

# **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 3 October 2006

Session 2

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## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

**18<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2006, Session 2**

### **CONVENER**

\*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

### **DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD)

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

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

\*Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP)

\*Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

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

\*John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)

### **COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES**

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)

\*attended

### **THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE**

Philippa Bonella (Equal Opportunities Commission)

Rona Fitzgerald (Scottish Women's Budget Group)

Adam Gaines (Disability Rights Commission)

Tim Hopkins (Equality Network)

Ali Jarvis (Commission for Racial Equality in Scotland)

Dr Ailsa McKay (Scottish Women's Budget Group)

Professor Arthur Midwinter (Finance Committee Budget Adviser)

Angela O'Hagan (Scottish Women's Budget Group)

### **CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Steve Farrell

### **SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK**

Zoé Tough

### **ASSISTANT CLERK**

Roy McMahon

### **LOCATION**

Committee Room 2



## Scottish Parliament

### Equal Opportunities Committee

*Tuesday 3 October 2006*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 09:32*]

#### Item in Private

**The Convener (Cathy Peattie):** Good morning. I open the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting in 2006 of the Equal Opportunities Committee. I remind everyone present, including members, that mobile phones and BlackBerrys should be turned off completely because they interfere with the sound system. I have received apologies from Sandra White and Jamie McGrigor.

The first item on our agenda is consideration of whether to take in private discussion of our approach to the Commissioner for Older People (Scotland) Bill. Do members agree to do that?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Budget Process 2007-08

09:33

**The Convener:** I warmly welcome all our witnesses for the second item on the agenda, which is consideration of the budget process 2007-08. As we will not follow our usual format for evidence taking, I will explain to everyone how the process will work. We will have brief introductions from our participants before we move on to discuss specific issues. The round-table format enables participants to make comments and to seek clarification from other participants, but I remind everyone to speak through the chair, otherwise it is difficult to keep track of the discussion. I also ask people to use full names when addressing other participants because that makes things easier.

I invite participants to introduce themselves briefly. We will go round the room, starting with Marlyn Glen.

**Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I am an MSP for North East Scotland.

**Ali Jarvis (Commission for Racial Equality in Scotland):** I am the head of the Commission for Racial Equality in Scotland.

**John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP):** I am a list MSP for Central Scotland.

**Dr Ailsa McKay (Scottish Women's Budget Group):** I work for Glasgow Caledonian University and am a member of the Scottish women's budget group.

**Adam Gaines (Disability Rights Commission):** I am Scottish director of the Disability Rights Commission. Given that we are discussing the Scottish Executive's budget, perhaps I should declare an interest. The DRC is in receipt of funding from the Scottish Executive Health Department for a project to do with access to health services.

**Angela O'Hagan (Scottish Women's Budget Group):** I am convener of the Scottish women's budget group.

**Tim Hopkins (Equality Network):** I work for the Equality Network, which is one of the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality groups in Scotland. I declare that the Equality Network is funded by the Executive's equality unit, at a level considerably below level 3 in the budget.

**Rona Fitzgerald (Scottish Women's Budget Group):** I am from the Scottish women's budget group.

**Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab):** I am the constituency member for Kirkcaldy.

**Philippa Bonella (Equal Opportunities Commission):** I am the policy director for the Equal Opportunities Commission in Scotland. I should register the same interest that Adam Gaines declared because we are funded by the Health Department, for the same reason.

**The Convener:** I thought that Adam Gaines would start a fashion.

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** The two people on my right are from the official report. I am the MSP for Gordon.

**The Convener:** We have just been joined by Carolyn Leckie MSP.

I ask the participants to discuss issues around equalities reporting. You will be aware that the list of issues that was circulated in advance includes the reporting of equalities in the draft budget, the different approaches that different departments have taken to equalities reporting, how equalities are reported in changes in spending plans and—my favourite—targets and priorities that have an equality focus.

Who wants to start?

**Angela O'Hagan:** As you might expect, the Scottish women's budget group has a number of comments to make. I will begin by saying that it is positive that we have come this far in what we think will be a lengthy journey towards effective gender scrutiny in the budget.

The bullet points under the first issue in the committee's paper are what we would describe as work in progress. Among the issues to be tackled is what we regard as continual confusion in how equalities are addressed within the budget framework. As we have mentioned in a number of our submissions, equalities policy—gender policy, in particular—is continually absorbed into the objective of closing the opportunity gap. Subsuming equalities in the anti-poverty platform means that there is no opportunity to separate out the dynamics of gender. We think that there are a number of inconsistencies in how equalities are being reported—I can give more detail on that now or come back to the issue.

We have also noticed several examples in the current draft budget of equalities targets in the policy statements disappearing or being overridden or replaced entirely, with the result that gender specificity is lost or the equalities target is completely altered. A key example is how a programme on skills and capacity for offenders became a domestic violence programme. We are curious about how a change of that magnitude could occur within an equality target.

As the convener suggested, we have been on the targets and priorities merry-go-round before. We have consistently said that it is important to

recognise whether targets are about quantitative spend or qualitative change. We often give the example of the modern apprenticeships scheme, an increase in the number of participants in which does not result in a shift in the quality of employment or in the income that is generated as a result of that training and capacity building. Colleagues will say much more about that. Those are my opening comments.

**John Swinburne:** Equalities reporting is a brilliant aspiration but, in reality, it falls well short of the target. I could sit here for the next two hours and give chapter and verse on where we are failing on gender, in particular. The basic pension for a lady is £60 a week, whereas for a man it is £114 a week. Unless we get over such hurdles, we will never have gender equality. I suffer from age discrimination because I happen to be over 75. Other MSPs suffer from it because they are over 65. Age discrimination is built into the parliamentary structure. It is of course nice to read all these nice words, but the reality is that we have a long, long way to go.

**The Convener:** I agree with your point about pensions, but we need to concentrate on the wider issues in the Executive's budget.

**John Swinburne:** But they are only words.

**Adam Gaines:** Over the past few years, there has been not only a move towards the greater inclusion of equalities in the budget but a more consistent approach to including equality matters. Nevertheless, there are still differences between portfolios and variations not only in the extent to which equality is expressed in some of the target areas but, indeed, in what is viewed as equality. Instead of clearly expressing what equality is, some targets and areas are more likely to have what might be called an equality feel to them. Although equality is set out in some areas of the budget, it is not mentioned in other areas, even though considerable equality work is in fact being undertaken in those areas. That makes it more difficult to make comparisons over time. As a result, we need to examine not only the specific amounts in the budget but the very process of mainstreaming equality and the extent to which that cuts across the different portfolios.

**Ali Jarvis:** A look at the budget suggests that equality happens at a number of levels. For example, certain projects are distinctly equalities activities, and they sometimes have good, well-measured targets. However, that is only the tip of the iceberg. Adam Gaines introduced the word mainstreaming into the discussion, and we need to understand that the bulk of the budget is not—indeed, it should not be—spent on equalities projects. Instead, we should be able to tell that equality principles have been embedded and concretised within the bulk of level 3 spend and to

measure them at the end to find out whether that spend delivers equalities outcomes. We should be careful about looking too closely at what I would call equalities airbrushing, which, as with photographs of supermodels on the covers of glossy magazines, simply touches things up at the edges at the expense of looking at intrinsic elements of the body politic.

**Tim Hopkins:** I want to say something positive about the various equalities statements in the different portfolios in the budget document. We have been asking for years for a clear statement of what equality means, and the introduction now clearly spells out the six European equality strands. That is a step forward.

Some portfolios' individual equalities statements are better than others and go into considerable detail. However, as Ali Jarvis said, they tend to focus on specific equality projects; indeed, some of the statements are more about policy than about the budget. For example, the references to the work on hate crime in the justice section are not really about spending.

Nevertheless, I welcome the step improvement year on year in the way that each portfolio area has been looking at its work on equality. More work could be done on a couple of statements, which are simply copies of what was said in last year's document; moreover, as we have pointed out before, there is still some confusion between promoting equality and closing the opportunity gap.

However, I echo Ali Jarvis's comment that the Executive must now move beyond this point and, rather than focus on specific work on equality, begin to look at whether the huge amount of money in the budget is delivering equally for the whole population. One very good target in that respect is the Scottish Executive administration and associated departments workforce target, which is the only one that disaggregates on the basis of the equality strands and has allowed us to see year-on-year improvements. We would really like to see more of that kind of analysis of mainstream spend.

**Philippa Bonella:** I agree entirely with Angela O'Hagan. Much of our discussion has highlighted the need for evidence-based budgeting that acknowledges that, for example, major health and education targets require different activities to meet the different needs of women and men from different minority ethnic groups, disabled people and so on. Having such evidence at the beginning of the process will allow us to know what the target audience looks like, who the beneficiaries will be during the delivery process and how the money is being spent and to ensure that we have allocated enough money to meet different equalities needs properly. The equalities sections of the various

portfolios in the budget document do not provide any evidence-based analysis linked to existing targets; instead, there is very much a focus on small add-on projects that have been going on for years without any evidence about why they are needed or what they are delivering.

09:45

**Marlyn Glen:** There is a huge gap between how this committee approaches the budget and other committees' discussion of the process. For example, as a member of the Justice 1 Committee, I know that its approach to the budget is far removed from this kind of analysis of mainstream spend on equalities. Should we encourage a wider analysis of mainstream spend as well as an examination of all the other little details? Just last week, I asked a parliamentary question on alternatives to prison for women offenders. However, the minister did not answer my whole question and, as with so many matters, said that although the Executive has got some really good ideas it will not deliver them until more research and work have been carried out. That means that it will be the next session before such measures can be introduced. Similarly, modern apprenticeships sound like a great idea until you start asking how many women are involved in the scheme.

I was certainly quite upset that in the debate on mainstreaming that we had a few years ago there did not seem to be much of a grasp of the concept. We need to approach the matter from both ends by analysing mainstream spend and by establishing an evidence base that allows us to make links.

**Ali Jarvis:** Data and evidence are critical to such an approach. After all, we are in an era of evidence-based budgeting and policy making, and equality is probably an example of where spend must be reflected in the budget. There is an element of that in the spend on central analytical and statistical services such as the General Register Office for Scotland. However, if we are to do what Marlyn Glen suggests, we need disaggregated statistics for all key areas not only to set the correct direction of travel but, most importantly, to measure whether those areas are delivering. Unless money is put into such areas, we will not be able to get the data out.

That has two implications. First, as far as the race agenda is concerned, we have been looking for an ethnic minority boost in the labour market survey, which is one of the key measures of economic success in Scotland. However, we hear again and again that the information cannot be captured because there is no budget to do so. That shows that, although a certain matter might not be specified at level 3, if it is not mainstreamed

into the budget process at the very start there might not be anything in the pot to pay for its delivery.

Secondly, if the evidence does not exist we cannot measure anything at the end of the process. As far as modern apprenticeships are concerned, the number of women involved can certainly be increased, but if they are simply going into lower-paid, lower-status areas such as child care or hairdressing that have value but do not give women long-term financial advantage over the years, that will not help Scotland's economic performance.

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP):** I am sure that everyone knows what I am going to say, but the most obvious example of gender inequality is the situation with equal pay in local authorities. That could be quantified and the Executive could be proactive and upfront about it and set a budget for it. However, instead of that, the Executive answers written questions by saying that it is for local authorities to spend the budgets that they have been allocated and that it might consider increased budgets next year. The situation has been known about for seven years and has obvious financial implications, but it is not mentioned in the budget; it is like the elephant in the room. To be honest, I cannot take seriously any other efforts to achieve equality in the budget when the Executive does not mainstream the most obvious issue.

My experience in trade unionism before I became a politician gave me an understanding of the philosophy of mainstreaming, but many people have the attitude that mainstreaming means that equalities are not their responsibility and that they do not have to be proactive about them any more because there is no focus on them. The message about what mainstreaming is has not got through, which is why equalities end up being considered at the end and why people can say, "Aw, we've nae money left." Attitudes have not changed and there is no focus on changing the attitudes in the various Executive departments.

Whenever there are briefings in the Parliament on equality-based issues, the women turn up. Then, when the men's issues—trains for example—are being considered, plenty of men turn up. I find that thoroughly depressing.

**The Convener:** The job evaluation process in local authorities has been interesting because it still looks as if jobs that are traditionally male or female are being rewarded in different ways.

**Carolyn Leckie:** There are such huge problems with equal pay that the Executive will not tackle the issue head on and will not take responsibility for it, which means that I do not take its efforts to address inequalities seriously at all. The Executive

could be proactive in addressing pay inequalities in local authorities; if it was, I would take it seriously. It focuses on wee projects here and there because that makes it look like it is doing something, but it does not tackle the big issues because they are too expensive.

Achieving equality means spending money and the budget is about the amount of money that is spent. There is a financial gap—an inequality—between men and women and between other groups. Unless the Executive is prepared to put money into the pot, it will not address that inequality, so everything else is just frills and frippery.

**Tim Hopkins:** Carolyn Leckie raises a really important point about local authority employees. Why can the budget not break down the expenditure on, for example, health service staff in the way that it already does for Scottish Executive staff? Health service staff are directly employed by the Executive in any case. They account for a huge amount of expenditure and a very large number of workers, but how much of that expenditure goes to women, how much to men and how much to ethnic minorities?

With local government staff, there is an added complexity because the expenditure is delegated, but it is important that the budget imposes equality requirements on the people to whom the Scottish Executive gives a lot of money—in this case, local government.

For years there has been a target that combines increasing the number of modern apprenticeships with targeting the more disadvantaged groups—we all know that there is a huge gender disparity in that scheme. The report on the 2002 spending review says that that target has been met, but it only talks about the absolute numbers, which have gone up. Although that part of the target has been met, there is no evidence that the other half—targeting underrepresented groups in modern apprenticeships—has been met.

Similarly, a number of targets have tacked on at the end a statement that the Executive will do whatever for underrepresented groups in particular. However, that will not happen unless the analysis is done and the data are available to show that that part of the target has been met. We do not want a lot of additional equality targets; we want the main targets to be equality proofed so that we know not only that the targets have been met in the headline figure but that they are delivering for everybody.

**Nora Radcliffe:** The crux of the matter is having the right information. I am always leery about targets, but I am keen on information. If we are to start to change perceptions and attitudes, we need to get the right information in black and white.



Perhaps if we demand segregated data on every equalities strand, the figures will speak for themselves and nobody will be able to blink at them because they will be there in front of us. That is far more important than setting targets, which will follow from incontrovertible data.

**Angela O'Hagan:** Carolyn Leckie made a strong point about the absence of targets belying the political will to address equality. The point about the absence of a quantitative target and a timescale for achieving equal pay across public authorities was well made and we echo it.

I point to questions that we might go on to consider, such as the future scrutiny role of this committee and others. That is particularly important because of the potential for a fiscal squeeze in the next parliamentary session. We wish to talk more with the committee about that over the course of the morning. If there is a reduced pot, future scrutiny must be alert to the extent to which specific or mainstreamed equalities measures might suffer from a dilution in resources, diminished political scrutiny and diminished political will to address them.

**Marilyn Livingstone:** Tim Hopkins raised an important point about modern apprenticeships. I used to work in further and higher education and to convene a committee on Fife Council that examined stereotyping within modern apprenticeships. The situation did not get, and is not getting, any better. The question is why that is the case, and some of the budget needs to be directed towards finding that out.

I convene the cross-party group on construction. We know that we will need 27,000 new entrants to the industry over the next five years. However, women make up 3 or 4 per cent—I cannot remember which, but it is one or the other—of civil engineers. Women are not going into traditionally male employment areas such as civil engineering and architecture, where there are good careers, salaries and promotion prospects.

There is an issue with the point at which we start looking at such matters and the advice that young people get. We have not made huge inroads over the past 10 years. We have made some, but still only 4 per cent of those going into civil engineering are women. Questions need to be asked about that. Civil engineering is only one example—I am sure that we all have examples. It is good to increase the number of modern apprenticeships, but we must examine the guidance and support that are available. Attitudes and aspirations are part of the problem as well. We must set targets much earlier on in the process.

**Rona Fitzgerald:** I echo a number of the points that have been made, but it is important to get back to the scrutiny of the budget. The Scottish

women's budget group has been working on trying to build transparency into the process. The points that were made about data, whether an issue is mainstreamed and the need to embed issues in core spend as opposed to airbrushing equalities issues, as Ali Jarvis said, are fundamental.

The draft budget says that the Executive is "indebted to the lessons learned from the pilot work",

but we have not seen that in the way in which the budget is presented. I know that the budget's presentation has been worked on for a number of years—we acknowledge that and have been part of the exchanges that have taken place about it—but it is still not in a form that enables us to identify the link between the policy objectives that the Executive claims to have in the equality strategy and the way in which resources are allocated. In the Scottish women's budget group, we have been trying to work on that transparency to try to get a better sense of where the biases are and where we are not getting enough information about what has informed a policy choice.

10:00

There is a link between the points that Angela O'Hagan made earlier about the difference between quantitative spend and qualitative change and areas in which there is an overall target that remains substantially gender blind, such as is the case with the modern apprenticeships, or in which there is a change to be brought about, such as increasing young women's participation in sport. In that case, the money goes into golf and football and it is clear that gender impact analysis has not informed the setting of the target as there is no understanding of what young women might do by way of participating in sport.

It is important to think at an early stage about what we want to achieve with mainstreaming. We need to ask how we can allocate enough resources to do that and how we can make the process more transparent so that we can see where we make mistakes or miss out on opportunities to make those final connections.

**The Convener:** The famous pilot schemes that we always seem to discuss—and about which I get frustrated—seem not to be particularly clear about what they are looking at, which means that the outcomes are not as clear as they might have been.

**Dr McKay:** We have discussed the pilots on several occasions. The Scottish women's budget group is frustrated that the outputs from the pilots are not yet in the public domain. As someone who worked with the Executive as a technical adviser on the pilots, I am quite disappointed that much of the learning from the pilots therefore cannot be

shared. We would like the committee to ask the Executive whether the final report is imminent and whether the guidance that we produced, which it might be possible to use as a toolkit to inform thinking on this subject, will be used in future. From the budget document, it appears that it is not going to be used in that way and that it will inform instead the development of the equality impact assessment tools. We would like some clarification on that.

**The Convener:** I agree that that is an important issue.

**Adam Gaines:** Rona Fitzgerald talked about the importance of transparency. However, the issue of consistency across the budget needs to be thought about. There are a number of helpful equality measures in the budget. For example, with regard to the transport budget, there is the disaggregated information relating to concessionary fares and similar measures. However, for certain large pieces of expenditure, such as the money that is spent on improving transport infrastructure, which has a direct equality implication in terms of greater access for disabled people, equality issues are insufficiently taken into account or expressed. Similarly, in the education budget, excellent work is being undertaken on additional support for learning. However, much of that spending is part of a much bigger budget, which means that we would not be able to see it.

As Tim Hopkins said, how the information is expressed is as important as how the targets are reached and set out, as that is what enables us to trace what the outcomes are.

**Philippa Bonella:** I agree with Ailsa McKay that it would be great to have the products of the pilots in the public domain.

The pilots proved that equality proofing budgets and policies helps departments to achieve their policy objectives better. With regard to areas such as sports participation and smoking cessation, it is clear that different approaches need to be taken to women and to men and that different approaches work better with different groups. Making that case is all very well and I hope that doing so will help to improve understanding of the need to mainstream equality and to think about who is using services but, from our perspective, the legal framework has moved on. The gender duty, the disability duty and the race duty are coming into force, which means that the Executive is legally obliged to assess the impact of its policies and to ensure that it is promoting equality for those groups across everything that it does. We are beyond the point of needing to make the case through pilots that equality proofing helps the Executive to achieve its objectives. The Executive now just needs to get on with it. Through equality impact assessments, the tools are in place to allow that to happen.

**Dr McKay:** I would like to tie up the points that have been made in this discussion in order to inform the point on the agenda that is about suggesting ways forward for the committee in scrutinising the budget.

As John Swinburne said, we are a long way from achieving an allocation of resources across the Executive's budget that would specifically promote gender equality. However, that does not negate our efforts to get there. We might be a long way from that point, but there are incremental gains to be made.

On evidence-based budgeting, I think that we have got a lot of information. The modern apprenticeships scheme has been raised in a number of contexts and we have a lot of evidence about how it is working and a lot of learning from the pilots. None of that evidence is going towards supporting the promotion of the equality agenda as part of the budget process. We should focus on areas such as the sport and health pilot and the modern apprenticeships.

The link has not been made between the budget and the policy. We all have an awareness of the outcomes of the modern apprenticeships, but we do not make the link with spending. We know that women end up in lower-paid occupations with worse career prospects than men following the modern apprenticeships programme but also, and perhaps more crucially with regard to the budget, the training programmes that women tend to take part in have less money spent on them, because they last only six months to a year whereas young men go into programmes that benefit from four years of spending. If we do a budget analysis, we can see that the Scottish Executive's spending is disproportionately benefiting young Scottish men. That negates the objective of closing the opportunity gap.

We need to see the links. If the committee could follow through on those three policy areas, that would be extremely useful in that regard.

**Angela O'Hagan:** I do not want to distract from Ailsa McKay's effective summary, but I would like to come back to something that Philippa Bonella said. I agree that the approach that is advocated by the pilots is effective and can work. However, not many people will know that if the results of the pilots are not published—that point might be facetious, but it is valid nonetheless.

The quality and understanding of the purpose and content of the equality impact assessments would be much improved if the learning from the pilots were incorporated, as that would lead to better skills and higher levels of confidence in the people whom we are asking to perform the analyses. Although I have previously argued that there should be an integration of equality proofing

and gender analysis in budget setting within equality impact assessments, if we move straight to that process, we will have missed the opportunity to incorporate what has been learned from the pilots, which could be used as a stepping stone to improve the practice and build the confidence of officials.

**Ali Jarvis:** Several people have raised the issue of the link between evidence, data and attitudes. At the heart of the issue, there can be an attitude vacuum, which is why there sometimes appears to be a disconnect between the equalities agenda and what is in the budget. Ailsa McKay talked about using the budget to promote the equalities agenda. Obviously, that is a key aspect. However, I would like to turn that question round and ask how we can use the budget to address the existence of the inequalities. At the moment, it could be argued that, unless the mainstreaming work is done, the budget is not delivering best value in the sense that there are sections of the community that, at best, are not getting a fair outcome from the budget and, at worst, are being put in a situation of poor performance or low economic performance. We have to consider how we can improve the situation as well as recognising that, unless we have incontrovertible evidence that current budget planning is perpetuating poor outcomes for sections of the public, we might not be able to make the attitude shift that is needed if mainstreaming is to be seen as a way of dealing with something that is holding Scotland back, rather than as something that would be nice to do or as simply a moral imperative.

**The Convener:** I am interested in considering the different approaches that are taken by different departments; it is clear that each department works in its own particular way.

**Dr McKay:** I want to go back to the issue of learning from pilots and addressing inequalities, and to pick up on your point about the differences between departments.

A key thing to have emerged has been the role of the spending review as opposed to the annual budget process. What I am about to say has not been in the public domain, but Rona Fitzgerald and I worked on it so I think that we can safely speak about it. Also, Arthur Midwinter is here now so he might want to comment. Given where we are in the budget process, we might want to consider carefully how we make progress with future spending reviews. This is the last year of the 2004 allocation so it is a bit redundant to talk about how we can equality proof that spending; it is in the past and this budget document is just a reflection of it. We have to look to the future and try to work out how we can influence allocations—keeping in mind the agenda that Ali Jarvis has

talked about—in the 2007 spending review. The pilots have shown that departments approach the equalities agenda with reference to their planning for future spending reviews, not with reference to the annual draft budget.

**Professor Arthur Midwinter (Finance Committee Budget Adviser):** If I can, I will try to aid your discussion, offering insights into how I see the process working.

The first thing to make clear is that the draft budget document this year was deliberately intended to have less information. MSPs all across the board had been saying that budget documents had far too much repetition. The key document is the spending review—the plans—and not necessarily the draft budget that follows it.

Most of you will not be aware that there are processes that go on in private—I was reminded of that when I heard the comments on transport infrastructure. There are a couple of internal processes: pre-expenditure assessment and option appraisal, which involves looking into the detail of big projects. However, I do not think that you will ever see those in the budget, because of the time pressure. That is an issue, because the processes are not in the public domain; they lead to what are regarded as internal documents to assist the Executive to take decisions, and they are required for each new spend of, I think, anything above £5 million. An assessment has to be produced to show the impact that the project will have on all the cross-cutting issues. Therefore there is information that does not necessarily get into the public domain to be scrutinised.

People have already commented on the differences between the departments when it comes to the budget process. That process is not a strong, centrally driven process. The finance team sends out guidance; the portfolios produce the chapter and send it back; the finance team sends comments back; the portfolios make adjustments if they wish to; and the portfolio minister—not Tom McCabe—signs off the final product. The final product remains under the control of the individual ministers, and I suspect that that is a reason for the variations in attitude—which is a word that has been used.

Ailsa McKay was getting into a fairly big strategic issue. There are what I call the “Who benefits?” questions. Ailsa was discussing the different benefits for young men and young women, but those would have to be assessed across the board in the budget to get a feel for the overall situation.

The final depressing thing to say is this. I have not seen the pilots but, in the current atmosphere, if they contain anything even mildly critical, they

may not see the light of day before the next election. They may well be held back.

**The Convener:** We have started to joke about the pilots, but Arthur Midwinter is absolutely right. When the committee has been considering the mainstreaming agenda and the budgets, we have been told, "The pilots will bring that forward." However, we have not seen the pilots. We know what they are and what their aims are, but knowing the outcomes would be really helpful.

**Professor Midwinter:** If you, as vigorously as possible, can engineer cross-party support for a request for the outcomes to be published, it would do you good. However, I would not be confident in the current climate.

**Dr McKay:** In the 2006-07 draft budget, there was a statement, which is in the public domain, that progress on the pilots would be reported on in future documents. Well, the next future document is the draft budget that we are discussing today, but the information has been lost. What has happened?

I do not think that there will be anything critical in the pilots, but there will be a lot of learning. I think that Arthur Midwinter's point is that the pilots will probably not be published because the learning would imply the need for significant resources and a change in the way in which the Scottish Executive approaches the agenda.

10:15

**Professor Midwinter:** People have spoken about shifting the focus from equality to inequality. If the documents suggest that there are serious inequalities in the current allocation, that would be a strong reason for ministers not to publish them in the run-up to an election. We should be clear about that. However, Ailsa McKay knows better than I do what is in them.

**John Swinburne:** I would like to hear Arthur Midwinter's analysis of the situation. He has been involved for—how many years is it, Arthur?

**Professor Midwinter:** More than I care to remember.

**John Swinburne:** Are we making progress, or are we just muddying the waters so that no one can see the true picture?

**Professor Midwinter:** I am in a phase of disappointment and disillusionment. I have been involved for five years. For the first three, we had very constructive engagement with ministers, and we had lots of informal meetings about trying to put the budget information together in a way that would be more useful to people when making the political choices that they are asked to make.

I prepared a short note for the committee about how things have developed. Since spending review 2004, things have just stood still. There has been no progress at all. I feel that way about all the cross-cutting issues, not only the equalities issues.

In 2003-04, we had for the first time the identification of spend below level 2 in the list that was driven by the equality unit. The Finance Committee then asked for that to happen for all cross-cutting issues, but now we have lost it completely. It is gone—the list is not even being produced any more. That list was the first time that I ever knew that £400 million was spent directly on equalities issues.

I do not know what has happened, but I feel that we are not making the progress that I would have wanted. During my first three years, I was always optimistic that we were making progress. However, in the past couple of years things have just stood still.

**Marilyn Livingstone:** Arthur Midwinter is perhaps being a bit negative. From what I am hearing around the table, people are not saying that the pilots will not be published; they are saying that the pilots have not been published yet. From the people who are sitting next to me, I gather that final drafts of the pilots are coming through. I hope that those pilots will be published. We are discussing them today.

Ailsa McKay spoke about modern apprenticeships. If there is any criticism in the statistics, it is of Scottish Enterprise. As someone who has occasionally been very critical of Scottish Enterprise, I think that it would be interesting for the committee to find out how Scottish Enterprise spends the money that is allocated to it.

I disagree with Arthur Midwinter when he suggests that the reason why pilots are being held back is that they are critical of the Executive. I do not think that that view holds any water in this debate. The committee should ensure that it sees the pilots timeously to see what lessons can be learned from them.

There is a huge spend on the modern apprenticeships. For me, the question is not just what additional spend is needed but where the moneys are being spent. Ailsa McKay highlighted one instance in which, if we consider how the spend pans out, we see that women are being disadvantaged. That is the kind of information that I would like to see. That is where the pilots are important.

**Carolyn Leckie:** The proof of the pudding is whether we see the pilots and have time to analyse them before the budget process is completed. We should ask the direct question and see whether we get an answer. If we can, we

should speak to every minister about what role they have taken in their department in mainstreaming equality and what they have achieved. Also, if we have time, we should get the convener of every committee in to see how they have promoted the equalities agenda and ask them direct questions.

I would like more detail from you, Professor Midwinter. In paragraph 17 of your submission, you talk about the target for promoting equality mainstreaming. I had a wee laugh at your suggestion that the Executive is claiming that it has met its target for promoting mainstreaming rather than achieving mainstreaming. That is probably correct.

**Professor Midwinter:** That was meant to be a sceptical comment.

**Carolyn Leckie:** Will you say more about how you came to that conclusion? You talked about the pre-budget process—you talked about a couple of processes—but what is the gender balance among the people who are involved in that? Do you know who they are? What training have they had on the equalities agenda? What cognisance do they take of mainstreaming issues? Can we find that out?

**Professor Midwinter:** In every single case, it will be the civil servant who has the responsibility for that policy area who will draft the pre-expenditure assessment—which is the document to which I was referring—with assistance from the research specialists, the economists and the statisticians. Whether they have any training in the wider issues of equality, I would not know. What was the first part of your question?

**Carolyn Leckie:** It was about your paragraph about promoting equality mainstreaming targets.

**Professor Midwinter:** You want to push me further on what I said. I did quite a bit of background reading for this session and I am not sure whether the definition of equality mainstreaming that is used helps me to know whether mainstreaming has happened in the budget. I always found the definition pretty vague. Unless the Executive clearly identifies the policy and programme level, the budget will be meaningless in that sense. After a great deal of pushing around, we were able to find out from departments which programmes were directly seen to be promoting the interests of equality groups. However, the committee can tell for itself that there is not a great deal of evidence in any of the budget documents on the wider issue, which is incorporating equality considerations into what I call functional programmes, which are just the mainstream programmes. That is what I think the mainstreaming agenda is about.

For me, this is a bit of spin. It is quite easy to say that local authorities have a statutory duty to take care of equal opportunities and sustainable development—now under best value—and there are suggestions that that will be extended to the rest of the public sector. I am not attacking local authorities for this, as this is new ground for most of them, but in almost every best-value audit so far—15 authorities have been audited—they have been criticised on both the equalities and the sustainable development issues. The auditors are saying, “We realise this is new territory so we are not surprised.” There is a huge way to go before we could say that we had delivered equality mainstreaming as opposed to promoting it. Does that help?

**Carolyn Leckie:** Yes.

**Nora Radcliffe:** We move on to your suggestions for our future budget scrutiny, Professor Midwinter. You implied that there was progress for the first three years. The wagon was rolling, if you like. What has caused it to grind to a halt and what barriers do we need to remove to get it going again?

**Professor Midwinter:** That is difficult to answer. I do not know why things have stalled. I still have excellent relations with the staff whom I deal with in the Executive finance team. They always provide me with the information that I require. What I am not clear about is what the internal dynamic of the process is and how it should be resolved. My concern is that we need someone to be driving the process at the centre if we want it to happen. I am not sure that that is happening. I felt that the information was changing every year for the first three years. We were always taking a step forward. We then went to a new approach, in which we would have lighter years so that the burden on members would not be so great.

This year, for example, I deliberately said to the finance team before the advice went out, “Please don’t have the departments coming back regurgitating the same stuff as last year. Take all of that out, as it is in the spending plan document if we need it.” I also said that if we are focusing on the changes to the budget, we do not want to know about all the things that are already being done, as the departments see it, on equalities and closing the opportunity gap; what we want to know is what the departments are doing this year that is new, from the additional moneys. I understand that some departments said that they would find it very difficult to answer that. The result is that there is still a lot of repetition from the previous years. Despite all the rhetoric, the Executive is still—as the Scottish Office was before it—a loose federation of departments rather than a single, strong department.

**Rona Fitzgerald:** My point is about scrutiny and about how the committee might take the work forward. A number of things are important. Ailsa McKay said that two areas to continue to monitor might be the modern apprenticeships and the sport allocation because of what we learned from the pilots about patterns of participation among young women and young men, and the link with smoking cessation—or not, in the case of young women. The committee could try to monitor those areas over the next few years.

On the relationship between this committee and other committees, Arthur Midwinter's point is important. Portfolio departments produce their bid for resources. Although they might get central guidance from finance, they do it as individual departments. That is why there is a lack of consistency and why things seem to be better developed in some areas than in others. Working with the other subject committees, the committee could try to get some consistency in the approach to mainstreaming equalities throughout portfolios. The relationship between this committee and the Finance Committee is important strategically, in terms of the comprehensive spending review. As Ailsa McKay and I found in our report four years ago—but consistently with the pilots—the CSR is critical both in terms of the overall, strategic allocation and in terms of the early stage of people making the links with having evidence and disaggregated data on the equality strands that can feed into the identification of policy priorities and targets. That relationship with the Finance Committee is critical. Carolyn Leckie suggested bringing in conveners of other committees and asking them what they are doing.

The other important link is with the Finance and Central Services Department and the equality unit, which have both been partners in the equality proofing budget and policy advisory group, but which also have some responsibility to ensure that the learning from the pilots is embedded in the work of the Executive.

10:30

As Philippa Bonella pointed out, the gender, disability and race duties are legally enforceable. They provide not only a mainstreaming approach but a strong legislative weapon. We should be clear that that is the approach that the Executive needs to take.

The critical thing for the Equal Opportunities Committee to do in its scrutiny of the budget is to ask the Finance and Central Services Department and the equality unit about areas such as the guidance that was prepared for the comprehensive spending review. I understand that the United Kingdom Government Treasury guidance is not yet complete. The Equal

Opportunities Commission has been lobbying for something to be included on the gender duty, because of its pertinence. Under the comprehensive spending review, huge policy areas are considered for the three years after 2007. It is the critical review. It is vital that the committee contacts the Finance and Central Services Department and the equality unit to ask about the nature of guidance and how the equalities dimension is being taken on board.

As someone who was intimately involved in the pilots and who, along with Ailsa McKay, drafted the final report, I know about the critical learning curve that is involved. The policy people say, "I just do policy," and the finance people say, "I just do finance." People tend to say that they have neither the responsibility nor the authority to ask others to do things differently. That is not acceptable any more. People in finance should have enough understanding of equality objectives to make demands by way of the guidance that they issue. They should also scrutinise with authority what they receive from portfolio departments. At the same time, the portfolio departments should be able to demonstrate that, throughout their portfolio, they have taken equalities seriously.

**The Convener:** We have asked all the committee conveners to look at their role in terms of equalities and to undertake an equalities review. We recognise that that work is necessary.

**Dr McKay:** I return to Nora Radcliffe's question to Arthur Midwinter on why the good practice stopped—

**Professor Midwinter:** That is only my perception.

**Dr McKay:** Right—Arthur's perception of why it stopped. In taking forward this work, perhaps we should dwell not so much on the barriers as on the levers. My experience as a member of both the Scottish women's budget group and an international organisation of feminist economists—there are not that many of us—leads me to say that we are talking about not a social justice agenda but hard-core economics. As Ali Jarvis said, the key issue is the impact of inequalities on overall economic performance. We have strong evidence on the modern apprenticeships, which should be used. We are talking not about being nice to women but about improving Scottish economic performance. Given that we will get less of an allocation over the coming years, we will need to make the best use of our available resources.

As the Scottish women's budget group has said, although we may be disillusioned by the Scottish experience of gender budgeting and dissatisfied with and disappointed by the lack of progress that

has been made, the Scottish experience is being talked about at the international level. I know why that is the case—we write the good practice case studies for the international publications.

In terms of the levers, the issue is the role that the parliamentary committees play and the relationship that the Scottish women's budget group can have with them, as well as with the statutory equality agencies. Given how the parliamentary process operates, the Equal Opportunities Committee has a significant role to play in taking forward the equalities agenda, specifically with reference to the spending review. It is okay for us to say that we are disappointed with the Scottish Executive's non-progress in this area, but the committees can play a significant role in addressing the issue. The Scottish women's budget group is prepared to work closely with the committees to help take that forward.

My final point is on the international perspective and the role of the committees. I have just returned from the Turkish Economic Association's annual conference, one session of which was dedicated to gender budgeting. The special adviser to the finance committee of the Turkish Parliament is doing a PhD on gender budgeting. People in Turkey are taking gender budgeting seriously and are looking to Scotland.

We have previously discussed the kinds of things that committees elsewhere have produced, such as a people's guide to the budget containing a checklist on gender budgeting and an explanation of the concepts. Once such issues are related to hard-core budget economics, the men become interested. If you talk a different language, and talk not about gender budgeting but about the democratisation of economic policy or the democratisation of the budget, people start to listen.

**Ali Jarvis:** We have been asked for suggestions on how committees can scrutinise the issues. Several people have talked about ways of joining things up. There is an opportunity to consider the issues on both a macro and a micro basis.

My suggestions split into three areas. There is an opportunity to scrutinise the specific equality spend although, as I said at the outset, that can be a bit of a red herring, if not a fig leaf, if I am not mixing my metaphors. The other two areas might be even more interesting if the committee could apply more pressure in scrutinising them by actually holding portfolio holders and committees to account. Professor Midwinter referred to key functional areas of the budget. You could ensure that those areas specifically include equality evidence measures. You could say to the portfolio holders working on "A Smart, Successful Scotland" or the employability framework, "Tell me how this will address the needs of these groups.

How have you made that implicit in your budgeting process?" Doing that would force the evidence through and allow you to set the measures and assess the outcomes. The functional areas could be prioritised depending on which were most likely to have the greatest impact on Scotland's economic performance.

You could also bring in the human dimension by robustly assessing all spend related to people. That could be done with employment targets, especially in the public sector, which is relatively easy to assess. Indeed, that should be happening now, because it is a legal obligation. That should also be related to issues such as poverty and the closing of the opportunity gap. You should turn things round the other way, and ask the portfolio holders to account for the addressing of existing inequalities.

We have talked about equality impact assessment tools, and some of the work that the Scottish Executive has done has been helpful, but people must use those tools. The tools are only as good as the people who pull them off the shelf and put the time into considering how they can be used. The tools can help portfolio holders and their teams.

As I have said to this committee before in a different context, two major areas of work—the employability framework and "A Smart, Successful Scotland"—were not even race-equality impact assessed until nearly two and half years after they came into existence. That suggests that anything learned from the process would be tricky to put into practice.

It would be useful to have guidelines for portfolio holders and organisations with devolved budgets, such as Scottish Enterprise and local authorities. We have to ensure that the thinking on equalities is joined up from cradle to grave.

**Angela O'Hagan:** Nora Radcliffe asked about how we could move forward. I want to raise a point that refers to something that I said earlier and to Professor Midwinter's points, relating to the climate in which future budget scrutiny might be conducted.

We read in the press, heard at last week's Finance Committee meeting and read in quotes from civil servants that there may be a downturn in resources such that the Scottish Executive will have to make difficult decisions. In light of that, the Scottish women's budget group is concerned that the Howat review on public authorities and public spending took place without the benefit of public consultation. Where is the gender analysis? What likelihood is there that the outcomes of the Howat review will take account of a gender analysis? The Executive is dragging its feet on the publication of the Howat review. Does that mean that there will

be feet dragging on the introduction of the spending review for 2007? I have no reason to suspect that there will not be similar feet dragging on the introduction of the Scottish gender duty.

That brings me back to my earlier point about political will and sustaining political momentum. Instead of being pessimistic about all this, we should view it as a challenge. If the spending review after the election happens to coincide with the introduction of the gender duty, the parliamentary committees will have a key role in effectively scrutinising the processes, not only by calling public authorities to account but by supporting them as they introduce the duty. However, if at that time there is a fiscal squeeze and resources are being reduced—Rona Fitzgerald has highlighted the importance of the CSR in that respect—this committee, the Finance Committee and the various policy committees will play a key role in finding out what impact the squeeze is having on mainstream equality measures or on specific equality projects and programmes. In any case, Professor Midwinter has stressed the importance of disaggregating figures at policy and programme level.

We are concerned that if equalities and expenditure on equalities are seen as marginal, they might be the first to go in any fiscal squeeze. The more integrated and transparent—to use a word that has been used a lot this morning—the implications for equality and the effects of addressing inequality are in the budget process, the more effective scrutiny might be. To use the vernacular, it would give the Executive fewer places to hide. However, the parliamentary committees will have to think about the climate in which they will have to carry out scrutiny.

**Adam Gaines:** On Ali Jarvis's suggestions for ways in which the committee might carry out scrutiny, there is a question about how the process of mainstreaming has been arrived at and the extent to which expectations on equalities that have emerged from certain functional areas have been placed on third-party organisations such as local authorities.

One particularly significant area for committee scrutiny will be the forthcoming three-year spending review. When we compare the equality targets in the 2002 spending review with those in the 2005 spending review, we see that progress was made. I am sure that another three-year review will take further account of them. After all, this is about not what happens in a single year but how progress on equality matters can be sustained.

**Marilyn Livingstone:** Adam Gaines's point about the spending review is particularly important, and we should certainly consider it.

In our disability inquiry, the report of which will be published soon, we examined training, education and work for disabled people. In that respect, Ailsa McKay and Ali Jarvis made some important points about modern apprenticeships, the employability framework and "A Smart, Successful Scotland". We could certainly take a close look at how those policies are working. After all, "A Smart, Successful Scotland" and the employability framework form Scottish Enterprise's overall strategy, which filters down to initiatives such as modern apprenticeships. However, some of the answers to the committee's questions on how equality has been embedded in "A Smart, Successful Scotland" have been unsatisfactory.

As a result, we should ask for a report on modern apprenticeships and then examine "A Smart, Successful Scotland" and the employability framework to find out the extent to which equality policy has been embedded in the Scottish Executive's relationship with a particular quango. I am not convinced that equalities are embedded in "A Smart, Successful Scotland". That course of action would be a good way for us to see the follow-through and to examine how it all works in budgetary terms. Then, as Ailsa McKay said, we could consider the impact of the strategy on economic performance. I am interested in following the whole trail, although I am not convinced that that is possible.

10:45

**Tim Hopkins:** I want to follow up Adam Gaines's point about the targets in next year's spending review. It is important to have the right kind of targets. The target for modern apprenticeships in 2002 said something about improving the number of people from underrepresented groups. That was a soft target with no measure attached to it and now we see the outcome—rather, we do not see the outcome, which is the point. There is a hard target for the Scottish Executive workforce but, unfortunately, because it is a hard target it is one of the few that has not been met. That is rather unfair, because a lot of progress has been made on increasing the number of women and disabled people whom the Executive employs, although the specified figures were not achieved in certain areas. If the Executive is concerned that some of the targets will be flagged up as not met, we may need targets simply for year-on-year improvement rather than for a fixed number that must be reached. However, we need a target that allows us to see measurable year-on-year improvement.

**John Swinburne:** In my two and a half years on the Finance Committee, I was impressed by the total impartiality of its financial analysis of all the documentation that came before it. The best thing



that the Equal Opportunities Committee could do on equality issues in the budget is to demand—not ask—that the Finance Committee be given more teeth and more power to enforce equalities across the board. If we emphasise that, we will see a better outcome in a year's time and further down the road.

**The Convener:** We are running out of time. I know that a few of the witnesses have other work to do this morning. In the next few minutes, I am interested in getting any input that people feel would be helpful to us in our work on the budget.

**Ali Jarvis:** I have a point about prioritisation. Anyone who has waded through every single page and paragraph of the trimmed-down budget document—

**Professor Midwinter:** It is supposed to be trimmed down, but it is actually longer.

**Ali Jarvis:** I probably skipped a couple of the pages, but reading it is a massive task. Although we want progress to be made in all areas, to make the process less demanding and daunting, particularly for those who are portfolio holders and for the Finance Committee, perhaps for this year and for the CSR review in 2007—or whenever it is done—we should set priorities to give people a chance to focus on some areas. Those could be economic development, public sector employment, data and evidence issues, and perhaps even community planning. Work in those areas would have a major impact on a large number of people.

I suggest not that we let the other stuff go, but that we give people a chance to get the matter right and gain confidence from working well rather than continuing to think, “Oh no, we have another box to tick on that and we haven't quite completed the pro forma on this.” All that happens is that the exercise becomes about box ticking. I have seen many equality impact assessments that have been simply an exercise in completing a form rather than a learning exercise to improve the general outcome. We need to prioritise the key areas of major functional spend that have a large impact.

**Professor Midwinter:** I am sure that the committee has this in mind, but it is vital that you feed into your budget report for this year the views that you take from this session. The spending review will take place in a hurry, after the election. The delay of a year has complicated the process. The Finance Committee has had to ask for views about next year, even though some members may not be here then. I know that some members are leaving. After the previous election, I think that I had nine new members out of 10 on the Finance Committee. Keeping up the co-ordination will be a big task for you all.

The message from the Treasury is that we will see not a squeeze but lower growth. There is no

suggestion that we will face real reductions in resources. We are using a ballpark figure of 2 per cent for the growth of the budget. That is much lower than the 4.5 per cent increases of recent years, but it is still growth.

On the Howat review, I had a constructive session with members of the review team, at their request, early in the process. In my view, the Howat review's clear remit was to do two things: to assess whether the Executive is effectively targeting its priorities and to look for areas in which there is scope to reallocate resources. The review was not given specific guidance on gender or equality measures, but it was asked to discover whether the Executive was effective in targeting its priorities. I look forward to seeing the review's conclusions on that. In my view, we need a much more rigorous and systematic targeting of priorities than we have seen.

What has emerged for me is the importance of the committee trying to influence the guidance. I had not thought about that before, as I always focus on the budget because, unfortunately, for me cash is king and that is what I tend to focus on. It would be helpful if this committee, both in its report and in its discussion with people afterwards, considered what kind of information is needed to see whether things are being done properly. We are always in the position of having to scrutinise what the Executive has done, because that is our responsibility.

The point that Tim Hopkins made about the need for relevant targets was absolutely spot on. We need meaningful targets. To be honest, I have always been sceptical about targets, because people usually set easy targets so that they can report that they have achieved, for example, 83 per cent against the target. I have come to the view that, perhaps as part of the audit process, we ought to have a series of high-level performance indicators that show year-on-year trends. They are already available for local government, where the impact of employment issues on women and disabled people can be traced through the statutory performance indicators. The Finance Committee had a brief discussion about that a couple of years ago, when we tried to get the Executive to deliver such information for health and other activities, but the Executive shied away from doing so. This committee should push the Executive on providing relevant targets, but the bigger, wider issue is that perhaps we need independent assessment of performance.

**Rona Fitzgerald:** On ensuring that targets are informed by equal opportunities or equality or gender perspectives, much could be learned from the structural funds—that is not often mentioned in the public domain. That is a fertile area for the committee to consider, especially because

structural fund targets were informed by a gender mainstreaming process. In other words, if we are setting a target for modern apprenticeships, rather than set an overall target for participation we should have a target for changing patterns of participation, so that we get a 10 per cent increase in the number of women in traditional areas or a 10 per cent increase in the number of men in non-traditional areas. A lot of really good stuff could be learned from the structural funds in areas like that. We have identified economic development in particular, because it makes so many links that we want to make. It would be useful for the committee to examine that.

**The Convener:** We need to wind up now. I thank everyone for their evidence this morning. I suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

10:53

*Meeting suspended.*

11:03

*On resuming—*

## Equalities Review

**The Convener:** Item 3 concerns the committee's review of equalities, in particular the participation event that the committee has agreed to hold. Do members have any comments or questions on the paper that has been circulated?

**Nora Radcliffe:** I was slightly taken aback that no implementing body has been appointed to co-ordinate activities in the United Kingdom. The Government should be getting its act together a bit better than it is.

**The Convener:** That is the next item.

**Nora Radcliffe:** I am sorry. Am I jumping an item?

**The Convener:** Yes. I agree with you on that point, but we will come back to that item. We are talking about the participation event for the equalities review. We are considering the work that has been done over the past seven years. That will give us an opportunity to highlight some of the issues that we have heard about constantly and to draw up some kind of paper to pass on to the successor committee in the next parliamentary session. I am interested in members' views and questions.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** I agree with the proposals in the approach paper, which are good ideas. I have a technical question about the crèche. The paper says that we will provide lunch for people who attend the participation event, but can we also ensure that they know that we have a crèche for visitors and that they are welcome to bring their children along? I am surprised at the number of people who do not know about it. Parliament staff are trying to put the message out through new leaflets, but it is still surprising that people do not know that the crèche exists and is for visitors.

**The Convener:** That is a good point. I am aware that that information will be sent out.

If no one else has comments, are we happy with the paper and do we agree to proceed with the equalities review?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**Marilyn Livingstone:** That is agreed. The paper is good.

**The Convener:** Are members happy for further arrangements for the participation event to be taken forward by me and the clerks?

**Members indicated agreement.**

## European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007

11:05

**The Convener:** The fourth item is the European year of equal opportunities for all.

**Nora Radcliffe:** The year was flagged up far in advance, so I expected the national implementing body to have been nominated by now.

**The Convener:** I would have thought so.

**Nora Radcliffe:** I do not think that we can do anything about that.

**The Convener:** Could we raise the matter with the Executive?

**Nora Radcliffe:** Is the UK Government responsible?

**The Convener:** Yes, but the Executive can raise issues with the UK Government, given the role of equal opportunities in the Scottish Parliament.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Can we write to our sister or brother committee at Westminster?

**The Convener:** We have no brother or sister at Westminster.

**Nora Radcliffe:** What about an equivalent?

**The Convener:** I am not sure whether we have an equivalent.

**Nora Radcliffe:** That would have been a route for providing a comment.

**The Convener:** We can engage with the UK set-up, but it would be worth while writing to someone.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Who is the appropriate person to make a point to?

**The Convener:** Would it be acceptable to produce a proposal about whom we should contact?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**Elaine Smith:** Will any Scottish Executive ministers or officials attend the conference in Berlin in January?

**The Convener:** We expect them to be part of a UK delegation but, as we have no information about the set-up, we are not clear about that.

**Elaine Smith:** It is important to ensure that the Scottish Executive is part of the UK delegation. It is a good idea for the convener to attend, but should one other member attend with the convener? Will clerking support be provided for the conference?

**The Convener:** Elaine Smith makes a good point, but I understand that attendance is limited. Clerking support will be required.

We can write to the Executive to ensure that ministers participate in the event, which is important to our work in the Parliament. We will pursue the scope for additional committee members to attend—I agree that that would be good.

**Elaine Smith:** The conference is important. The bigger the presence from Scotland, the better.

**The Convener:** Attendance is limited but, given that the Parliament has an Equal Opportunities Committee, the conference is worth investigation.

**Carolyn Leckie:** How long will the conference last? What is the process for influencing the agenda and the themes that it takes up?

I notice that the last bullet point in our paper says that a key aim of the year is

“promoting the benefits of diversity for the European Union.”

How do we influence the focus of the debate to consider employment, migration and the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, for example? How those issues will be approached interests me. What opportunities do we have to focus the debate?

**The Convener:** I am told that a programme of events will be discussed at UK level. You are right—we do not want something that is handed down from on high at a conference. If we are having a European year, we want to participate in what needs to be in place for it.

**John Swinburne:** The brand new equal opportunities legislation, which is only about two days old, contains some exemptions.

Can the committee request a list of those exemptions and the reasons for them? The minute an exemption to an equality is given, we have an inequality.

**The Convener:** I agree, but that is not to do with the paper that we are discussing.

**John Swinburne:** The issue could be taken to Europe to find out about it. The exemptions are probably the result of European legislation.

**The Convener:** We need to agree to the paper first.

**Carolyn Leckie:** If we go to the conference, will we have the opportunity to speak at it?

**The Convener:** I hope that we will have the opportunity to speak about some of the work that we do and about some of the equalities issues that we experience in Scotland. Like Elaine Smith, I

think that it would be good to have more than one member at the conference.

11:10

*Meeting continued in private until 11:28.*

Do members agree to the actions that are proposed in the paper?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

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