



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 7 June 2018

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Thursday 7 June 2018

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STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
12th Meeting 2018, Session 5

CONVENER

*Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)

*Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

*Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Katy Orr

LOCATION

The Adam Smith Room (CR5)

Scottish Parliament

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 7 June 2018

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Cross-party Group

The Convener (Clare Haughey): Good morning. I welcome members to the 12th meeting in 2018 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. Our first item is for the committee to take evidence on the proposed cross-party group on basic income. I welcome to the meeting Ivan McKee MSP, who will be a co-convener of the proposed group, and invite him to make an opening statement.

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): Thank you. The citizen's basic income is an issue that is gaining a lot of attention and traction. Different parties HAVE talked about it, and a lot of organisations are looking at it. The Scottish Government has expressed some interest in understanding more about the issue, and four local authority areas are looking to run pilots.

The purpose of the cross-party group is to bring together the various strands of thought in the area, because although basic income is but one subject, there are many different perspectives on how it could or should operate. In bringing together different people who are interested in the issue, the group will be able to provide a forum for discussion, to bring in external speakers, to provide analysis of theoretical and practical aspects, to look at international examples and to allow networking among the various individuals, groups and organisations who are working on the matter.

As the committee will see from the application paper, a range of organisations are interested in participating, and we have a cross-party selection of MSPs. We do not believe that the work of the group would cross over into or duplicate work that is carried out by any existing CPG.

The Convener: Thank you very much. Do committee members have any questions?

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): The issue is interesting and quite topical. The application paper says that the cross-party group would

"seek to run in parallel with any developing pilots in Scotland".

Is it perhaps a bit soon to set up a cross-party group? Would the group not be doing the same work as is being done through the pilots? Would the group add value to the pilots?

Ivan McKee: The group would add value to the pilots. Clearly, it would allow MSPs to get involved and bring their perspectives, but it would also provide a forum in which the work of the pilots—which will involve looking in a fairly practical and hands-on way at how basic income could work in a specific area—and the theoretical aspects can be considered in one place. People from the various pilots would be able to come together and give their input to the group. Given that the issue is so topical, as Elaine Smith said, it is important to have a forum in Parliament in which it can be discussed.

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): I declare an interest as a prospective member of the proposed cross-party group. What opportunities will there be to work with other cross-party groups? For example, last night I attended a meeting of the cross-party group on industrial communities. Representatives from Fife, which is one of the pilot areas, were at the meeting, and there was great interest in the citizen's basic income.

Ivan McKee: That is an interesting idea. Given that there are 98 other CPGs, I will need to go through the list and figure out where the links are, but there could be many. We think that there is potential crossover in various areas including physical health and mental wellbeing, industrial communities, entrepreneurship and the creative industries. Clearly, all the work on social security is also at the core of the issue. I am also very interested in automation, because smoothing out the transition to new industries will be fairly critical to the matter, too. Tom Arthur is right: the proposed CPG could have common interests with many other CPGs.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I will follow on from Elaine Smith's question. Have you reached out to the officials or the councillors in the councils that are involved in the pilots, in order to seek their membership or involvement?

Ivan McKee: We have. An interesting discussion is going on, but I need to gain a better understanding of it. There seems to be a feeling among some people who are involved in the pilots that they should not officially be part of the CPG. "Compromise" is too strong a word, but there might be a perception that they want to be separate. However, they want to understand what the CPG will be doing. The CPG could inform what they are doing, but it is not certain that the pilot groups would want to be officially part of the CPG. However, we are aware of that; we have reached

out, and we are keen to share whatever we learn with them.

Patrick Harvie: I can see that councils, corporately, might take that view. For individual councillors, it might be less of a barrier.

Ivan McKee: Potentially, that is the case. We are exploring how best to do that.

Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con): It seems to be a single-issue policy group, as opposed to a general interest group. What would happen to the group if legislation was passed?

Ivan McKee: That is a good question. I think that we are a long way from that, because the Scottish Parliament does not yet have all the powers to do that. If that came to pass, there would still be questions about how roll-out was working, the issues that come on the back of that, and how the system as implemented could be tweaked, because it would then, in effect, be our welfare system.

However, the issue is broader than that, because it impacts on the health agenda, the automation agenda, the business agenda and a wide range of other agendas. Even if the basic income were to be implemented, which is a long way off, there would still be scope for discussion on how it was working and how to leverage it to affect those other agendas best.

Tom Mason: In my mind, I am still questioning whether it really is an interest group, as opposed to a lobby group, because it is so narrowly focused on just one policy issue.

Ivan McKee: As I said, the scope of the proposed group would be huge.

Tom Mason: The scope would be huge, but the policy area is—

Ivan McKee: It is a completely different way of looking at welfare, but it is broader than that as well, because it is focused on a transition in society from the industries and careers that we have at the moment to where we are going in the future. It would allow that process to be smoothed. If you consider welfare in its widest sense to be a single issue, you might have a point, but it is broader than just one policy.

Tom Mason: Why have you not called it a social security and welfare group?

Ivan McKee: That is because the group would be broader than that, as I have said, and because the basic income would impact on all the other areas that I mentioned. I am having conversations with the Federation of Small Businesses at the moment about how it might impact small businesses and what its members' perspective might be. That whole discussion needs to be opened up. In terms of the future of what we want

society to look like, conceptually and in practical terms, the CPG would be a forum that would allow that discussion to take place.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I agree with some of the things that Tom Mason has said. The policy itself is narrow, although I appreciate that you are looking to widen it out. The organisations that you have got involved may be quite narrow in their focus, but you have also mentioned discussions with the FSB. Will you be looking to widen out that group of organisations?

Ivan McKee: Yes.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: Are there organisations that may not be signed up yet but which demonstrate an interest in the group?

Ivan McKee: The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce—the RSA—has a fairly broad scope and looks at a lot of stuff. The discussion will develop as we go forward, but the RSA takes a broader view and I am keen also to engage with business organisations. As we get more into the discussion, it will become apparent what other organisations we could involve. The Scottish Council for Development and Industry has done work on automation, and a basic income could have a direct impact on how that transition would operate. As matters develop, I would be keen to bring in a much broader range of organisations.

There are various key objectives of the CPG. There are those who come at it from an equalities perspective, which is great, but there are many other aspects to the issue, so sharing and cross-fertilising all the ideas would be a valuable function of the CPG.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: As a Highlands and Islands MSP, I am concerned to ensure that people in my region can be involved in any cross-party group and feel that they are involved in the Parliament. How will you ensure that they are able to be involved?

Ivan McKee: You are very welcome to come along and make sure that we are involving everyone.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: It is wider than just me. There are interested groups and people with experiences that might be of real benefit to the work of the proposed CPG.

Ivan McKee: That is a good point. We can put on the agenda the need to look at geographical impact and to ensure that we reach out to organisations that focus specifically on the Highlands and Islands.

The Convener: If there are no further questions, I thank Ivan McKee for coming along today.

We now move to item 2, which is for the committee to decide whether to accord recognition to the proposed cross-party group on basic income.

Tom Arthur: I am content with the proposal.

The Convener: Is the whole committee content?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: We therefore agree to accord recognition to the proposed cross-party group on basic income.

10:11

Meeting continued in private until 11:05.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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