

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

Tuesday 15 March 2005

Session 2

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

† 5th Meeting 2005, Session 2

CONVENER

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green)

*Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP)

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con)

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)

*Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

*Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP)

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Zoé Tough

ASSISTANT CLERK

Roy McMahon

LOCATION

Committee Room 5

† 4th Meeting 2005, Session 2—held in private.

Scottish Parliament

Equal Opportunities Committee

Tuesday 15 March 2005

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:03*]

Item in Private

The Convener (Cathy Peattie): I open the fifth meeting in 2005 of the Equal Opportunities Committee. I have received apologies from Phil Gallie and Marlyn Glen, but have not heard from Marilyn Livingstone. We can add her apologies if she does not make the meeting.

Do members agree to take in private agenda item 4, which is consideration of an approach paper that the committee has not yet agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Reporters

10:04

The Convener: Under agenda item 2, I invite members to nominate a reporter on age issues. Members will recall that Nanette Milne was the reporter on age issues, but she has now left the committee.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): I nominate Sandra White.

Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP): I second that.

The Convener: Are members agreed that we should appoint Sandra White as the new reporter on age issues?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Congratulations, Sandra.

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): Thanks, convener.

The Convener: If you have an opportunity later, you should have a word with the clerks, who will outline what has happened so far. I am also happy to have a wee chat with you about the role of reporters.

Ms White: That would be ideal, convener.

Petition

Care Homes (PE522)

10:05

The Convener: Item 3 is the committee's consideration of petition PE522 from Ms Carol Main on the lack of care homes for young physically handicapped people. We have received a response from the Minister for Health and Community Care to our request for an update on the Executive's scoping study. The response, which includes the research specification for the study, has been circulated to members. I seek members' comments on the paper. I expect that there are quite a few of them.

Ms White: The response covers many issues. At first, I was concerned about disbanding the group at such short notice. However, I realise that the decision was consensual. After reading the research specification and finding out the scale and scope of the study, I think that it would be a good idea for us to wait until the Executive has examined the issue properly and has come back with a final report. I know that the report is far-reaching, but I am quite happy to support the recommendation to wait and see what the Executive comes back with.

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): Perhaps I am being a little obtuse, but I saw no significant differences in the update. I was looking for an emphasis on young people and am concerned that the study's scope still seems to be as broad as it was before. Indeed, I read through the research specification several times to see whether the inquiry's boundaries had been more narrowly defined—after all, difficulties had been experienced in that respect before—but could not find anything. I welcome other members' interpretations of the specification.

Elaine Smith: I was concerned about that issue, too, but I now agree with Sandra White that the committee should wait and consider the Executive's final report once it is published. In the meantime, members might want to take on board Shiona Baird's comments and send another letter to the Executive. However, I believe that we should consider the petition along with the final report.

The Convener: Absolutely. Initially, I shared Shiona Baird's concerns about the issue of young people. We need to keep our eye on that complex matter, but the Executive has said that it wants to examine it. To begin with, I felt like Sandra White that it seemed a bit hasty to abandon the initial piece of work, but as I read the papers it seemed to make a lot of sense.

We should watch what happens. For example, I am interested in the timescale for the research, because sometimes this kind of work takes longer than we might hope. After all, the issue of provision for young disabled people has been constantly raised with the committee. I suggest that we simply watch what happens and get a copy of the report as soon as it is available. If necessary, we can bring the minister in to find out how the report's conclusions will be implemented.

Shiona Baird: Given that the petition concentrates on the issue of provision, I am concerned that its aim is being diluted by the report's broad scope.

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): I take on board Shiona Baird's concerns, but I point out that the scoping study will simply identify what the Executive needs to concentrate on. I also note that a draft final report was expected at the end of January. Is it worth checking whether that is on schedule?

The Convener: The Executive is still waiting for it, but I understand that it is due to be received at the end of the month.

Elaine Smith: I do not want to be particularly controversial, but, as far as Shiona Baird's remarks are concerned, I do not think that the issue is being diluted. Indeed, I am not even sure that diluting it is the wrong thing to do. If we focus too narrowly on one issue, we may miss other matters, given that the subject is complex. As the research specification points out, young disabled people have a range of needs, which we are finding in our inquiry. Focusing narrowly on the one issue that is raised in the petition might not be the right way of proceeding, although clearly the petition has helped to set the ball rolling. I do not share the concern that the issue may be diluted. It would be better to wait for the results of the research, although we should keep a close eye on the issue.

The Convener: The scoping report will highlight several other issues. We need to keep our eye on the study as it develops and find out what happens next. If, as we expect, the issue of young people is highlighted, we will want to know what action is to be taken. Elaine Smith is right that the issue is wide, which is why we want to ensure that the initial work that is done is thorough.

The committee will now move into private to discuss a paper on our review of progress in relation to Gypsy Travellers.

10:11

Meeting continued in private until 10:44.

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