LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ROY AMNER

As a parent with two children in independent education I strongly believe that the Bill singles out independent schools from tens of thousands of other charities to pay non-domestic rates and it takes no cognisance of the schools charitable purpose that has been ratified by OSCR and is core to the values and actions taken by the school and Board of Governors of schools such as Hutchesons’ Grammar School. Hutchesons’ are an integral part of the local community in the southside of Glasgow and via its charitable actions allows local clubs and societies to use its facilities, as well as a large number of State school educated children.

The Barclay Review and the proposed Bill does not accept the Hutchesons’ public benefit, and makes a false argument that State Schools pay rates, which they do not, as they receive no money and do not pay out. My view is that no school should pay business rates and I would request that the Committee rule in favour of my position.

The proposed bill fails to acknowledge the potential impact of this change on the bursary provision which schools like Hutchesons’ Grammar School offer to the local community and which has and does benefit a sizeable number of children.

The proposed change will drive children from independent into State schooling due to the impact of increased fees associated with independent schooling having to meet this rates charge. This is a counter intuitive move by the Scottish Government and fails to acknowledge the likely impact on State Funding. The State sector is already over-stretched and under-funded. As an example, I understand that the independent sector in Glasgow educates approximately 10% of the children in the Greater Glasgow area and almost 30% in Edinburgh. By placing further funding burdens on the independent sector it is likely to lead to more parents placing their children in State Education facilities, increasing the cost for local and Central Government and jeopardising the future viability of independent education which would place further cost implications on the State Sector if this sector financially failed. In the last two years there have been a number of independent school close due to funding challenges and this has placed increased burden on local State-run facilities as the children have had to be accommodated in existing State Schools.

I firmly believe that this proposal is inappropriate and counter productive in the wider financial scope of the Scottish Government’s financial planning. The Government should be seeking to support the independent sector and not harm it.
It should be noted that independent school parents already pay their taxes but do not receive their educational allowance for their children as they do not use the State facilities. As such they are net contributors to the State Sector already.