

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

Tuesday 26 November 2002
(Morning)

Session 1

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE 18th Meeting 2002, Session 1

CONVENER

*Kate Maclean (Dundee West) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Kay Ullrich (West of Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Mrs Lyndsay McIntosh (Central Scotland) (Con)

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

Mr Gil Paterson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP)

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

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

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD)

Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Jim Johnston

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Richard Walsh

ASSISTANT CLERK

Roy McMahon

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Equal Opportunities Committee

Tuesday 26 November 2002

(Morning)

[THE CONVENER opened the meeting at 10:09]

The Convener (Kate Maclean): Okay. We will get started. I delayed the start of the meeting a bit until members from more than one party had arrived.

I have received apologies from Elaine Smith, who is ill.

Items in Private

The Convener: Does the committee agree to take items 3 and 4 in private? Item 3 deals with our approach to a bill, which has not yet been agreed. Item 4 is our consideration of a draft report that has not yet been signed off by the committee. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

Reporters

The Convener: Under item 2 we are to consider reports from our reporters. I ask Cathy Peattie to talk to her paper, which has been circulated to members.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): I think that the report speaks for itself, but I will highlight a number of issues that relate to legislation. I ask the committee to agree to progress issues raised by the Equality Network. From notes that are included in the paper, members will see that one or two issues have moved on since the paper was originally written.

The Equality Network rightly suggests amendments to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. It also proposes to amend the amendments that Donald Gorrie lodged to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill. I understand that, because of issues around language, it is not possible to make progress on those important amendments today. I am happy to explain the reasons for that at our next meeting, at which I suggest that we add an item to allow us to discuss possible committee amendments to the bill.

The Convener: Donald Gorrie's amendments to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill are part of the Justice 2 Committee's current stage 2 consideration of the bill. Although it may be too late for the committee to lodge an amendment at stage 2, we can discuss whether we want to support the Equality Network's proposed amendments at stage 3.

As members do not have comments or suggestions to make about Cathy Peattie's paper, do members agree the report's recommendations?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: We also have a report from Michael McMahon.

Mr Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): I want to update the committee on a meeting that was held about the committee's taking of evidence on the Jandoo report into the Chhokar case. James Johnston, Richard Walsh and I met Mr and Mrs Chhokar and representatives from the Chhokar campaign. We agreed a list of procedures, which are acceptable to family members, for a special meeting of the Equal Opportunities Committee.

It was agreed that the meeting would take place in Edinburgh rather than in Lanarkshire as we had first envisaged. It suits the family for the meeting to be held in Edinburgh on 16 December. We agreed the order in which evidence would be taken and who would be invited to give evidence. We also discussed the role of interpreters and

other issues of relevance to the meeting. Minutes were taken, which should be sent to the family for endorsement. There was general agreement on how to progress arrangements.

The Convener: You said that the meeting is to be held in Edinburgh. Is that at the request of the Chhokar family and its representatives or was it our suggestion?

Mr McMahon: No. We suggested that the location of the meeting be left to the family. We put both options to the family and they chose Edinburgh as the venue.

Kay Ullrich (West of Scotland) (SNP): I am sorry that I arrived late. Is Mr Chhokar in better health now?

Mr McMahon: A bit. I would not say that he is in great health, but he certainly feels that he could endure a day in Edinburgh for the meeting.

The Convener: As members have no further comments on Michael McMahon's report, are we agreed that the special meeting will be held on 16 December in Edinburgh and that all the appropriate arrangements will be made to facilitate the meeting?

Members *indicated agreement.*

10:13

Meeting continued in private until 10:29.

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