

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

Tuesday 31 October 2006

Session 2

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2006.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Licensing Division,
Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ
Fax 01603 723000, which is administering the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate
Body.

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by Astron.

CONTENTS

Tuesday 31 October 2006

Col.

BUDGET PROCESS 2007-08	2019
EQUALITIES REVIEW	2038
ITEMS IN PRIVATE	2061

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

19th 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)

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE

Malcolm Chisholm (Minister for Communities)

Brian Henderson (Reid-Howie Associates Ltd)

Sheila Reid (Reid-Howie Associates Ltd)

Yvonne Strachan (Scottish Executive Development Department)

Laura Turney (Scottish Executive Development Department)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Zoé Tough

ASSISTANT CLERK

Roy McMahon

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Equal Opportunities Committee

Tuesday 31 October 2006

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:08*]

Budget Process 2007-08

The Convener (Cathy Peattie): Good morning and welcome to the 19th meeting in 2006 of the Equal Opportunities Committee. I remind all who are present—including members—that mobile phones and BlackBerrys should be turned off because they interfere with the sound system.

I offer a warm welcome to the committee and to Scotland to members of the Equality of Opportunity Committee of the National Assembly for Wales, who are in the public gallery.

I have received apologies from Elaine Smith.

In the first item on our agenda, we will take evidence on the budget process. I welcome Malcolm Chisholm, who is the Minister for Communities, Yvonne Strachan and Laura Turney, who are from the Scottish Executive Development Department equality unit, and John Nicholson, who is from the Finance and Central Services Department.

The Minister for Communities (Malcolm Chisholm): Thank you for asking me to come to speak to the committee; I am really looking forward to the discussion—I think. It provides us with a useful opportunity to talk about the draft budget for next year and about other related areas of work that I am sure will be of interest to the committee.

This is the first opportunity that the committee has had to scrutinise the Executive's spending plans for 2007-08 since they were published. As members can see, we have maintained many of the previous changes that we talked to you about last year in relation to the 2006-07 budget. However, as members know, we must take account of a range of views. In deciding the format of the draft budget, the Executive takes account of the priorities that are set in the spending review and of recommendations that are made by the Finance Committee and by other interests. In recent years, the Finance Committee recommended that the draft budget document be streamlined and that its focus be on budgetary changes. We have sought to implement those recommendations in this year's draft budget.

Building on the work that we have already undertaken, we have continued to record relevant

information about spending and equalities work in the budget. We have again provided details of different portfolios' activities on equalities issues, as well as those relating to the Executive's other three cross-cutting priorities, which are closing the opportunity gap, sustainable development and growing the economy. The mainstreaming of equalities and those other three cross-cutting themes is one of our key principles, which impacts on all the activities that we undertake to achieve our targets.

Of course, we are not complacent and we will continue to seek ways in which we can improve the reflection of equalities in the budget document while taking account of the need for it to be streamlined and focused on budgetary changes. The next draft budget will be the first in the new spending review period—that is, spending review 2007. We will take the opportunity to review the information that we present in the draft budget, to review its format, and to review the guidance that we give to those who are involved in its production. The committee's views will, of course, be considered as part of that process.

I appreciate that committee members look to the budget for evidence of cross-Executive activity on equality. As I have said, we—as you do—want to identify ways in which we can improve how we reflect equalities issues in the budget document. However, we need to bear it in mind that the purpose of the draft budget is to present the Executive's spending plans—it is not intended to be the means through which we report on equality policy.

The Executive has published a range of documents that outline what is being done on equality and the progress that is being made. Examples include the update on the report of the strategic group on women, the update on progress towards meeting the commitments in the action plan of the Scottish refugee integration forum, and the race equality scheme. As you know, with the new disability and gender duties, there will be annual reporting: the Executive will take that opportunity to report on progress across the range of equality strands.

In November last year, I contributed to an Oxfam compact disc to promote gender budgeting—I reiterated the need to connect evidence, policy and spend. The ability to reflect equality in spending plans depends on the extent to which we incorporate equality considerations into policy. Although we all accept that that process takes time, we should not lose sight of the fact that we have made some important advances: concessionary travel; free personal care; working for families; improving the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities; supporting women and children who are

experiencing domestic abuse; and challenging attitudes through the see me campaign, the one Scotland, many cultures campaign, and the domestic abuse no excuse campaign, all of which are changing the lives of people on the ground.

We are making improvements that will help us to get to where we want to be in mainstreaming equality; for example, there has been a push forward on the availability of disaggregated data. We have commissioned a gender audit that will be published this year and, at the end of November, we will see the publication of high-level statistics on equality.

The Executive's mainstreaming website, which provides information on equality research and data for policy makers, has been updated and made more user friendly. Also, a new equality impact assessment tool has been developed for policy makers—that is a crucial development. In addition, a widespread programme of briefings for staff across the Executive about the new public duties and equality impact assessment is under way. The programme is only part way through and a number of departments have still to be covered, but to date more than 450 people have participated. All that work, and more, provides the basis for effective mainstreaming of equality.

We are constantly learning how to improve our mainstreaming work. We have drawn on experience across departments, in particular from our internal case studies in housing and schools and from the work of the equality proofing budget and policy advisory group. The work that has been undertaken to develop tools for gender analysis of the budget through two pilots on smoking cessation and sport has helped us in developing our equality impact assessment tool. I know that the committee has been interested in that report: it is now available on the Executive's website and copies are available here this morning.

I mentioned the new public duties on disability and gender. Those and, of course, the existing race duty will be enormously helpful in promoting equality and mainstreaming the issues across policy interests.

10:15

The new duties are outcome focused, so we are expecting to see real change as a result of the work that is being done to impact assess policies and to involve disabled people and other equality groups in shaping policy and service provision. We will also work hard to ensure that we develop clearer indicators of progress on equality. I am sure that we will want to discuss those with the committee in due course.

I believe that we have a shared agenda: we are all committed to improving the delivery of equality

and to improving the life experience of people who are discriminated against, abused, excluded, disadvantaged and undervalued. How we ensure that those matters are sufficiently reflected in our policies and inform our spending is an on-going process. As part of that process, we will continue to make improvements to budget documents—we are always pleased to consider suggestions as to how we might do that. However, I continue to stress that we must balance the need to keep the budget documents workable and accessible with the many requests to include more targets, impact assessments and performance indicators. I know that the committee understands those tensions and I look forward to continuing our dialogue on them and on the wider issues that we need to address in order to deliver our shared commitment to equality.

The Convener: I welcome the move towards impact assessments. You said that a gender audit will be published later this year and you will recall that the committee is keen to see progress there, so that is good news. The committee also looks forward to seeing the outcomes of the pilots in smoking cessation and sport. I understand that we will soon receive copies of the reports on those pilots.

During its budget scrutiny last year, the committee was concerned that equalities reporting differed between portfolio areas. The committee notes that the Scottish Executive has accepted recommendations that the Finance Committee made on the issue. What assurances can you give us that equalities reporting across portfolios will be improved as part of the 2007 spending review?

Malcolm Chisholm: Reporting on equalities will improve dramatically from December this year. From then, the Executive will publish annual reports on its performance in respect of the public sector duties on equality. Those will be separate from the budget documents, but the aim will be to provide, where appropriate, cross-references to more detailed sources of information in the budget. We will also take account of equality issues during the next spending review, although decisions on the final approach to the review will not be made until after May next year.

Recently the equality unit organised a workshop with members of the equality proofing budget and policy advisory group. They have developed constructive suggestions for future equalities reporting in the budget. We would like those suggestions to be considered seriously, with a view to having equality issues reported on appropriately in the budget, with clear referencing to the detail of our equalities work in the forthcoming annual reports.

The Convener: That is very good news that will be welcomed by the whole committee. I am keen

to know what the Scottish Executive can do to ensure that future budget documentation more adequately reports the equalities impacts of changes to spending plans. Will the measures to which you have just referred ensure that that happens, or does more need to be done?

Malcolm Chisholm: The measures will certainly help, but there are other issues. We intend to review the format of the draft budget, especially to consider ways in which reasons for changes to spending plans can be made more explicit. The impact of such changes on equalities should become clearer as part of the process.

However, there is a distinction to be drawn. There are probably steps that we can take more easily in relation to targeted spending, when it is clear that spending has a specific equalities outcome, but that is more difficult in policies in which one or several equality issues have been mainstreamed. It is worth noting that the mainstreaming equalities strategy that we are implementing across the Executive does not lend itself to providing the sort of detail that the committee might like. As equality issues are mainstreamed more effectively into policy and practice, it will become more difficult to identify projects that have a specific associated spend. However, we could do more, so we will explore the issues related to targeted spending.

The Convener: What impact will the existing and forthcoming public sector duties have on the way in which the Scottish Executive approaches the budget process with regard to equalities reporting?

Malcolm Chisholm: As you know, the public sector race and disability duties and the forthcoming gender duty include requirements to carry out impact assessments. The implementation of the equality impact assessment tool, which I mentioned briefly earlier, will make an enormous difference to the way in which we think about equalities and act on issues of concern. Impact assessment is the cornerstone of delivery of the public duties. The measure of success in implementation of the duties will be whether we can effectively assess the impact of what we do, although that does not mean that impact assessment is the end of the line. The tools that we have developed make it clear that we will need to reconsider our proposals or our approach to implementing proposals if they are seen to discriminate. The duties are, after all, about outcomes. Impact assessment will be key to delivering those outcomes.

To clarify the situation regarding the impact assessment tool and the budget, I should say that we have drawn on lessons from the pilot work in health inequalities and that the tool includes questions to prompt officials to consider whether,

and in what ways, equality issues will affect resourcing of policy.

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): The committee is concerned that, when they prepare draft budgets, not all portfolio departments are adhering to the guidance that is issued by the Finance Committee. How confident are you that the guidance is sufficient to ensure that departments meet their equalities responsibilities?

Malcolm Chisholm: The guidance is clear about what we want portfolios to do. Portfolios have been asked to identify any changes in spend and to tell us what they have been doing that was new on equality. The purpose of the draft budget is to outline spending plans and the key issue for us is to identify where there are changes in spend on equality. I am not saying that that was always done by departments or that there was not a certain amount of to-ing and fro-ing to ensure that it was done but, fundamentally, there was no problem with the guidance. There is, of course, a further issue, to which I have already referred: we will consider how we can improve reporting and, as I said, we have held a meeting with the budget group to see whether we can improve the way in which that is done.

The equality unit has been holding regular briefing sessions for officials across all Executive departments since June this year. They have been well attended and all officials have had, or will have, an opportunity to hear more about the public sector equality duties and the equality impact assessment tool and requirements. The process will yield real benefits.

There is no particular problem with the guidance, but there are issues, in some cases, with implementation of the guidance. I hope that the meetings that I have mentioned, as well as other things that are being done, will improve that side of the situation. The second issue involves consideration of related matters to see whether some of the procedures can be changed, which would, of course, lead to revised guidance. The main point that I am making is that I do not think that there is a fundamental problem with the existing guidance.

Marilyn Livingstone: What more can you do to ensure that each department adheres to the guidance to ensure a more uniform approach across the Scottish Executive?

Malcolm Chisholm: Obviously, the officials are directly involved in that and will consider contributions that come in from various departments. They will comment on those contributions if they think that the guidance has not been followed. That is the most fundamental process that takes place. There can be a parallel minister-to-minister process around that but, at the

moment, the situation is dealt with mostly by officials.

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): How can you influence your ministerial colleagues to ensure that promotion of equalities is given prominence in their sections of the budget documentation and that they actively push their departments to produce such material?

Malcolm Chisholm: I talk to ministerial colleagues about equalities issues in general, but I cannot claim to have directly addressed the guidance, which is dealt with at official level. I am not saying that I could not address the matter if we thought that there was a serious problem, but in most cases it is dealt with effectively by officials.

Ms White: If the guidance was not being adhered to, would you step in or would that be left to officials?

Malcolm Chisholm: The matter can be part of this committee's and the Finance Committee's consideration. If there was a fundamental problem, I could certainly be involved in addressing that at ministerial level for the next budget document. In looking retrospectively at the formation of the budget document, I was not specifically involved in the guidance.

Ms White: Only the enterprise and lifelong learning portfolio has implemented the committee's recommendation on budget proofing equalities and attaching spend to each measure—the other portfolios have not. That recommendation was not guidance, which is why I asked whether you would be able to step in, as Minister for Communities.

Malcolm Chisholm: I could certainly do that if there was a problem about the guidance not being followed.

Ms White: You could highlight such a problem. Thank you.

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): Has the Cabinet had a briefing on the new equality duty?

Malcolm Chisholm: There have been many individual briefings, but I do not think that we have had a briefing as a Cabinet. [*Interruption.*] I am reminded by the head of the equality unit that we have had a written briefing but not an oral one.

Ms White: I have another question on finance, which is important in equality proofing. Concerns were raised in oral evidence about the level of training that finance and policy officials receive on equalities issues. How are the officials who are responsible for writing the equalities sections in the draft budget trained to meet that responsibility? I heard what you said earlier about the equality impact assessment tool and workshops. Is that part of the training?

Malcolm Chisholm: Yvonne Strachan will speak more fully about that. Officials do not receive specific training on drafting the sections on cross-cutting themes, but they are given advice by specialists, such as the staff of the equality unit, which Yvonne heads. I mentioned the briefing sessions that the equality unit is rolling out. They outline the requirements of the existing and forthcoming public sector duties as well as the equality impact assessment tool, and they should certainly improve the knowledge and understanding of equality.

I cannot emphasise enough the important role that the equality unit plays within the Executive. A lot of its work is invisible to the public, but the unit has been an important part of the Executive since it was set up. Yvonne Strachan has been its head since the beginning. Perhaps she can explain in more detail how the training works,

Yvonne Strachan (Scottish Executive Development Department): The minister is correct to say that there is no specific training for individual departments on the equality sections of the budget—it is each department's responsibility to determine what it does. Each department has a finance section and people who give advice on the guidance in respect of finance. That guidance is brought together by finance colleagues in the equality unit in dialogue, so a relationship exists.

We also try, where possible, to engage with departments as appropriate during development of the budget. When we get an opportunity to examine submissions and pass comment, we do so. That is not standard practice that has to happen, although we engage in it as appropriate. If we can and do identify a problem, we refer it back.

On whether there is specific training, the answer is that there is not. However, as the minister said, the process of raising awareness around equality in general and the importance of the impact assessment and the agenda are things that we are rolling out throughout the Executive, which will—we hope—result in better outcomes.

10:30

Marilyn Livingstone: The minister talked about the importance of some of our key strategies, such as closing the opportunity gap. What roles do the minister and the equality unit have with external organisations? For example, Scottish Enterprise has a large budget for skills and learning, which is fundamental to carrying out the strategy. What role do you have in ensuring that quangos adhere to the strategy? What work has the equality unit done with bodies such as Scottish Enterprise?

Malcolm Chisholm: Yvonne Strachan will deal with the last question.

The important development for all those bodies is the public sector duty. They will be subject to that duty just as the Executive is subject to it. That will be a big step forward, because I am not sure whether hitherto the situation has necessarily been satisfactory.

I do not know what influence Yvonne Strachan feels that she has over those bodies or whether she has any direct contact with them.

Yvonne Strachan: We need to distinguish between the matters on which there is a formal or legal responsibility between the Executive and our non-departmental public bodies and those on which there is not. Of course, in respect of public duties the responsibility lies with the NDPBs rather than with the Executive. However, there is a relationship in that there is dialogue with Scottish Enterprise on equality issues. It has a unit that works on equality and we have close contact with it. However, what Scottish Enterprise does as a body is a matter for its board and, of course, for the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department, which has a sponsoring relationship with it.

The equality unit's role is to work with the relevant department and to encourage it to engage with its non-departmental public bodies and agencies on the equality agenda. The extent to which that happens is an issue that must be explored with departments—it is not something on which I could specifically answer at this time.

Ms White: I want to follow up on the response that no training is given. Concerns have been raised in committee during evidence from witnesses. If the committee were still concerned after going through further papers and taking further evidence, and if the issue was raised prominently in our report, would you consider the training of officials?

Malcolm Chisholm: Training of officials is not particularly my responsibility. Yvonne Strachan will comment?

Yvonne Strachan: If there is training for equality, then the equality unit has a role to play. We are currently rolling out briefings on public duties and rolling out the impact assessment process. We obviously have dialogue with our human resources and training departments about how equality can be incorporated into the Executive's internal training programmes. That would cover all departments, not only the Development Department or the equality unit.

On what we provide and what is necessary by way of specific training, the needs of staff are constantly under review internally. If the feeling was that there was a need for further briefing on the equality aspects of the budget, then there is nothing to stop the finance department and the

equality unit considering how that might be developed within the Executive. It is certainly not prohibited. What we do on our training programmes depends on the needs of staff at the time. Obviously, the committee's views on the matter help to shape what we need to do for the future.

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): Good morning. We welcome the direction in which the Executive is going on the budget, but it is clear from the discussions at last week's meetings that there is perceived to be a fundamental problem.

I am concerned about the perception that mainstreaming tends to confuse the issue of whether money has been spent effectively. What is the point of directing money to one particular area if we are not certain how it will impact on equalities? The committee has previously pushed for specific equalities targets, which were not supported by the Finance Committee, but we heard oral evidence from the Equality Network that targets for year-on-year improvements are another mechanism that might allow targets to be set with greater flexibility. What are your thoughts on that suggestion?

Malcolm Chisholm: That is an interesting suggestion that we are happy to explore. The basic point is that we are committed to making our targets as outcome focused as possible. Having milestones, with indicators on the way to them, would be consistent with that approach. We are developing indicators for equality that are not necessarily shown in the budget. For example, the national race equality action plan, which will be published soon, will contain a basket of indicators for public sector performance on race equality. We consider constantly new indicators that could be developed, which is consistent with the approach that Marlyn Glen suggests.

Marlyn Glen: I am keen that people should be able to look at the budgets and see the year-on-year improvement. An annual report is not meaningful unless it has a baseline so that people can see the improvement that has resulted from the way in which we have spent the money.

Malcolm Chisholm: Will you amplify the point that you made about mainstreaming? I am not sure that I understood it fully.

Marlyn Glen: I was picking up on the point from your opening remarks.

Malcolm Chisholm: I was trying to say that progress is easier to identify when spend is targeted at action on a specific matter, such as race equality or domestic abuse. However, the basic idea of mainstreaming is that all the big budgets, such as health, education and housing, should be equality impact assessed and that equality issues should permeate the whole budget,

which makes it more difficult to identify specific spend on equality within that. I suggested that it is more difficult to identify progress with mainstreaming. The issue is interesting. If I understood Sandra White correctly, she praised the idea of identifying a specific sum of money for equality matters. However, that could be seen as contrary to mainstreaming, the whole idea of which is that it should permeate the entire budget.

We have hard choices to make. Obviously, we do not want to use mainstreaming as a cover for not dealing with the spending issues. I hope that our work on gender budgeting and, more generally, equality impact assessments shows that we take seriously what happens in the mainstream budgets. The issue is difficult. I thought about it closely when I read the *Official Report* of your meeting on 5 October, when Professor Midwinter looked back to what he suggested was a golden age when money was earmarked for equality. I am not sure whether it was a golden age—we may have made more progress on mainstreaming by not thinking in that way. The debate is interesting and there may be pros and cons on both sides. In some cases, we can earmark money for specific equality initiatives, but I am not sure whether we want to extract specific sums for equality, as that could ultimately be contrary to a radical approach to mainstreaming.

Marlyn Glen: If we are mainstreaming, it should be possible to see it. For example, the justice portfolio sometimes appears to be gender blind, rather than gender proofed, although there are obvious issues for women or for young offenders at which money could be targeted specifically. The fact that we are still debating the issue concerns me. Will you consider using targets for year-on-year improvements rather than hard targets?

Malcolm Chisholm: Absolutely. Speaking personally, I am favourably disposed to that general approach to targets, but I am not sure whether that is official Executive policy.

John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP): We are trying to analyse the mythical inputs and outcomes. Do you agree that equality issues should to a degree be encompassed in the analysis of inputs and outcomes?

Malcolm Chisholm: Absolutely. The approach of the new equality schemes is to focus on outcomes. Obviously, we need inputs to deliver the outcomes, but the main focus is on outcomes. I cannot say that the schemes will solve all the problems, but they will allow us to take a big step forward in the next year or two.

Marlyn Glen: Last year the deputy minister for communities updated the committee on the progress of the mainstreaming pilots on housing and education, which you have mentioned—you

said that the work on those pilots has already been drawn on. What is the current situation with the pilots? You said that the report on them is imminent.

Malcolm Chisholm: I had wanted to bring along that report, along with the report on the gender pilots that is being published today, but it will not be published for another two weeks. It will appear on our website in two weeks' time and we will ensure that the committee gets a copy as soon as it has been finalised. I am sorry that it has taken such a long time to get the report into the public domain, but we are working to ensure that its publication is imminent. Officials will be happy to talk to committee members about its findings once it has been published.

Marlyn Glen: We will have to wait until it has been published.

Malcolm Chisholm: I am sorry that it is not available today.

Nora Radcliffe: The committee was concerned that although the gender pilots on smoking cessation and sport were alluded to in the draft budget, we did not have access to the report on them. We are delighted that it will be published today, although it would have been nice to have obtained a copy prior to the meeting so that we could have studied the results. How will you build on the lessons that have been learned from those pilots?

Malcolm Chisholm: I apologise. I wanted the report to be available a few days before the meeting, but clearance has to be obtained from all round the Executive. It is certainly not the case that I deliberately delayed its publication until this morning—in fact, I made it explicit that it would have been better if the committee had had access to it beforehand.

It is clear that there are lessons for us to learn, although in some respects things have moved on since the research was undertaken. We have already begun to put into place some of the recommendations, for example through the development of the equality impact assessment tool and the public sector duties briefings.

In brief, the report explores the connection between evidence, policy and spend; examines the evidence and what it tells us about the different experiences and needs of men and women; assesses to what extent that evidence is taken into account when policy is formulated; and considers resource allocation.

The report is necessarily brief and focuses on the headline findings and recommendations for the Executive. One of the recommendations is that the guidance should be used to train officials. As I said, we have already started that process—

examples are the public sector duties briefings and the development of the equality impact assessment tool. The report contains a call for better availability and use of sex-disaggregated data, on which we have been working with our analytical services division. If the committee would like more information, Laura Turney is an expert on that, among other things.

The report outlines that we need to do more to ensure that equality issues are considered systematically when policy is developed and resources are allocated. We certainly have some way to go before we can say that such systematic analysis is embedded in the process, but we are making progress. Officials would be happy to discuss the report with the committee once it has had time to study it.

Nora Radcliffe: Disaggregated data interests me a great deal. You mentioned data that was disaggregated according to gender. The availability of good disaggregated statistics on all the equality strands is fundamental.

Malcolm Chisholm: Absolutely.

Nora Radcliffe: What are you doing about that? Without good information that can be compared, how are we to know whether we are making progress year on year?

Malcolm Chisholm: We met the equalities commissions last month to discuss the issue and have begun to ensure that we adopt a systematic approach to embedding equalities in analytical outputs, to meet the requirements of equalities legislation and monitoring. We will work with the commissions—of which there will soon be only one—to establish a core equalities data requirement in respect of each equality duty.

We are keen to drive the full use of existing equalities data through the forthcoming high-level summary of equalities statistics, which will be published on 28 November, and through our portal to resources and information on mainstreaming equalities website, which is called PRIME. We will publish the schemes in December 2006 as part of the report on all six equality strands that I have mentioned, which will include a statement on data collection. In addition, we have contracted researchers at the University of Edinburgh to conduct a gender audit of statistics and research, which will be published early next year. We are also making lots of local-level data available on the Scottish neighbourhood statistics website. A lot of activity is coming to a head over the next few weeks.

10:45

Laura Turney (Scottish Executive Development Department): The committee will be interested to know that, when we were rolling out the briefings for the public sector duties and

the equality impact assessment tool, we started with the analysts in the Executive. They were the first people we talked to, as we wanted to ensure that they were geared up for working with the various departments and that their schemes and objectives were properly evidence based. We have been working quite hard with the analysts, in a logical sequence, to ensure that things are up to speed. They have been extremely supportive. It has been very good.

Nora Radcliffe: How much extra work will have to be done to collect the data? The disaggregation of data has been quite a neglected area.

Laura Turney: There are two questions in that. One is about the disaggregation of existing data. Often, data are collected but not necessarily analysed or disaggregated using suitable categories. The other question is about filling the gaps—identifying those areas where data are not collected, or where they are collected but not in the way that would be most helpful from our perspective. That will be quite a lot of work.

Nora Radcliffe: This is obviously work in progress. Is there an interim end point this year, prior to the next spending review?

Laura Turney: It is indeed work in progress in some ways. We have been focusing on certain things, such as the commissioning of the gender audit. We wanted to ensure that the sex-disaggregated data were available in the context of the forthcoming gender duty and the high-level summary of statistics. That covers the other equality strands.

There is still work to be done. For example, the Health Department has been considering its available data sets and checking where the gaps in the disaggregated data are. That is a long, slow process, bearing in mind the volume of data that are collected from the various areas concerned.

John Swinburne: The committee notes that the Scottish Executive was not successful in meeting all its equality employment targets for the Scottish Administration. What is your reason for that?

Malcolm Chisholm: I think that we met seven out of the 12 targets. The basic reason is the current recruitment and promotion situation. There is a low staff turnover rate. That has severely restricted opportunities for progress towards our targets, particularly those for ethnicity. I regret that. However, I do not think that that is through a lack of effort to meet the targets.

There is also a significant degree of underreporting: 38.2 per cent of staff have not declared their disabled status and 15.5 per cent of staff have not recorded their ethnic background. That is not the fundamental point, however. I am not sure whether Yvonne Strachan wishes to add anything.

Yvonne Strachan: The minister has covered the main issues. There is a clear programme in the Executive to promote diversity in recruitment, selection and promotion. When there is not a high turnover, it is very difficult to make a change to the existing position, as the minister has indicated. The policies are there, however, and they are pursued with vigour when they can be. At the moment, that is all that we could say on the matter.

John Swinburne: We do not have a level playing field. The current representatives in the Parliament are not representative of all the ethnic minorities and so forth. There are no MSPs in that category. Taking that into account, I think that you have done rather well in what you have achieved.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): How is the Scottish Executive ensuring that it will meet the equality employment targets in the future?

Malcolm Chisholm: A range of activities is in hand, including a revised diversity placement scheme, targeted recruitment to maximise available options and extended mentoring opportunities. The underreporting issue to which I referred is being addressed through targeted re-surveys, changes to recruitment practice and awareness-raising exercises to encourage staff to participate in the diversity monitoring process and to ensure that our recording procedures support that. In addition, the Executive's diversity delivery plan, which was launched in July, sets out a range of actions for stakeholders throughout the Executive to maximise progress towards our targets.

Mr McGrigor: The existing and forthcoming public sector duties may require the Scottish Executive and the departments and organisations that it funds to be more accountable about their workforces. Using the targets that have been set for the Scottish Administration as a benchmark, how can you progress equality employment targets for the public sector in Scotland?

Malcolm Chisholm: As I said, we are committed to making our targets as outcome focused as possible and we are keen to work with other public sector employers on meeting their public sector equality duties. However, individual equality targets will be a matter for each organisation, because each will have its own context in which to develop them. Further thought certainly needs to be given to how we can promote equality in all public sector bodies, but the fact is that each organisation has its own responsibility and is bound by the duty to promote equality and to eliminate discrimination, so it must monitor employment as part of its own scheme. Organisations have separate schemes, so how far we can direct the process is limited.

Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP): I am sorry for arriving late; I had major transport difficulties. I hope that I do not repeat anything. We have heard evidence recently and quite a lot of concern has been expressed about the absence of the mainstreaming of equalities throughout all the Executive's budget headings. Everyone has said that mainstreaming equalities issues needs to be integral to the spending review. Given that the Executive's committed policy is to make equalities integral to the spending review, what measures is it taking to address those concerns?

Malcolm Chisholm: We will have input into the guidance for the spending review, to ensure that equalities are taken account of as a fundamental issue. We have made some progress on mainstreaming, but I am the first to admit that there is a long way to go. The different parts of the Executive are becoming more familiar with not just the general concept, but the practical ways of achieving mainstreaming. Yvonne Strachan has talked about the work that she has done on the equality impact assessment tool that is being developed.

Progress is being made, but there is a long way to go. We want to ensure that the guidance for the spending review takes account of the issue. As Carolyn Leckie can see from the budget document, equalities are a cross-cutting theme, as they will be for the forthcoming spending review. We must build on what we have done. The public sector duties will provide a great impetus to more success.

Carolyn Leckie: What will happen in the Executive's departments? Concern was expressed that people did not even understand the concept of mainstreaming. It is evident that one of the biggest gender equality issues that faces Scotland is equal pay in local government, but the budget document does not refer to that. It is difficult for me to take seriously the commitment to equalities when such a requirement, which has been easily measured, does not attract a specific heading or financial commitment in the budget. What communications have you had with the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform? Was a deliberate decision taken to omit equal pay from the local government budget?

Malcolm Chisholm: I do not think that there was a deliberate decision. I suppose that the issue partly relates to our previous discussion about how some issues are the direct responsibility of the Executive and others are the responsibility of other bodies. Obviously, local authorities jealously protect their autonomy in that area. I suppose that that is the fundamental reason for that decision. How prescriptive central Government should be in its relationship with local government is always an issue, but we generally let local authorities decide

how to spend the allocation that they are given. Local authorities have to follow equal pay legislation and will be subject to the equality duty, so they need to take action on those issues, but the responsibility is theirs and I suppose that that is the reason for the decision.

Carolyn Leckie: The Executive's policy is to achieve equal pay. Although the Executive provides substantial funding to local authorities, the local authorities have said that they have insufficient funding to level up pay to achieve equal pay. That is why in Glasgow, for example, low-paid women workers such as home carers lose out on shift allowances and unsocial hours allowances for weekend working. Other women lose up to £6,000 a year from their salaries. How does that achieve equal pay for women?

Malcolm Chisholm: I am sure that the issue will need to be considered in the next spending review, when decisions are made on how much money is given to local government as distinct from everyone else in the budget. When money is distributed to local government or health or other bodies, we need to take account of the pay bill, which is in fact the biggest item in health and local government. I am not saying that we are not mindful of the equal pay issue but, to answer your opening question, the particular responsibility for equal pay lies with local government. However, we will need to take account of that in our decisions on how money is distributed under the next spending review.

Carolyn Leckie: Given your responsibility for equalities and trying to push the mainstreaming agenda, my question was specifically about what communications you have had with the Finance and Central Services Department.

Malcolm Chisholm: I have spoken to Tom McCabe about the issue, but the immediate responsibility rests with local government. However, I have said that equal pay needs to be a relevant factor in the big allocations of money in the next spending review. As committee members will have noticed, only limited scope exists to shift resources between budgets within a spending review period. Obviously, some shifts take place and those are highlighted, but most of the money is allocated for a three-year period. However, for the next spending review, the issue will obviously be an important consideration.

Carolyn Leckie: That leads to my next question. The committee is concerned that, if there is a reduction in resources due to the lower growth in spend that has been projected, spending on the promotion of equalities might be reduced in favour of other priorities. What assurances can you give the committee that that will not happen? We have already identified that equalities issues have been underfunded and that we have not made as much

progress as we would have liked. Can you give us a commitment that further resources will be provided for the equalities agenda, or will there be a detrimental impact on equalities?

Malcolm Chisholm: We will definitely make progress on equalities with the budget. Obviously, our ability to do many things will be determined by, among other things, the overall amounts of money available, which we do not know at present. I do not for a moment think that there will be reductions in budgets, but we may not have the same level of growth that we have enjoyed in the past two spending reviews. Obviously, that presents us with some difficult decisions and choices. We will need to be even more focused on prioritising and getting more out of existing resources, but that in no way means that we will lessen our commitment on equality issues. The progress that we have made on the public sector duties will ensure that equality issues are more prominent than they have been in the past, but that will not get rid of the fact that we will face some hard choices.

11:00

John Swinburne: Minister, in your opening statement, you said that there might be wider issues that should be considered. This is not a budgetary issue; I am looking for some advice from your good self.

Is there or should there be such a thing as equality of right of tenure for a tenant? I am asking this because two elderly tenants who live in terraced houses in Holytown, just outside Motherwell, have been served with eviction notices, despite the fact that one of them, who is 70 years old, was born in that house and his neighbour, who is 80, has lived there for 40 years. Their private landlord has issued them with eviction orders. Is that quite legal and commonplace in Scotland in 2006? What can I or the Executive do to remedy that after the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006?

The Convener: John, that is an issue for the Communities—

John Swinburne: The minister talked about wider issues—

The Convener: Let me finish—

John Swinburne: This a wider issue and the minister invited us to address wider issues. I am just looking for a little bit of advice.

Malcolm Chisholm: I think that you should write to me about that. There might well be some serious issues but it is not obvious to me that those people are being evicted because of their age; I certainly hope that they are not.

John Swinburne: It is not because of their age; the man wants to build on that property.

The Convener: You should write to the minister, John. It is difficult for him to consider every issue.

John Swinburne: It is about equal opportunities for senior citizens. They are being evicted and thrown out on the street. If I cannot raise the issue in the Equal Opportunities Committee, where can I raise it?

The Convener: I am asking you to raise the matter with the minister by writing to him in your capacity as an MSP. That way, you will be able to include all the issues involved.

John Swinburne: At least the minister now knows that I will be writing to him about it.

Malcolm Chisholm: I will await your letter and deal with it.

The Convener: As there are no other questions on the budget for the minister, I thank him and his team for their evidence.

I suspend the meeting for five minutes to allow for the changeover of witnesses.

11:02

Meeting suspended.

11:08

On resuming—

Equalities Review

The Convener: Item 2 is the equalities review. I am pleased to be able to welcome Brian Henderson and Sheila Reid from Reid-Howie Associates Ltd, which has carried out two pieces of research for the committee. The first is on stakeholder views of developments in Scotland since devolution and the second is on public attitudes towards equalities issues. I invite one of the witnesses to make some introductory remarks on the work that has been carried out.

Sheila Reid (Reid-Howie Associates Ltd): Essentially, we were asked to do two things as part of the review to a specification prepared by the Scottish Parliament information centre and agreed by the committee. The first was to consider the views of some stakeholders in Scotland about equalities work that had been done and how they envisaged that work would be taken forward in the future. The second was to examine existing material relating to public attitudes to equalities in Scotland. Those were the two strands of the work and the two separate reports relate to those.

We carried out the research during the summer and it generated a vast amount of information. We understand that the purpose of that information was to help to inform the debate and the way forward by identifying the current situation.

The stakeholder research was done by talking face to face with 28 organisations that had an interest in equalities issues. Those organisations reflected the six strands and were located in different parts of Scotland. It was important to include the statutory equalities organisations and some of the national issue-based umbrella groups, as well as some locally based organisations. We recognised that it would not be possible to include all the organisations that have an interest in equalities work and we never intended to undertake a comprehensive consultation with all the relevant organisations. The purpose of the exercise was to look at the views of a cross-section of organisations on successes, good practice and areas for further action. It was intended to stimulate further discussion of the issues that emerged from it. We agreed that the organisations that took part would not be identified by name and that their views could be submitted anonymously.

When the research was under way, some organisations brought together a group for discussion. In some cases, we met one or two representatives of an organisation. The different combinations worked well, and we found that the

issues could be covered equally well in a group setting and with an individual interviewee. The organisations explored their own equalities issues and provided a more general picture of work on cross-cutting issues. We covered a range of topics, which can be summarised as follows: the key issues for organisations at the time of devolution; their expectations of devolution in respect of equalities work; their views on the impact of devolution on equalities issues; positive developments; constraints that they had experienced; and their current priorities and views on the way forward. Again, the focus was on identifying issues for the future.

In a report of this kind, it is impossible to reflect every point that people made, but the report reflects the range and depth of views that were expressed. I hope that it provides an insight into stakeholders' views on the issues that I have mentioned, which reflect the points that stakeholders raised with us.

The public attitudes study involved examining the findings of studies that were based on direct research exploring the general public's attitudes towards equalities issues. We also included research that had been done with particular equalities groups into their experience of discrimination, because there are two aspects to public attitudes. The first is people's direct views on the issues; the second is equalities groups' experiences of those views, as they translate into behaviour. We also looked at attitudes to developments in equalities work and to the way forward. We identified material through a range of sources. Some of the people whom we interviewed as part of the other research identified further material for us to take into account.

We found that there were both studies that focused particularly on Scotland and wider United Kingdom studies that included material of relevance. A small number of the studies focused on specific local authority areas; there were also some UK-wide studies that included relevant data. Some of the studies explored attitudes to a range of strands, whereas some were strand specific. Again, our main focus was on the six equalities strands; we also looked at some of the cross-cutting issues. We hope that we have managed to summarise the key issues in relation to what is currently known about attitudes to equalities issues in Scotland. We hope that, taken together, the two studies will help to inform the debate.

The Convener: We have some questions to ask about your excellent report, which contains a great deal of information that will help us to decide how to take issues forward. To what extent did the views which emerged from your review of research into public attitudes coincide with the views of the stakeholders that you interviewed?

Were there any glaring discrepancies between what stakeholders said and what the public in general said about equalities issues?

Brian Henderson (Reid-Howie Associates Ltd): There were no glaring disparities; there was a good coincidence of views. It is important to bear in mind that stakeholders are, in a sense, experts, so their views tend to be more wide ranging than the public's view. They are more concerned with practical policy, legislation and so on. We should not downplay the importance of public attitudes, but they are only one element of a mesh of issues. We are content that there were no areas in which there was a significant disparity between the views of stakeholders and the public attitudes research.

11:15

The Convener: Was there any evidence to suggest that some equality strands have experienced more progress than others since devolution?

Sheila Reid: A view seemed to emerge that there has been a focus on particular issues at particular times. There is not necessarily a view that some strands have made more progress overall, but there is perhaps a view that the relative focus on different strands has been different at different times. Overall comparisons of progress are difficult, because they do not necessarily compare like with like, but there is a perception that progress has recently been made in some of the newer equalities strands, although they sometimes started from a fairly low base. It was clear that, at devolution, some of the organisations representing the newer issues were conscious of the need to establish themselves and be recognised in equalities work. The focus is perhaps reflective of the fact that there had not been such a focus on the newer strands.

There have perhaps been different levels of progress within strands that include different issues, so it is not just a question of a group as a whole. Within a strand, there might have been a lot of progress on a specific issue. One example that emerged was the campaign against violence against women, which was often identified as having made a lot of progress, while progress on other issues was not quite as visible or as high.

None of the stakeholders was content that all of the issues in all of the strands had been addressed, but there was evidence of progress in all of them. Some of the areas where stakeholders felt that particular progress had been made are highlighted in the report.

Marlyn Glen: The next questions are also about the views of stakeholders. There has been a lot of change in legislation since 1999. For example, there have been changes to the Disability

Discrimination Act 1995 and we have seen the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Civil Partnership Act 2004, the Gender Recognition Act 2004, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 and the forthcoming gender equality duty. What were the views of the equalities groups interviewed about the impact of the changes?

Brian Henderson: There was a clear recognition that legislation, both here and from the UK Parliament, has had an impact in a range of ways. It has clearly improved the experiences of some equalities groups, and it has also had an impact on communities and in promoting wider change and shifting attitudes. The fourth point is that legislation has also established principles and given a clear sense of direction. When they went through the list that you have just gone through, a number of people were surprised at just how much legislation there had been. That was viewed positively.

It would be fair to recognise that legislation is not the only thing that has brought about change—I have no doubt that we will talk about other things that have been important. However, almost all the people to whom we spoke were content to give legislation its place as an agent of change.

Marlyn Glen: What about the pace of change? The report notes that many respondents felt that the broad policy areas currently requiring action are similar to those on the agenda at the time of devolution. That suggests that positive change is slow in coming even when there are changes to the law. What were the stakeholders' general views of the overall pace of change?

Sheila Reid: The issue was certainly brought up. It is complex, because of the different levels of concern about it. For example, people were concerned about the length of time it takes to carry out equalities work and how long it takes for that work to have an impact on the lives of those who are affected. However, they also acknowledged that making a difference in equalities is a long-term process and that it is not just about the pace of progress being slow.

The policy areas are similar because of the issues within them. A broad policy area might contain a myriad of issues that need to be addressed, so it might still be seen as a policy area even though things have been done and progress made.

Addressing one issue might simply bring up more issues that need to be addressed. For example, many respondents highlighted concessionary travel as an area in which progress has been made for disabled people and older people, but that raised questions about the accessibility of transport. Because tackling one issue focuses attention on another issue that

remains to be tackled, transport remains a policy area.

Finally, empowering groups to participate in the policy process—which is what has been seen to have happened—is bound to raise new issues in policy areas.

Marlyn Glen: The stakeholder report notes that there was a degree of interrelationship between some of the groups that were interviewed. How much agreement was there among the various equalities groups on the progress that has been made to date and on areas to target for development?

Brian Henderson: There was a widespread recognition that there had been change and that progress had been made. However, we should not view all the groups and issues as homogeneous. It was also recognised that, within the six strands, a great deal still needed to change. Some pointed out that the pace of change on individual issues was slower and others differed on the degree of change that had taken place, but I do not think that any of the organisations to which we spoke believed that no progress had been made.

Marlyn Glen: Did they also agree on the areas that should be targeted?

Brian Henderson: I find it difficult to think of any such area that cuts across the six strands. Respondents might have raised a general issue about overall direction, leadership and strategic vision but, beneath that, they tended to focus more on the issues in individual strands. After all, older people, young people and LGBT people face different issues.

Marlyn Glen: Based on the interviews, do you think that strand-specific groups focus on their own issues or do they also appreciate the need to support diversity and inclusion more generally?

Sheila Reid: There is evidence of growing support for cross-strand working. The interviews highlighted that, at devolution, such working was not absent, as such, but was much less prevalent, and people commented that strands tended to work in their own areas, did not work together so much and did not see the big picture. That situation seems to be changing.

However, as Brian Henderson said, strand-specific groups tend to focus on their own key issues. There is also quite a wide variation in the extent to which groups get involved in developing cross-strand working. In some cases, two organisations might work together on a particular project or issue while, in other cases, all the strands might come together to present a broader view.

In that respect, there might also be some variation between local and national organisations,

with more of a focus on individual issues and less cross-strand working at local level. However, I do not want to generalise, because the situation varies. There is broad general agreement on the way forward and on the need to combine awareness of policy, awareness of legislation, the need to tackle attitudes, and the need to consider structure and operation.

There has been a growth in joint working in relation to the development of the commission for equality and human rights. That seems to have brought some organisations together and got them thinking about cross-cutting issues that affect them. A nucleus of organisations is involved and others are beginning to see that they, too, can have an input.

Brian Henderson: More now than at the time of devolution, there is recognition that people have multiple identities. There was once less recognition than there is now that, for example, women in ethnic minority communities face specific issues as women and specific issues as members of ethnic minority communities. There is clear evidence of organisations working together to address such multiple-identity issues. Progress has certainly been made.

John Swinburne: Before I ask a question, I want to make a point. Your document is very good, but it is headed "Views of Stakeholders" when it should be headed "Views of a Tiny Minority of Stakeholders". Paragraph 2.4 is headed "Age" and it includes a sweeping statement. It says:

"One organisation noted, for example that:

'There was a scare about older people having to sell their houses, to pay for their care, that was a big issue at that time.'

What organisation was it that undermined the document with such bland and anonymous generalities? I accept that you cannot cover everyone and it is great to hear comments, but you should make it clear that you have covered the tiny minority of stakeholders and not the vast majority.

Brian Henderson: I do not think that we ever intended to suggest that the vast majority of stakeholders—

John Swinburne: That should have been on the cover.

Brian Henderson: That is perhaps an issue to take up with the clerks, as to how the work is described.

John Swinburne: Fair comment.

Concerns were expressed at the interviews at the lack of equality group representation among MSPs. It was noted that political parties should

recognise the need for equality as a priority. Should we regard that as symptomatic of wider public attitudes towards equality issues, or does research suggest that there are, in some areas, other reasons for the lack of representation of people from ethnic minorities etc? I would add that my party will have an ethnic person representing us in the Parliament after the next election.

Brian Henderson: You raise a range of issues. Clearly, issues arise to do with capacity and the extent to which various equalities groups have been supported in the past to take part in public life. As Sheila Reid said earlier, there is an inevitable time lag. In the meantime, there will have to be capacity building to help people from equalities groups to be selected. However, the representation within the Parliament is ultimately a matter for the political parties and I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to comment on that.

Ms White: Good morning and thank you for an excellent report. I think that the committee agrees that the research in both papers this morning has been very good. I wanted to ask about the vision for equalities in Scotland, and then about the commission for equality and human rights.

The report on the views of stakeholders identified a lack of overall vision for equalities in Scotland. Was there any agreement on how such a vision could be achieved? I noted some of the issues that have been raised about the possible loss of various strands.

11:30

Sheila Reid: A number of suggestions were made by stakeholders about how to address that. It was suggested that a strategic approach should be developed. There was a specific suggestion about developing a strategy that would be supported by an action plan. The need for clarity was emphasised frequently. It was felt that it was important to develop a clear picture of what equality in Scotland might look like, what that would mean and how that would fit into a strategic process. The suggestion was that the vision and outcomes should be developed and that they should be supported by a clear strategy and clear action plans.

There was agreement about the need for that overall approach and for shared goals. There is not yet clarity about what those elements would be—obviously, equalities groups have their own ideas about what that would involve for specific strands and what it would involve overall.

The information suggests that the groups would want to have an input into the development of an overall approach. There was a constant stress on the importance of listening and consultation. It was

strongly felt that the groups should have a chance to make their views heard.

There were suggestions about the need for clear definitions of equalities issues and terms and for reviewing and refreshing the existing equalities strategy in order to support the vision.

From the findings of the stakeholder report, you could draw the conclusion that a strategic approach would involve the broad areas that we have identified—the policy, the public attitudes, the structure and the operation. Ways in which that approach could be developed have been indicated. A further conclusion would be that elements of the work that has been found to constitute good practice should be developed, such as consultation, participation and listening. Clearly, a wide range of organisations would want to have an input with regard to the issues that have been raised. This report gives a flavour of what some of those issues might be.

Ms White: Obviously, we want progress to be made and positive attitudes to be encouraged. However, do you think that the report shows that a lot of people are quite frightened that, the more we get into the issue of equalities, the less progress we will make, as it will appear that equality has been achieved? Was that one of the concerns that came through? That would explain why they want more communication and to be kept in the loop.

Sheila Reid: A concern was expressed that, at some point, there will be a feeling that equalities have been done and that we can move on to something else. There was a strong feeling that there is a need to stress that the issue can be dealt with only in the long term and that it will need to be a constant priority.

Ms White: With regard to the proposed commission for equality and human rights, your report notes that there were mixed views on the legislation and that there were concerns about how seriously issues were being treated in some strands. Would you say that there is a degree of anxiety about how individual strands will be dealt with when the new commission is in place?

Brian Henderson: Yes. Clearly, there is ambivalence. Many people recognise that there are huge opportunities as a result of the CEHR, but any period of change is bound to give rise to anxiety. We identified concerns about the possibility that one strand might receive greater attention than others or that individual issues might be diluted because of the existence of a mega commission. Inevitably, there is a concern that those interests that are able to promote themselves most effectively will get the most attention. There is also a concern that the existing expertise in the current commissions might be lost. However, it is important to stress that there are

mixed views. Many of the people to whom we spoke recognised the opportunities that will present themselves. I suppose that the research looks back to the coming of the Scottish Parliament, which was a period of change, and people had anxieties at that time. That is clearly stated in the report. Periods of change present opportunities, but they also give rise to anxieties.

Ms White: You are right to say that there were anxieties, and there were mixed views as well. Would you say that, as well as the anxieties about the loss of certain important strands, people were concerned that the effect of the CEHR legislation in Scotland will be diluted because it is Great Britain law? Also, were they worried about the effect of European legislation on the CEHR legislation? How strong were those worries and concerns?

Sheila Reid: People certainly said that we need to focus on issues that are specific to Scotland or which have a particular impact in Scotland. People did not think that there was a problem per se, but they were concerned about how the CEHR will take shape and how it will deal with Scottish issues. People said that it is important to take account of those issues and ensure that the organisation that develops can deal with them appropriately.

Mr McGrigor: It is obvious from page 21 of the stakeholder report, which covers the impact of devolution on equalities, that some stakeholders suddenly realised how positive they were being during the discussions. Do you think that carrying out the interviews was, in that sense, a positive intervention? Is there merit in carrying out such reviews regularly?

Brian Henderson: Yes. It was a useful exercise for a number of the organisations and individuals concerned. As they said at the end of the interviews, it was an opportunity for them to reflect. It is fair to say that a number of them got to the end and thought, "Hmm—I've been a lot more positive than I thought I was going to be. A lot more has happened than I remembered."

On the need for regular reviews, I return to several points that were made previously. Achieving equality is a huge, long-term aim and processes such as the research allow the committee and others to reflect on what has been achieved to date and what still needs to be achieved. In that sense, reviews are valuable. That was reflected in the views of the people who spoke to us. They recognised that the committee, the Parliament and the Executive—through the equality unit and in other ways—have given them the opportunity to participate to a significant extent both in defining what needs to change and in taking those changes forward. Most people were not surprised but—I am trying to find the right word.

Sheila Reid: I think that people appreciated the opportunity to give their views, which is part of what they identified as good practice.

Throughout the research there was an emphasis on the fact that good practice involves a clear input to the policy process and the opportunity for people to feed in their views. Some organisations do not have a systematic way of doing that or one that they recognise as being the most effective for them. The research provided one way of doing that, so it was valued. Most of the organisations would say that they were pleased to participate. I hope that they would all say that.

Mr McGrigor: On page 35 of your stakeholders report, you expose the problem that equalities is often regarded as the responsibility of one person and that their expertise is lost when they move on. That leads to frustration in equalities groups and difficulties with achieving a long-term focus on equalities work. Did the people whom you interviewed suggest how that problem can be overcome?

Sheila Reid: The fact that there were lots of references to mainstreaming is relevant to your question. It is important to ensure that staff throughout organisations are not only aware of but understand equalities issues.

One problem that was highlighted was that, beyond the individuals with responsibility for equalities, there is sometimes not just a lack of understanding but a lack of recognition that equalities has anything to do with people's work. It is a matter of ensuring that everybody recognises how equalities impacts on their work and addresses the issues. That is what mainstreaming is about. That should be the focus for the way forward, coupled with developing knowledge, education and training.

Mr McGrigor: It is suggested on page 37 of the report that the impact of the section 2A debate has led to a fear at Executive level about tackling difficult issues. Was there any evidence in your research to suggest that that debate had a significant impact on public attitudes towards equalities issues generally?

Sheila Reid: That is a difficult question. The interviews did not focus on asking organisations about their views on public attitudes, although that emerged as a concern. We talked about the issues that had arisen, and the responses tended to centre on the impact on organisations and on the nature of the debate rather than speculation about whether the section 2A debate changed or impacted on public attitudes as such. There were issues within and among organisations and an overall feeling that that debate had been difficult. There was a suggestion that there was a fear of the impact on public attitudes and that perhaps

that interfered with subsequent work. However, there was not really any evidence to suggest what organisations thought had actually happened to public attitudes. I hope that that is a clear distinction. Organisations were concerned that there was a fear, but did not speculate about the impact on public attitudes as such.

Mr McGrigor: So they did not suggest anything to resolve that fear.

Sheila Reid: There were many references to making positive statements, to leadership, to expressing commitment and to challenging issues head on. There was information about good practice, including making brave decisions and continuing with what is right because of a feeling that it is right, rather than weighing up public attitudes.

Marlyn Glen: The report highlights concerns about the perceived lack of knowledge and understanding of equalities issues, particularly at decision-making level, and about a lack of effective leadership across the equalities agenda. What suggestions did the stakeholder groups that you interviewed make for tackling that?

Brian Henderson: That goes back to a couple of the points that Sheila Reid made earlier. It is about having clear statements from the highest level about the importance of equalities and the need to develop an equalities agenda. It is about the development of a vision and a clear commitment to equalities and asking what an equal Scotland looks like. It also involves training for people at all levels. That comes under the mainstreaming agenda that Sheila Reid was discussing. If people do not understand equality, it will not happen.

A high priority needs to be given to equalities issues throughout all strands of government and policy development. There is also a need to continue with initiatives and to promote developments that are specially designed to address problems as they arise. It is important for the process to be transparent and open, and it should engage as many people as possible. That was a clear message from the stakeholder research. People want to be involved in taking forward that vision. In order for that to happen, there needs to be a process, leadership and a clear picture of what people want to achieve.

Nora Radcliffe: The topic of public attitudes is always fascinating. In the equalities field, it is among the more relevant considerations. We have been considering what influences public attitudes. In your research, was there any evidence to suggest that the public behaviour of specific equalities groups has had an obvious impact on public attitudes towards equalities issues in general?

11:45

Sheila Reid: Research that is relevant to that question has been done. There is always a danger in such work of identifying equalities groups as being somehow responsible for prejudice against them and for finding a solution to that prejudice. We stress that the evidence that exists is not necessarily about their behaviour; rather, it is about the white majority population's expectations of equalities groups and how those expectations affect the level of discrimination that they face.

Obviously, evidence exists that attitudes are based on stereotypes and expectations of appropriate behaviour. Material suggests that the extent to which people see others as being like them affects their attitudes towards them. For example, our report on public attitudes makes the point that ethnic minority people are more accepted when greater acculturation has taken place. People in the white majority population are often more accepting of those who are most like them. Perhaps the more challenging a group's behaviour is in diverging from the behaviour of the majority, the less that group will be accepted. There may not be a linear relationship, but there appears to be a link.

There are issues to do with the perceived threat from groups. For example, the level of economic threat that groups pose has been highlighted as an issue that influences public attitudes towards discrimination. Such issues—which relate not to the behaviour of equalities groups but to the behaviour of the white majority population—have an impact on public attitudes.

Nora Radcliffe: Your report on public attitudes mentions

“evidence of a lack of understanding of some types of equalities work, with remaining confusion between promoting equality (e.g. positive action) and ‘favouring’ certain groups (positive discrimination).”

Is there a feeling that people who work in the field have developed an impenetrable private vocabulary, or are people not communicating effectively enough?

Brian Henderson: Perhaps there is a bit of both. There is certainly evidence of a lack of understanding of terms such as “positive action” and “positive discrimination”. We encounter that lack of understanding quite often; indeed, I wish that I was given a pound for every time that we do so.

Understanding the terms that are used is not necessarily easy. For example, the concept of mainstreaming is not easy to grasp. It is easy to see what it means in general—in big letters—but difficult to understand what it actually means in practice. People might be clearer about rights, fairness and justice, but they are not necessarily

clear about concepts such as mainstreaming, positive action and so on. Our report on stakeholders' views says that it is important that concepts are clear, and our report on public attitudes suggests that they are not necessarily clear.

However, messages are getting across—there are no two ways about that. Attitudes have evidently changed in some areas in the seven years since devolution, although it is not immediately clear why some messages get across and some do not. That problem has taxed people for as long as there have been philosophers, and I am not sure that we have a better answer than any of those that people have come up with down the years.

Mr McGrigor: Your report says that research shows that there is often a lack of clarity between race and religious issues. Did your research suggest that that was because the religion or belief strand is relatively new, at least in legislative terms, or is there a more fundamental lack of understanding?

Sheila Reid: It seems to me from the research that the basis of the discrimination that occurs is not clear cut. There are issues to do with religion and belief being a new strand and the recognition of that strand—that issue certainly arose. However, part of the confusion concerns the basis of discrimination—whether somebody is discriminated against because of their race or because of their religion or belief. That distinction is a particular issue when religious matters are linked to ethnic minority groups and the boundaries are blurred. The religious groups that are being identified are often ethnic minority groups and the understanding becomes blurred along with the basis of the discrimination.

Mr McGrigor: A question was asked about vocabulary. Is positive action the same thing as affirmative action?

Sheila Reid: Positive action involves introducing measures to address an imbalance that has occurred. It means taking action to address an existing barrier to equality, to ensure that everybody starts from an equal starting point. The same principle of taking action to address an existing difficulty applies, but action is not taken just because a person is a member of a particular group.

Mr McGrigor: So positive discrimination occurs when somebody is a member of a particular group.

Sheila Reid: Positive discrimination occurs simply because somebody is a member of a particular group and not to address an existing barrier.

Mr McGrigor: That has cleared up the matter.

Marilyn Livingstone: Is it fair to say that the research suggests that public attitudes tend to focus more on specific groups of people or issues than on equality in general? If so, does that have implications for how we should combat negative attitudes?

Brian Henderson: You raise two issues. The generalised view that equality is a good thing probably exists, but most of the work that has been done has targeted specific equalities issues. Even when an apparently comprehensive survey of attitudes to equalities was conducted—the 2003 Scottish social attitudes survey—it did nothing on age or religion and beliefs. Work on such areas is still two or three bits short of being comprehensive. The 2006 survey, which we were told is in the field—I presume that that means that fieldwork is being done now—will cover age and religion and beliefs.

It is said that public attitudes tend to focus on individual strands, but whether that is the case or whether it only appears so because the research has been done on attitudes to individual strands is not immediately clear. If people are asked generalised questions about equality, they may have generalised views. The difficulty for us is in presenting evidence, because even if anyone has asked such general questions, we do not have access to the data.

Sheila Reid: On the implications for taking work forward, it is useful to go past the general issues and to reach the strand-specific issues. It has emerged that each area of work involves a vast number of specific issues, which individual groups are best placed to identify. The same applies to public attitudes. If public attitudes to a particular group or to an issue for that group are known about, it helps us to target the response. However, both aspects are needed. The evidence suggests that broad views of equalities issues are also important, to obtain a flavour of changes and patterns, within which it is useful to know about individual strands.

Marilyn Livingstone: In paragraph 2.8 of your attitudes report, you refer to a study that suggests that

“many people felt that pressure to ‘say the right thing’ had made prejudice less visible, but that underlying attitudes and beliefs had not changed significantly.”

Did the interviews with stakeholder groups support that view?

Sheila Reid: Stakeholders did not deal with that directly as an issue, but a couple of points are relevant to it. As you say, material in the attitudes research suggests that at least an element of what you describe is present. Stakeholders certainly referred to lip service being paid to equalities issues in some cases, which is the same idea.

The stakeholder research also identified that there is overall support for work to tackle equalities issues. It is felt that there is growing awareness, but that it is coupled with some problematic views, which are identified in the report. It is acknowledged that overall awareness has been raised, but that there is a persistent lack of understanding about some of the more detailed issues, which is a similar issue. It is not necessarily the case that people are not saying the right thing, but there is at least a level at which people are not fully understanding the issues. Some issues are not yet well understood. It is not just about saying the right thing. There is a genuine lack of understanding of some issues. However, it was clear that the stakeholders were emphasising the need to tackle attitudes and the lack of understanding.

Marlyn Glen: There are some worrying findings in the attitudes report. For example, on page 20 you quote a study that indicates that 41 per cent of people felt that Britain as a whole had become more racially prejudiced in the last five years and that the same percentage thought that racial prejudice would increase in the next five years. Was that finding supported by your interviews with relevant stakeholder groups?

Brian Henderson: Yes, although not in such precise terms. There is recognition not only among ethnic minority stakeholders but among other stakeholders that racism is a serious issue in Scotland. A lot of mention was also made of the rise—if I can describe it as that—of Islamophobia, which had not really been discussed in 1999.

Another related point that was made by a number of people is that most of us have grown up with a cosy idea of Scotland as a place where there is no racism, where we are all Jock Tamson's bairns and we are all friendly. To some extent, what has changed is the increasing visibility of racism and racist attitudes and an increasing recognition that they exist. They are evident in daily life. From that point of view, it is not clear whether there is a rise in racist attitudes or people are now better able to recognise such attitudes for what they are. Research continues to explore the issue.

To return to your original point, there is certainly a strong concern that racism is and remains a serious issue.

Marlyn Glen: I am sure that Sandra White wants to make this comment too. I want to emphasise that you are talking about the relevant stakeholder groups that you talked to locally in Scotland, but the studies were conducted in England, or in one case in England and Wales. Did the stakeholder groups go along with them and agree with the findings?

Sheila Reid: They did, to the extent of recognising the seriousness of racism. They were not asked the same specific question about the increase in racism and future developments, but the issues remain very much a concern.

Carolyn Leckie: I have a question about a related matter. I am not sure that you can answer my question, but the findings are concerning. Were the responses often specific to Islamophobia? For me, the obvious explanation for that is Government policy, which you refer to in your findings as one influence on attitudes.

Somebody will ask a question later about the influence of the media. Is it possible to quantify how much each factor influences attitudes? I would like to know the answer to that question, but I am not sure that you can answer it.

For me, the rise in racist attitudes and Islamophobia is directly related to the actions of Government, but how do we prove that? The scale of the rise gives us a lot of circumstantial evidence that Government policy has been the major determinant in the rise of Islamophobia. How much more can you say about that?

12:00

Sheila Reid: We cannot comment on that in any quantifiable terms. First, as you have pointed out, such things are not easy to measure. Secondly, we have not found a way of measuring people's attitudes in a way that allows us to explore with them what influenced their attitudes.

As you mentioned, there is plenty of evidence on what kinds of things influence attitudes, and the public attitudes study contains material on how attitudes develop and what influences them. However, we cannot say that there is a direct link between a particular factor—Government policy or the media or whatever—and an individual's attitudes towards racism, for example, and how those might develop.

Ms White: I want to go back to the public attitudes report. As Marilyn Glen mentioned earlier, we should make it clear that the 41 per cent who said that the country had become more racially prejudiced were respondents to a survey that was carried out for Cumbria County Council down in England. Will you elaborate on whether exactly the same question was put to respondents in Scotland? Paragraph 2.93 of the report states:

"Overall, the 2005 research suggested some positive trends in the acceptance of people from other backgrounds in Scotland ... 61% ... believed that people who come to live in Scotland from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds enrich Scottish culture."

If exactly the same question was put to people in Scotland, what was the answer?

I think that you have already said that no such question was put to people in Scotland. It seems quite dishonest to include such figures in a report for the Scottish Parliament when so much of the research relates only to England and goes as far back as 2000. Can you elaborate on that and provide some clarification? I am not saying that Scotland does not have problems with prejudice or racism, but we should be honest and not quote English figures in a report for the Scottish Parliament.

Sheila Reid: That raises a number of issues. First, the questions were not ours. We had to rely on what was asked in studies that had already been published. We have tried to bring together material from different studies to provide an indication of what public attitudes are. We have tried to be clear about which studies relate to England and Wales and which are UK-wide so that the report does not imply that the same situation exists in Scotland.

The issue also highlights the fact that there is a dearth of information on some issues. For the public attitudes study, we have had to draw in information from existing published sources. As I said, we have tried to be specific by trying to make it clear which studies relate to Scotland.

Another issue is that, if two studies ask a similar question in slightly different ways, they cannot be said to be identical and to compare like with like. In those situations, we have again tried to draw out what the studies were about, to ensure that the reader is in no doubt what question was asked in the different studies and what the separate findings were. We do not attempt to say that such studies are about the same thing. Our report tries to give a broad picture by pulling together findings that help us to infer what the attitudes are. However, it is difficult to do that because there is a limited amount of information, which often comes from people who are working to different parameters.

Ms White: I just wanted clarification on that. It should be noted that some of the figures are based on surveys that were carried out in England but not in Scotland.

Marilyn Livingstone: I want to continue on the theme of tackling prejudice. It is encouraging to note that paragraph 4.9 of the public attitudes study concludes:

"there is support in Scotland for ... concepts such as fairness, tolerance, absence of prejudice and human rights".

The report also notes that one study found that

"More than two thirds (68%) of people were found to believe that:

'Scotland should do as much as it can to get rid of all kinds of prejudice'."

Were the stakeholder groups that were interviewed optimistic that such support can be translated into action to reduce prejudice and discrimination?

Brian Henderson: Yes, it would be fair to say that there was a good level of optimism among the stakeholder groups. It was also recognised that, although much has been achieved, a lot remains to be done. Clearly, there is a need to identify what still needs to be done. A number of stakeholders mentioned the need for an overall vision and an understanding of what we are trying to achieve.

There was a view among stakeholders that equalities work will continue to evolve, that it will retain a high priority and that it will continue to have general support. There was undoubtedly optimism, which seemed to be based on people's recognition of what there was before and of the progress that has been made.

Marilyn Livingstone: You mentioned identifying what needs to be done. One of the bullet points under paragraph 4.9 says:

"A relatively high proportion of people think that equalities work has not gone far enough for disabled people and women and few think that it has gone too far".

It is encouraging to see that people believe that we need to go further.

However, another bullet point further down says:

"A higher proportion of people in Scotland believe that equal opportunities have gone too far for ethnic minority groups".

Do you know why that was? Why did the people who were interviewed believe that? Was there evidence that they felt that we had gone far enough in that direction but not far enough in other areas? We have got work to do in all areas, and I wondered why there was a difference in views.

Sheila Reid: It is difficult to speculate about such findings. Our study was specifically about attitudes in Scotland to four different groups and the report showed up some interesting contradictions in public attitudes. There were issues around how far people recognised that particular groups experience discrimination. There was a slightly anomalous situation, in that a high proportion of people recognised that ethnic minority groups experienced discrimination, whereas fewer people, relatively speaking, recognised the need for work to be done in that regard. Having said that, more people felt that measures had not gone far enough, which points to disparity and contradictions in how people view the need for work to be done. Across different groups, a good proportion of people felt that there was a need for more work. It is difficult to speculate on why they reached those conclusions and what underpins their attitudes.

Brian Henderson: To return to something that Sheila Reid said, there is a real danger that unless the scale of the problem is kept in the public eye, people will think that it is now sorted. The issue might be cyclical; people might believe that a lot of progress has been made and that there is therefore not an issue. In the stakeholders' view, however, there is a need to keep the scale of the issue as it is, to continue to make progress and to do so in the public eye. I would speculate that, over time, people might come to the alternative view that not enough has been done across all six strands.

Marilyn Livingstone: Stakeholder groups have recognised that tackling prejudice and discrimination needs long-term commitment. Did any of the groups talk about setting targets or timescales for measuring progress?

Sheila Reid: That was mentioned in a number of contexts, including those of developing a vision of what equality will look like in the future and developing a strategic approach and clear planning. People specifically referred to target setting for work and other relevant issues. An issue that came up persistently was the lack of measurement and of available data and baseline information. Such information would allow progress to be measured, which would link in with target setting, impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation. All those things were stressed.

Carolyn Leckie: On page 36 of your report, you say:

"some people have come to resent what they see as 'political correctness'."

Such attitudes are not substantiated by evidence of the material situation of discriminated groups. During your interviews with stakeholders, did you discuss how such attitudes might be tackled?

Brian Henderson: Not directly, but the issue related to our overall discussions about changing public attitudes and ensuring that people understand the issues. People often use the phrase "political correctness" as shorthand for dismissing something that they do not understand or do not much like the sound of. Stakeholders made the point in the context of discussions about the need for people to understand the reality of equalities issues. The presumption is that the more people understand that reality, the more they will understand the concepts and the likelier it is that they will not dismiss what they see as political correctness, because they will understand the seriousness of the problems. That relates to my earlier point about the need for clarity.

Carolyn Leckie: Did you discuss how that understanding can be achieved?

Brian Henderson: Not specifically, but the point was made regularly about the need to keep

equalities issues in the public domain, the need for strong leadership and clear vision and the need to help people to understand the day-to-day realities of equalities issues. Sheila Reid will correct me if I am wrong, but I do not think that there was a discussion about how to address the lack of understanding that is manifested in the notion of political correctness. As I said, the issue fits in the broader concept of improving understanding as a mechanism for helping to take work forward in a more successful and rounded way.

Carolyn Leckie: On page 43 of your report you quote a study that concluded:

"it is important that banal, benevolent and unintentional prejudices are tackled with as much commitment as aggressive and cathartic prejudices".

You mention other studies, which highlight difficulties in tackling such prejudices in individuals. Did those studies find that attempts to challenge such attitudes tend to be dismissed as excessive?

Sheila Reid: The issue emerged from material about public attitudes, which identified the need to tackle all kinds of discrimination, including discrimination that is not always clearly recognised as such and which is difficult to tackle. Although stakeholders did not discuss the issue in those terms, they acknowledged the need to challenge all discrimination and negative public attitudes, however they are manifested. They also talked a lot about how embedded public attitudes can be, which goes to the heart of the issue.

We come back to what Brian Henderson said about the lack of understanding of why the issues are important. The attitudes study found that people do not understand that some forms of discrimination are harmful. Stakeholders made suggestions about how to develop understanding and knowledge through education. We must acknowledge the danger of reinforcing stereotypes.

Carolyn Leckie: On gender equality, you quote a study from the European Commission in 1996, which concluded:

"European public opinion is ... strongly in favour of equal opportunities for women and men".

However, a 2003 study noted that

"on a social level, most people did not see sex inequality as a particular priority".

Does the contrast between the two conclusions reflect a gap between theory and practice, or is the issue the wider consciousness and understanding of the issues in society?

Brian Henderson: I do not think that it reflects a gap between theory and practice; it reflects a lack of recognition of the issues. During the past few years a range of research has examined matters

such as gender pay gaps and has identified a lack of recognition of gender inequality. I suppose that people might think that the issue has been sorted but, as you said, the reality does not bear that out.

12:15

Sheila Reid: As I said in response to the question about the rise in racism, studies use different terminology and methodologies. The findings of a study might suggest that there has been a change in attitude or contradict the findings of another study, but that might be to do with the nature of the questions that people were asked. If studies do not ask the same question, it is difficult to discuss the differences in their findings. However, issues emerged that are having an impact.

Carolyn Leckie: Do we need to reconsider the definitions that we use, in particular in relation to gender inequality? When I read what your study said about violence against women, I was interested to know what definition you used, because you did not mention prostitution and pornography and the proliferation of violence against women in our culture. There is currently an extremely low level of consciousness of such matters. I will not go into the abortion rights debate, but recently I participated in a university debate and I was horrified when students laughed at my assertion that women are oppressed in our society. That assertion would have been accepted as fact 20 or 30 years ago. The students' attitudes reflect your findings on the situation for women.

How can we redefine gender inequality and change the language that we use about the situation of women in society, to enable us to increase awareness and tackle gender inequality? What did stakeholders think about that? People understand economic inequalities and know that it is not good that women's wages are 80 per cent of men's wages—even though the Government is not doing anything about that. However, given the wider impact on women of changes in culture and the pressures that women are under, we urgently need to find the language and definitions that will enable us to start to tackle gender inequality.

Sheila Reid: We could speculate on the issues that you mention. The research evidence identifies a need for clarity in the terms that we use, to ensure that issues can be explained to people clearly and meaningfully. There is a wider point about the need to get underneath broad issues such as violence against women, and to talk about specific aspects and impacts of those issues in a way that people can understand.

As you said, we do not mention a range of issues in the report. At the start of the report we said that each issue merited an entire report of its

own. We have not tried to gloss over such matters, which are important, but we wanted to give a broad feel for the issues.

Stakeholders repeatedly stressed the need to have the data to support assertions, so that when we make an assertion we can support it with evidence.

The Convener: Carolyn Leckie is right. Perhaps we need to get underneath some of the issues as part of the equalities review.

John Swinburne: Both reports highlight the central role of the media in relation to prejudice and discrimination and the urgent need to tackle them. Page 44 of the public attitudes report states:

"The Citizens' Forum participants identified the need to challenge negative accounts in the media, as well as to promote more positive images of a diverse society."

Did you come across any examples of good practice in your research on tackling the media, including in the gutter press?

Brian Henderson: We did not go looking for good examples, because we were not asked to do so. Had we been asked to consider the impact of the media, I dare say that we would have found good and bad examples.

The answer lies in the question of what can be done to address those issues. It is about challenging stereotypes, promoting positive images—of which there are many examples in the press and publications by public agencies—and the need for clear and accurate reporting.

We discovered that stakeholders recognised the need to work with the media to promote positive images and good news stories. However, we did not go looking for good examples. That is not to say that there are none; we were simply not asked to do that.

Sheila Reid: We are talking about organisations that deal with such issues. I suspect that their views are based on their experiences of what has worked well and what constitutes good practice. Although we did not ask them to say, "We worked with X newspaper or X medium and this worked very well", we asked them what worked, based on their experience, and based our report on that.

John Swinburne: Do you agree that good news does not sell newspapers? Society wants to read all the grot that papers can print without being dragged before the courts.

Sheila Reid: I will not comment on that. The stakeholders recognised the importance of presenting a positive view of equalities work in the media, but felt that the emphasis was not always on positive developments and views.

The Convener: I thank the witnesses for the excellent report, which is a good starting point for us, and for their evidence. Are members content to publish the research on the committee's web page?

Members *indicated agreement.*

John Swinburne: Although I do not agree with it, we can publish it.

Items in Private

Meeting closed at 12:23.

12:22

The Convener: Our final agenda item is to decide whether to consider future items on the budget process 2007-08 in private. Do members agree?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Tuesday 14 November 2006

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

Single copies: £5.00

Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Standing orders will be accepted at Document Supply.

Published in Edinburgh by Astron and available from:

Blackwell's Bookshop

**53 South Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1YS
0131 622 8222**

Blackwell's Bookshops:
243-244 High Holborn
London WC1 7DZ
Tel 020 7831 9501

All trade orders for Scottish Parliament documents should be placed through Blackwell's Edinburgh.

Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation
Helpline may be able to assist with additional information on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament, their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries
0131 622 8283 or
0131 622 8258

Fax orders
0131 557 8149

E-mail orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Subscriptions & Standing Orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Scottish Parliament

RNID Typetalk calls welcome on
18001 0131 348 5000
Textphone 0845 270 0152

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

Accredited Agents
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers