

# **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 4 September 2001  
*(Morning)*

Session 1

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### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

#### **14<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2001, Session 1**

##### **CONVENER**

\*Kate MacLean (Dundee West) (Lab)

##### **DEPUTY CONVENER**

Kay Ullrich (West of Scotland) (SNP)

##### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)

\*Mrs Lyndsay McIntosh (Central Scotland) (Con)

\*Mr Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)

\*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

\*Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

\*attended

##### **CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Lee Bridges

##### **SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK**

Richard Walsh

##### **ASSISTANT CLERK**

Roy McMahon

##### **LOCATION**

Committee Room 1



## Scottish Parliament

### Equal Opportunities Committee

*Tuesday 4 September 2001*

*(Morning)*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:02*]

**The Convener (Kate MacLean):** Welcome to the Equal Opportunities Committee. I welcome everyone back from the recess and hope that you all had an enjoyable break.

We have received apologies from Kay Ullrich. Jamie Stone has indicated that he may be a little bit late.

### Interests

**The Convener:** Item 1 is to welcome Lyndsay McIntosh to the Equal Opportunities Committee. I have worked with Lyndsay before on the Justice and Home Affairs Committee so she must be following me.

**Mrs Lyndsay McIntosh (Central Scotland) (Con):** I am your stalker.

**The Convener:** I hope that you enjoy the work of the committee. I am sure you will find it interesting. Do you have a declaration of interests to make to the committee?

**Mrs McIntosh:** No, I do not. I have a continuing interest in the activities of the District Courts Association, but as far as the Equal Opportunities Committee is concerned, I have no interests to declare. May I say that I like the way that you operate?

**The Convener:** Thank you. That is the nicest compliment I have had all day.

### Items in Private

**The Convener:** Item 2 is to ask members to agree to take items 4 and 5 in private. Is that agreed?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** There seem to be a lot of items on the agenda to be discussed in private. The committee would not normally take so many items in private on the same day but the items have to be dealt with today.

## Civic Participation Event

**The Convener:** Item 3 is the civic participation event. Members have a paper about the forthcoming event on 14 September. Does anyone have any comments?

**Mr Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab):** Will the clerks tell us about any difficulties they have experienced that members might need to be aware of in the run-up to the event? It might be worth the committee addressing such difficulties so that members take decisions on the resolution of outstanding matters and the burden is taken from the clerks.

**Richard Walsh (Clerk):** Our main difficulties have been issues of communication. People were perhaps under the misapprehension that the committee was seeking specifically to invite organisations, but the original intent was to invite individuals who are members of the ethnic minority community in Scotland.

The biggest problem is that we received applications from a total of 136 people, which is more than the chamber can contain. Due to scheduling commitments and other considerations, the potential number of attendees is 97. So far, 75 people have confirmed. That figure excludes committee members and other MSPs who have expressed an interest. Therefore, although the chamber will not be full on the day, it will be quite full.

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** How many women will attend the event? Will child care be available?

**Richard Walsh:** The most recent figures that we have are from a few days ago. They show that approximately 60 per cent of the attendees will be women and 40 per cent will be men.

We have not put in a bid for child care, but if people had made a special request for child care, we would have had to deal with that.

**Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Has the proposed motion been run past any of the likely delegates, or has it simply been arrived at internally?

**Richard Walsh:** The motion has not been run past any of the participants. The clerks felt that the status of the motion was similar to that of a report and that it was therefore inappropriate to place it before the public for vigorous discussion before the committee had had the opportunity to approve it for the public forum.

**The Convener:** The motion is quite general. A list of actions will be added as a result of the discussions on the day.

**Linda Fabiani:** Good—I like that idea.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** I want to go back to Cathy Peattie's point about child care—it is important and I am pleased that she raised it. I was disappointed that child care was not provided at the Parliament's open day. I have made strong representations about that.

Richard Walsh says that no request has been made for child care, but people may not request child care if they do not think that such provision will be there. Alternatively, people may assume that because the event is being run by the Equal Opportunities Committee, child care will be provided, in which case they may leave things until the last minute because they feel sure that something will be arranged. Could we explore a little further the possibility of offering crèche facilities?

**Richard Walsh:** We could certainly explore that possibility, but at this stage, it may not be possible to offer such facilities.

As we have said from the beginning, the evaluation of this event will inform not only future events that the Equal Opportunities Committee undertakes but events that other colleague committees undertake. That is why everyone who attends on the day—and others who do not have the chance to attend—will be issued with a form on which to give their comments. We will certainly consider child care, although the original bid that we put in for the event did not include a cost for child care.

**The Convener:** At this stage, for an event that is to take place on 14 September, it would be difficult to go back to the conveners liaison group to get more funding for child care facilities. However, the committee could agree to have a policy on child care for anything else that it organises in future.

**Elaine Smith:** Would it be possible to identify local nursery providers who could offer child care services? People would have to make their own arrangements to pay for that, but it would be good to be able to give them an idea of the services available in the vicinity of the Parliament.

**The Convener:** We can look into that. I will discuss it with the clerks and come back to you.

**Cathy Peattie:** I would welcome our doing what Elaine Smith suggests. If we are promoting mainstreaming, we have to make a point of ensuring that child care facilities are available. Any future arrangements that are made—not only by this committee but by all committees—should include such facilities.

**The Convener:** If we wanted other committees to become involved in such arrangements, that would have to be discussed at the CLG. The

committee agreed the bid that went in; it was perhaps a bit lax of us not to notice that there was no provision for child care. We could try to agree a policy for future events.

**Cathy Peattie:** Our role is to promote good practice, not only in our committee but across the committees. We should be persuading people—or perhaps shouting at them—to ensure that they promote good practice.

**The Convener:** The committee should first agree what the policy should be. I would then be able to take that agreed policy to the CLG. That would be better than going to the CLG and simply saying, "There should be a crèche at every event that is organised." We should discuss the matter in committee first, to decide what the requirements would be.

I will discuss the matter with Elaine Smith and bring a proposal back to the committee at a future date.

**Linda Fabiani:** I remember that when I attended the civic forum debate on the first birthday of the Parliament a couple of good-humoured complaints were made about the fact that, as usual, MSPs talked far too much—the event was not for MSPs, but for civic society. Once we know which MSPs will attend the event, could we agree who will speak and for how long? We could have a constructive discussion about that with whomever the Presiding Officer will be. We should make it clear that we are there to listen rather than to—

**Mrs McIntosh:** Lecture.

**Linda Fabiani:** Thank you, Lyndsay.

**The Convener:** As far as I understand it, George Reid will chair the event, I will make opening remarks for a couple of minutes and Michael McMahon will make closing remarks for a couple of minutes. There are slots for 34 speakers, who I envisage will not be MSPs, but other participants in the event.

We will have a discussion with George Reid prior to the event and he will brief us on how the arrangements will work. We want to ensure that a good cross-section of the participants is able to take part.

**Linda Fabiani:** Members should note that I did not speak at the debate that I mentioned.

**The Convener:** I do not envisage that a lot of MSPs will speak.

The letter from George Reid, which was issued late, gives more information on that—I do not know whether all members have seen it. The letter sets out George Reid's comments on how he sees the event being run. He has made some useful suggestions.

We will have to agree to accept the offer of a buffet from the Commission for Racial Equality and we will have to agree the wording of the motion. One of George Reid's comments was that he thought that the word "participant" should be used instead of the word "delegate" when referring to those who attend the event.

**Mr McMahon:** I am worried about the implications of the proposed motion being labelled "The Edinburgh Declaration"—George Reid flags up that issue in his letter to the committee. Do we want to go down the road of labelling the proposed motion as such? Should we say from the outset that we do not intend that to happen? Labelling the proposed motion in that way might lead to a wider debate about its validity. George Reid was right to raise the issue of the outcome of any motion for race relations in Scotland.

I take George Reid's point that the motion has wider implications than our voting that certain action should be taken. The committee should say now if it does not want people to think that the motion is more of an issue than it is. We should say whether we want to flag up the motion as a bigger issue that will lead on from the debate. We should have a discussion about what exactly it will entail if the motion is agreed to.

**The Convener:** We should discuss what status the motion will have.

**Linda Fabiani:** It is good that that issue has been flagged up.

**The Convener:** The committee will decide the status of the motion. The civic forum event is meant to inform the work of the committee. I assume that, as we agreed to be involved in the event, we will be committed to pursuing any action points. Some of the points that will be raised will concern reserved issues, which we will not be able to deal with as a committee or as a Parliament.

**Linda Fabiani:** We will discuss those issues, though, will we not?

10:15

**The Convener:** Yes. Lee Bridges, the clerk, has pointed out that the motion, even if it is unanimously agreed to, will not have any legal status, as the event is not a meeting of the Parliament. However, people should assume that the committee will take forward points that are made. The point of having the civic participation event is to enable the views of people who have not been elected to the Parliament to inform our decisions.

The Commission for Racial Equality asked us to hold the event as part of the celebrations to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Race Relations Act 1976. The commission did not expect the motion

to be agreed hard and fast by the Parliament; it wanted to highlight issues relating to the black and ethnic minority community that we might not have considered. However, I assume that the committee will commit itself at least to discussing the issues that are raised at the event.

**Elaine Smith:** There might be difficulties with the part of the proposed motion that reads:

"We ... urge the Scottish Parliament to take the following actions".

We might want to change the wording so that it reads "We ... ask the Scottish Parliament to explore ways of taking forward the following actions". That would allow for the Westminster issue and would let us investigate which committees should explore which areas, if that was seen to be the most appropriate way forward.

**Linda Fabiani:** It is true to say that the Scottish Parliament will not be able to take certain actions.

**The Convener:** Are we agreed to change the wording of the motion in the way that Elaine Smith has suggested and to substitute "participants" for "delegates"?

*Members indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** We will circulate the amended text by e-mail.

Are we agreed to the CRE's paying for the buffet for the event?

*Members indicated agreement.*

**Linda Fabiani:** What time will it be at?

**The Convener:** One o'clock.

**Linda Fabiani:** Not the lunch, the debate—that says a lot about people's perceptions of me.

**Richard Walsh:** Participants will be invited to register from 10 o'clock but the event will run formally from 11 o'clock until 1 o'clock. A group photograph will be taken in the well of the chamber at about 10.30.

**The Convener:** Would you like to know the menu for the buffet, Linda?

**Mrs McIntosh:** I hope there is chicken jalfrezi.

**Richard Walsh:** The buffet will be vegetarian and vegan.

**Cathy Peattie:** I welcome that, but can we check that the caterers know what vegetarian and vegan mean?

**Richard Walsh:** I am assured that the Sodexo chef will be on hand on the day.

**Cathy Peattie:** Yes, but I saw one of the buffets that was supposed to be vegetarian and vegan and it had fish and things in it.

**Richard Walsh:** Everything will be labelled.

**The Convener:** Are we agreed to publicise the event and the motion?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**Linda Fabiani:** There was a good piece on the radio this morning. Did you issue a press release, convener?

**The Convener:** No, I did not. The BBC called me.

We now move into private session.

10:19

*Meeting continued in private until 10:58.*



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