

# **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 10 June 2003  
(*Morning*)

Session 2

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## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

1<sup>st</sup> Meeting 2003, Session 2

### OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER

\*Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green)

\*Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP)

\*Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)

\*Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)

\*Campbell Martin (West of Scotland) (SNP)

\*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

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

\*attended

### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Jim Johnston

### ASSISTANT CLERK

Roy McMahon

### LOCATION

Committee Room 2



## Scottish Parliament

### Equal Opportunities Committee

*Tuesday 10 June 2003*

*(Morning)*

[THE OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER *opened the meeting at 11:47*]

### Interests

**Mrs Nanette Milne (Oldest Committee Member):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I have the rather dubious honour of being the oldest committee member, so it falls to me to chair the first part of the meeting. It seems rather strange to have the oldest member do that. Given that this is the Equal Opportunities Committee, I think that we are being a bit agist, but that is obviously the procedure.

I have apologies from Mr Keith Raffan.

Members have the briefing paper, which was circulated with the agenda, on the members' interests order. Do any members have any relevant interests to declare?

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** I am a member of Amicus MSF and Unison. I am also a member of the Linked Work Training Trust (Central) Ltd in Falkirk and Grangemouth Carers Ltd.

**Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab):** I am a member of the Educational Institute of Scotland, Unison, the Co-operative Party, the Church of Scotland and Fife Domestic Abuse Forum. I am on the management committee of the Fife rape crisis centre. I am also a ministerial parliamentary aide to the First Minister, Mr Jack McConnell.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** I am a member of the Transport and General Workers Union, the Co-operative Party, the General Teaching Council for Scotland and the United Nations Development Fund for Women—UNIFEM. I am also on the board of the South Coatbridge social inclusion partnership.

**Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I am a member of the EIS, Engender and the Scottish Labour women's caucus. I also donate to Scottish Women's Aid.

**Campbell Martin (West of Scotland) (SNP):** I am a member of the National Union of Journalists. Given the composition of the Equal Opportunities Committee, perhaps I should also declare that I am a man.

## Convener

**Mrs Milne:** Members received a briefing paper on choosing the convener and deputy convener. Members will know that, on 4 June, Parliament agreed to motion S2M-107, which resolved that members of the Labour party are eligible to be chosen as convener of the Equal Opportunities Committee. I invite nominations of members of the Labour party for the position of convener.

**Marilyn Livingstone:** I nominate Cathy Peattie.

**Mrs Milne:** There are no further nominations.

*Cathy Peattie was chosen as convener.*

## Deputy Convener

**The Convener (Cathy Peattie):** Thank you, Mrs Milne. The next agenda item is the choice of deputy convener. Motion S2M-107 also resolved that a member of the Liberal Democrat party should be chosen as deputy convener of the Equal Opportunities Committee. I invite nominations of Liberal Democrat party members for the position of deputy convener.

**Elaine Smith:** I nominate Mr Keith Raffan.

*Mr Keith Raffan was chosen as deputy convener.*

## Legacy Paper

**The Convener:** We move on to consideration of the legacy paper, of which members have a copy. Towards the end of the Parliament's first session, each committee prepared a legacy paper on the work in which it had been involved. The papers highlighted work that was under way or that a successor committee might want to consider. The legacy paper is helpful because it gives a flavour of the kind of work that was done.

I do not know whether members have comments on the Equal Opportunities Committee's legacy paper, but it is clear that we must decide how we want to develop some of the work to which the legacy paper refers. The previous committee flagged up four issues in the legacy paper for the successor committee's consideration.

The paper also lists areas on which we might want to reflect, including the role of committee reporters. Members might have read the legacy paper, but I should explain that in the previous committee each member had a reporter's role. For example, Elaine Smith was the reporter on gender issues. I was the reporter on sexual orientation and other members reported on different issues. The reporter's role was to consider legislation in relation to the issues on which they reported and to meet organisations and interested parties to ensure that legislation that was going through Parliament met the Executive's equal opportunities commitment; if the legislation did not do so, the Executive needed to be reminded of that to ensure that the equal opportunities issue was included in legislation.

We will not decide now whether to have reporters, but it is a practice that might be worth considering because it seemed to work well in the previous committee. The reporter's role allowed committee members to report on particular issues. Indeed, when we were involved in inquiries on different issues, the reporter on a particular issue took a lead in linking with various organisations. Organisations have asked me already whether we will have the reporter system again.

The previous committee was involved in other issues—in which we do not necessarily have to get involved—including civic participation events. We had a memorable event in Parliament that involved Gypsy Travellers, at which young Gypsy Travellers highlighted their lack of educational opportunities. We can consider having similar participation events within and outwith Parliament.

Members have had the opportunity to read the legacy paper. Do they want to raise any issues on it at this stage?

**Elaine Smith:** I have a couple of points. Paragraph 49 of the legacy paper refers to a

single equality body. I was a member of the previous committee from its inception and I think that the committee considered inviting someone from Westminster—it was perhaps Barbara Roche. I wonder whether we should consider doing that, because I think that it is important for the committee to hear from a relevant person from Westminster.

The convener referred to the Gypsy Traveller inquiry. I think that a news programme last week brought up again the issue of Gypsy Travellers. Many people in the Gypsy Traveller community and in various organisations feel that there has not been a huge amount of action. Margaret Curran explained some of what the Executive is doing. Given that the previous committee's Gypsy Traveller inquiry and report raised expectations, I feel that the onus is on the committee to ensure that we revisit the issue and take action on it.

The previous committee also wrote a report on gender equality and best value. This committee should perhaps consider how matters are rolling out following that report, whether there have been any repercussions and whether any action needs to be taken.

**Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** I have a question, just for information, on Gypsy Travellers. I have had correspondence about travelling show people. Does that come under the same—?

**The Convener:** Yes.

**Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP):** I have a point for clarification. Paragraph 50 of the legacy paper refers to committee reporters. You referred to the members of the previous committee who were reporters. Will you explain briefly how the reporter system works? What is a committee reporter?

**The Convener:** Elaine Smith and I are the only members of the new committee who were on the previous committee. Perhaps Elaine Smith will explain what her reporter's role was.

**Elaine Smith:** The previous committee decided originally to appoint, I think, four reporters to be contact people for the main areas of committee work. I think that Johann Lamont was originally the gender reporter. A small group met to discuss gender issues, but the committee felt that such a group perhaps did not come within the Parliament's rules, so when Johann Lamont left the committee, I took over the role of gender reporter. I went out and actively sought to engage with women's groups in particular. A recent example of that was when I went to Glasgow Women's Library. I reported on that to the committee.

Therefore, a reporter's role is to engage proactively with groups and issues and to be a

point of contact. If the previous Equal Opportunities Committee wanted a gender issue investigated in depth and reported on, I would do that. For example, I went to speak to the organisation Routes Out of Prostitution and brought back a report to the committee. Last year, I think—the clerk, Jim Johnston, will confirm this—we produced a sort of bound version of the gender reporters' work and of all the reports on gender. It might be worth getting hold of that to give Frances Curran a flavour of what the work was about.

Having a reporter on an issue allows a bit more in-depth work to be done on an issue than the committee could do. However, that does not prevent groups from being invited to give oral evidence to the committee on particular issues. The reporter system means that we can engage a bit more with groups and organisations on particular issues. I instigated a gender equality inquiry, which the committee decided to do around the issues of best value and local government. Originally, I wanted the inquiry to be a wee bit wider, but we felt that such a remit would be too big and that the inquiry should focus on a particular area to produce action points and achieve something positive at the end. That is why I would like us to return to the gender equality report to consider what has happened to it and what action has come from it.

There were other reporters on the committee, including Cathy Peattie, but perhaps what I have said has given Frances Curran a flavour of what I tried to do in my reporter's job.

**The Convener:** The clerks will produce a paper on the reporter's role and a report on the bound volume. Members might or might not want to look at the bound volume, but it will inform members of the information that is available. Is that helpful?

**Frances Curran:** I have a final question. Elaine Smith said that she visited the organisation Routes Out of Prostitution. If a bill were introduced to Parliament on tolerance zones, for example, to which committee would such a bill go? Would the bill go to different committees? Would aspects of it go to different committees? Would such a bill come to the Equal Opportunities Committee?

**The Convener:** A bill would normally go to the relevant committee, which would have the role of scrutinising it. A bill on prostitution would go to the Communities Committee, I think.

**Jim Johnston (Clerk):** The Parliamentary Bureau decides which committee will be the lead committee. In the previous session, the Equal Opportunities Committee took a role as a secondary committee on a number of bills. Clearly, the committee would have a role in that issue.

**Marilyn Livingstone:** In the previous session, I was on this committee for the first year or 18

months. I was a reporter, and one of the issues that we considered was disability. There was a lot of disability legislation and I was particularly interested in lifelong learning issues and in whether colleges were implementing section 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. I say that just to give Frances Curran another flavour of the kind of work that reporters do. This committee has a wide remit and it was good to be able to focus on different issues.

12:00

**The Convener:** Clearly, we will have to consider our work programme and the areas that we want to concentrate on. We will have to consider the legislation that is coming through and how it will affect us. We may want to catch up with the Minister for Communities to ask what is happening with mainstreaming. The Scottish Parliament has done a considerable amount of work on the mainstreaming of equality issues. Things are not yet perfect and many questions have to be asked. However, some positive work has been done over the past four years. At the end of the summer, when we go on an away day, we will want to consider all such issues and our work programme.

**Marlyn Glen:** That would be very useful in giving some background, especially for the new members.

**The Convener:** We would have an opportunity to consider the committee's remit. If people feel that they would like more background information on particular areas, they should make that clear.

**Mrs Milne:** Will we be able to add other issues to those mentioned in the paper?

**The Convener:** Certainly. The paper is a starting point. The committee in the previous session knew that its recommendations were not set in tablets of stone, but offered an opportunity to consider the sort of issues that were likely to arise. For example, the committee started work on the European year of disabled people 2003, and we might want to consider holding a participation event before the end of the year. A number of issues are coming up, and legislation is coming through. We will have to consider what we think is important for our programme.

**Mrs Milne:** I was a little bit facetious at the beginning of the meeting about ageism, but it will be an increasingly important issue and the committee might want to consider it at some stage.

**The Convener:** That will certainly be on our agenda. Are there other issues that members wish to be on our agenda, or shall we wait until we sit down and consider our remit? If members are content to wait, are we agreed that the clerks and I

should organise an away day for the end of the recess, before our first meeting in September, so that we can consider what we want to do and whom we want to include in our work?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Thank you. That was a very short meeting. Indeed, it might be the shortest meeting of the Equal Opportunities Committee.

**Marilyn Livingstone:** In my declaration of interests, I should have said that I was the chairperson of Scottish Disabled Ramblers.

**The Convener:** Members will have an opportunity to declare interests at every meeting if they feel that they have forgotten to declare something.

*Meeting closed at 12:03.*



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