215 in the name of Willie Rennie (Crisis in NHS Dentistry), insert at end ", and recognises that the world-leading Childsmile programme, which was implemented by the last Scottish Labour Party-led administration in 2006, has been widely recognised as one of the

most effective public health interventions of the devolved era and has transformed child dental health."

After debate, the amendment was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 85, Against 31, Abstentions 0).

The motion, as amended was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 84, Against 32, Abstentions 0).

Accordingly, the Parliament resolved that—

That the Parliament recognises the significant challenges in dental services, compounded by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, high inflation, and Brexit on public services, dentistry and the available dental workforce across the UK; welcomes that the Scottish Government has confirmed the sustainment and improvement of access to NHS dentistry as a strategic priority; acknowledges that payment reform, as introduced on 1 November 2023, is the most significant change to NHS dentistry since its inception and the most meaningful intervention to realise the Scottish Government's ambition at this time; recognises that payment reform correctly prioritises public resources on securing access to NHS dentistry by incentivising delivery of NHS care through improved fees; is confident that the changes are the appropriate basis for further reforms to NHS dentistry, which will be focused on improvements in workforce and access to services across Scotland; thanks NHS dentists and all staff working across Scotland for their continued commitment to the sector and provision of a vital service to the people of Scotland, and recognises that the world-leading Childsmile programme, which was implemented by the last Scottish Labour Party-led administration in 2006, has been widely recognised as one of the most effective public health interventions of the devolved era and has transformed child dental health.

4. Business Programme: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-12233—That the Parliament agree —

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 27 February 2024

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Ministerial Statement: Scotland's Prison Population

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Budget (Scotland) (No. 3) Bill

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.30 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 28 February 2024

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Constitution, External Affairs and Culture; Justice and Home Affairs

followed by Ministerial Statement: Working Towards a Tobacco Free Scotland by 2034 and Tackling Youth Vaping

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2024

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Recommendations of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.30 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 29 February 2024

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Education and Skills

followed by Stage 1 Debate: National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution: National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 5 March 2024

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 6 March 2024

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy; Finance and Parliamentary Business

followed by Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.10 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 7 March 2024

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Transport

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 26 February 2024, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.

The motion was agreed to.

5. Stage 2 Timetable: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-12234—That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 22 March 2024.

The motion was agreed to.

6. Designation of Lead Committee: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-12235—That the Parliament agrees that the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Disability Commissioner (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

The motion was agreed to (DT).

7. Decision Time: The Parliament took decisions on items 2, 3 and 6 as noted above.

8. Declaration to Triple Nuclear Energy Launched at COP28: The Parliament debated S6M-11662 in the name of Douglas Lumsden—That the Parliament recognises the Declaration to Triple Nuclear Energy, which was signed by a number of countries at the COP28; understands that the declaration notes the key role of nuclear energy for achieving global net zero targets by 2050; further understands that the declaration recognises the importance of the application of nuclear science and technology to continue contributing to the monitoring of climate change and the tackling of its impacts, and emphasises the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in this regard; notes from the declaration that nuclear energy is already the second-largest source of clean dispatchable baseload power, with benefits for energy security; further notes from the declaration that new nuclear technologies have a small land footprint and can be located where they are needed, such as within a large energy intensive industrial zone, with additional flexibilities that support decarbonisation across the power sector, including hard-to-abate industries; understands that analysis from the International Energy Agency (IAE) shows nuclear energy more than doubling from 2020 to 2050 in global net zero emissions by 2050 scenarios, and shows that decreasing nuclear power would make reaching net zero more difficult and more costly; further understands that analysis from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shows nuclear energy approximately tripling its global installed electrical capacity from 2020 to 2050 in the average 1.5°C scenario; notes that the declaration was signed by 22 countries, namely the UK, the USA, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Ukraine, Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Ghana, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United Arab Emirates; welcomes the ongoing work and discussions that are taking place on this, including in the North East Scotland region, and notes the view that Scotland should fully consider this option going forwards.

The meeting closed at 6.23 pm.

David McGill
Clerk of the Parliament
21 February 2024

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

Subordinate Legislation

Made Affirmative Instruments

The following instrument was laid before the Parliament on 21 February 2024 and is subject to the made affirmative procedure—

Scottish Landfill Tax (Standard Rate and Lower Rate) Order 2024 (SSI 2024/60)
laid under section 41(3) of the Landfill Tax (Scotland) Act 2014 for approval by resolution of the Scottish Parliament within 28 days beginning with the day on which the Order was made, not taking into account periods of dissolution or recess for more than 4 days

Other Documents

The following documents were laid before the Parliament on 21 February 2024 and are not subject to parliamentary procedure—

NHS in Scotland 2023: A report prepared for the Auditor General for Scotland AGS/2024/3 laid under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman: Compendium of Case Reports for February 2024 (SPSO/2024/02) laid under Sections 15(1) and 15(1A) of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002

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