

HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 19 September 2007

Session 3

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HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

4th Meeting 2007, Session 3

CONVENER

*Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)

*Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)

*Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)

*Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP)

*Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP)

*Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

*Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab)

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP)

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

*Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Stewart Maxwell (Minister for Communities and Sport)

Steve Paulding (Scottish Government Public Health and Wellbeing Directorate)

CLERKS TO THE COMMITTEE

Karen O'Hanlon

Simon Watkins

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Douglas Thornton

ASSISTANT CLERK

David Simpson

LOCATION

Committee Room 5

Scottish Parliament

Health and Sport Committee

Wednesday 19 September 2007

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:45*]

Interests

The Convener (Christine Grahame): Good morning and welcome to the fourth meeting in session 3 of the Health and Sport Committee. I welcome Stewart Maxwell, the Minister for Communities and Sport, and his officials, Ian Campbell and Steve Paulding. We have received apologies from Ross Finnie, and we are joined by Jamie Stone as the Liberal Democrat substitute. Do you have any interests to declare?

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I formally declare my interests as recorded in the register of members' interests.

The Convener: I welcome Helen Eadie, who was at our meeting last week but who, this week, by some miracle of deception, is substituting for Malcolm Chisholm. She is a very talented lady.

Decision on Taking Business in Private

10:46

The Convener: Do committee members agree to take item 6, which is our discussion of the committee's work programme, in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I also ask members to agree that we will have a substantive discussion on the work programme in private next week, as is customary. Are we agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Sports Policy

10:47

The Convener: Minister, having welcomed you, I invite you to speak for approximately three to four minutes on the Government's sports policy.

The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell): I will try to get through my opening remarks as quickly as possible, convener. I am grateful to the committee for giving me the opportunity to outline my priorities for the development and delivery of sport in Scotland. The Government's manifesto commitments on sport identified several areas that are key to the development of sport at local and national level. The sport strategy "Reaching Higher" clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of all who are involved in the development and delivery of sport at all levels. I am committed to achieving its two outcomes of improving performance and increasing participation. I am also keen to work with local authorities and sports governing bodies to build a fresh approach to securing those national outcomes.

Sport makes a significant contribution across society and, without doubt, contributes to our objective of making Scotland a nation that is wealthier, fairer, healthier, smarter, safer, stronger and greener. That contribution should be mirrored at the local level, the potential of sport being fully recognised in community plans. I am working with ministerial colleagues on areas in which we can mutually benefit from a collaborative approach. For example, I am working with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice on diversionary programmes. I will continue to do that and will encourage local authorities to do likewise through the community planning process.

We need a much wider playing base if we are to increase Scottish representation on the international stage, and that starts in local communities. The active schools programme has clearly demonstrated that young people can be encouraged to engage in a range of sports and that their interest and commitment can be developed. I want to build on that and will look to improve the delivery of that programme in secondary schools. I will also look to improve the links between schools and local sports clubs. I will encourage efforts to support clubs in taking innovative and, if necessary, non-traditional approaches to increasing participation. Clubs also need to be encouraged to be flexible in allowing the use of their facilities and in working with others to provide multi-sport opportunities.

The additional funding that may be made available for sport will be considered in the

spending review process, which is currently under way. Local authorities already receive significant funding for sport, and it is rightly for them to determine how that funding is committed—although there are significant variations in local authorities' investment in sport throughout the country and I expect them to address that.

The other major goal of "Reaching Higher", alongside increasing participation, is to improve sporting performance and ensure that our elite athletes have opportunities to represent their country at the highest level and perform at their best.

One of the Scottish Government's first-100-day commitments was to convene a meeting with stakeholders in Scottish sport to discuss Scotland's representation on the international sporting stage and to consider the feasibility of a Scottish Olympic team. The performance summit that was held on 23 August was a tremendous success as I met so many representatives of organisations and governing bodies and heard at first hand their issues and concerns about the development and performance of our athletes and sport in Scotland.

The general consensus of the summit was that one size does not fit all and we agreed that a sport-specific approach needs to be developed in relation to performance development and delivery. It was also agreed that a Scottish Olympic team would be a natural consequence of Scotland becoming a fully independent country, but I pointed out the challenges that we face in achieving separate Olympic representation while we are still part of the United Kingdom. Competing independently on the international sporting stage is an aspiration of many; it would bring challenges and create many additional potential opportunities and benefits for Scottish sport.

A summary document of the discussions held with stakeholders will be published shortly and I will continue to work closely with stakeholders and officials to address the issues that were raised. I will also ensure that the committee receives a copy of that document.

This is an exciting time for elite sport. Fort William has just hosted the world mountain bike championships and there have been outstanding Scottish performances. The 2014 Ryder cup is at Gleneagles and we hope to win the 2014 Commonwealth games for Glasgow. Scotland's superb win against France last week and the excitement that it generated demonstrates one of the reasons why I want to look at the feasibility of hosting Euro 2016. We also want to investigate the possibility of hosting the 2015 rugby world cup. The First Minister has given his support to the Scottish Football Association in its bid to host the European champions league final at Hampden in

2011. However, it is crucial that we ensure that such events leave a legacy of increasing participation in sport and that they impact on the health and the pride of the nation.

The Scottish Government's vision for sport is that every citizen should be physically active and able to enjoy first-class facilities to achieve their potential. I am therefore disappointed in the lack of progress in some of the national and regional sports facilities projects. There is no denying that the provision of community facilities is a major challenge. We also need to make greater use of the school estate and I will explore that with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to find out how we can maximise the available facilities. I will also consider how best to maximise funding for facilities through the establishment of a sports facilities fund as outlined in our manifesto.

As the committee is aware, the Scottish Government is committed to reducing the number of public bodies to ensure a more effective public sector structure, with a decluttered organisational landscape. It is within that context that I am carrying out a review of sportscotland. I have written to the committee about the review process and provided it with the terms of reference. I would be happy for the committee to feed in any views on the process. However, I want to assure all here today that the needs of sport will be central to the review process and the final decisions on the future of sportscotland.

Convener, I thank you for the opportunity to outline some of the Scottish Government's priorities.

The Convener: Thank you, minister.

It is rather unusual, but appropriate, for Karen Gillon to say a few words about Colin McRae, who lived in her constituency.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): As this is the first meeting of the Parliament's Health and Sport Committee since his death, it is appropriate for us to pay tribute to my constituent, Colin McRae, who was without doubt one of Scotland's paramount sporting icons, having achieved the status of world rally champion in 1995. His death has shocked people in Clydesdale and throughout Scotland and the world. It is a terrible tragedy, particularly because the accident also claimed the lives of his son, his son's friend, and a friend of the family. I am sure that the convener and the minister will want to join me in sending condolences to those families who have been affected, and in paying tribute to the sporting success of Colin McRae.

The Convener: Thank you, Karen. I am sure that the committee and the minister share those thoughts. With the committee's leave, I will send our condolences to the McRae family and to the

families of the others who were killed in the tragedy.

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: We will move on from that sombre moment to questions for the minister.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): Thank you for your statement, minister. My question is on the effect of the London Olympics on sport in Scotland. I am also interested in the effect on the arts and film, but that is not in your remit. I gather that sportscotland's contribution to the Olympic fund between 2008 and 2012-13 will be almost £15 million. Are the benefits to Scotland from the London Olympics worth that loss in income to Scottish sport? What measures, if any, are you contemplating to make good the shortfall?

Stewart Maxwell: Thank you for your question, but I am not sure that I recognise the figure of £15 million; the figures that I have are much worse than that. We estimate that Scotland will lose approximately £150 million over four years across all lottery-funded activities. It is estimated that sport will lose about £13 million over four years—maybe that is the figure that you were referring to—but it is clear that the impact will be much broader and not just on sport.

It will come as no surprise to committee members—I have made it clear in the past, as have other members of the Government—that we are concerned about the loss of lottery funding not only to community, grass-roots sport in Scotland but to the good causes in Scotland that lottery funding currently supports. I think—and I also speak on behalf of colleagues—that it is inappropriate for lottery funding to be siphoned off from Scotland to fund a major capital investment project in the south-east of England.

The benefits of the London 2012 games to Scotland are unclear. At best, they will be limited. Some research has been done and it shows that there will be massive benefits to the south-east of England and London, some benefits to the midlands and areas further out towards the south-west, and little benefit to western parts of Wales, the south-west and north of England, and Scotland.

There is a possibility of one or two football games being held at Hampden, a possibility that some businesses might get some work, and a possibility that we might secure a training camp or two. We will do everything in our power to ensure that Scottish businesses get the opportunity to bid for that work and that those who bid to host the training camps also get the backing of the Scottish Government so that we maximise the return to Scotland of the London 2012 games. However, if you are asking whether the impact on the good

causes and Scottish sport is worth it, I do not think that it is.

I wish the London 2012 games well. They will be great for London, and London will do a marvellous job, but the loss to Scottish good causes and Scottish sport is serious.

The Convener: I have a long list of members who want to ask questions, but I want to check whether their questions are on the London 2012 Olympics. Jamie, is your question on that?

Jamie Stone: Yes.

The Convener: Karen?

Karen Gillon: No.

The Convener: Lewis?

Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab): Not directly, no.

The Convener: Michael?

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): Yes.

The Convener: Helen?

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): No.

The Convener: Mary?

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Yes.

The Convener: We will have questions from Jamie Stone, Michael Matheson and Mary Scanlon, then I will come back to the other members.

Jamie Stone: I take it that you are aware of the correspondence between Nicol Stephen and James Purnell, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

Stewart Maxwell: I have not seen it, obviously, but I am aware of it.

Jamie Stone: In it, Mr Purnell confirms in writing that the top-up money that will be needed is £675 million. That is more than £1 million per constituency in the UK. For my part of the world—Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross—that is a big hit and a big amount to lose.

I agree with what you said. My party believes that it would be appropriate for the Health and Sport Committee to ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to come to Scotland to explain what is going on. Have you made representations to your UK counterpart? If not, will you have such a meeting in the future?

11:00

The Convener: I have passed a copy of the letters to the minister so that he can have sight of them.

Jamie Stone: As a small second question, will your officials carry out an audit of present sporting facilities constituency by constituency? We know that some constituencies are better off than others.

Stewart Maxwell: Thank you for the copy of the letters, convener.

I know that ministers in the previous Administration wrote to the UK Government on the issue. Since the election, the cabinet secretary has written to express concern about the potential loss of considerable amounts of money. It is serious because, as you point out, the amount is £1 million per constituency—a vast sum of money. So, yes, there has been contact and correspondence. I am happy to carry on raising the Parliament's concerns with UK ministers, and I intend to do so at the first opportunity that I get to meet my UK counterpart.

On the second question, I can say that there have already been several audits of sports facilities. I believe that one is currently being conducted.

Steve Paulding (Scottish Government Public Health and Wellbeing Directorate): There is currently a review, and a database of sports facilities is being created at sportscotland.

Stewart Maxwell: The review will establish a database of the facilities that we have and their state of repair or otherwise. It will allow us to prioritise effectively where we need to make the effort on local community sports facilities. I await that audit's outcome.

Jamie Stone: I am here only for one day, but I hope that the committee will invite the UK minister to come before it to explain what is going on. We owe that to our constituents.

The Convener: I will be guided by the committee when we discuss our work programme. Mary, can you ask about the Olympic part only?

Mary Scanlon: The bid for the Commonwealth games in Glasgow projected costs of £298 million—£240 million from the Scottish budget and £60 million from Glasgow council tax payers. You said that the diversion from sport in Scotland is £163 million. I also understand that the previous Government had not intended to apply for lottery funding for the Commonwealth games. We are now in a different era with a different Government. Given that we are losing £163 million, will you apply for lottery funding to bring money back into Scotland to support the Commonwealth games, should we be successful, and to alleviate the financial pressures on Scottish taxpayers and Glasgow council tax payers?

Stewart Maxwell: You raise an important point. The previous Administration put in a bid for the

Commonwealth games that said that we would not use lottery money or establish a lottery to fund the games. I cannot comment on how those decisions were reached as I am not privy to the previous Administration's papers and correspondence, but I am certainly willing to consider your point about whether there should be lottery funding and to see whether it is possible. I suspect that it is not, because the bid is closed and we have no room for manoeuvre, but I am willing to examine the point and write to you about it.

The other problem that we face is that lottery funding is reserved to the UK Government. We have no control over it, so we cannot say that we will divert money in the way that the UK Government has. I would be happy if Mary Scanlon was willing to support our position on the establishment of powers over such matters—that would be nice to see.

Jamie Stone: Be careful, Mary.

Stewart Maxwell: The current situation is that the matter is one for the UK Government. We cannot rule on the distribution of lottery funding for a Glasgow Commonwealth games. However, I will speak to officials about whether we can ascertain from the UK Government or the national lottery what we can do. I suspect, though, that the position is a bit tied down, given where we are in the bid process.

Mary Scanlon: I am sorry, but it seems odd to me that we are complaining about a loss of £163 million of lottery money, but ruling out bringing in further lottery funding to Scotland. I do not know whether that was ruled out by the Liberal-Labour coalition or by the SNP.

I accept what you say, and I would be grateful if you would look at the situation again. Perhaps you can notify the committee when the lottery bids closed. Does the position of our Commonwealth games bid rule out our making an application for lottery funding to assist with the games?

The Convener: Before the minister answers, Karen Gillon also has a question on that line.

Karen Gillon: I do not share your pessimism about the impact that the London Olympics will have on Scottish sport, on participation in sport in Scotland or, indeed, on Glasgow's Commonwealth games bid. The line that you should pursue on lottery funding is to bid for funding for 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. All international and UK evidence shows that a major sporting event and major sporting success brings benefits and additional participation in sport. We should seek money from the lottery to ensure that our clubs, local authorities and volunteers are ready to accept the people who will come into Scottish sport after our athletes are successful in the London Olympics and the Glasgow

Commonwealth games—I am sure that we will be successful in our bid for the Commonwealth games.

Will there be discussions on that basis with the lottery fund to ensure that we get lottery funding between the end of the Olympic games and the end of the Commonwealth games, and that we take on board and gain from the successful outcome that those events will have for Scottish sport and for Scottish health and well-being in the years to come?

The Convener: Michael Matheson also has a question on this line.

Michael Matheson: We are in danger of becoming confused about the lottery funding issue. From what the minister said earlier, my understanding is that some moneys from sportscotland's lottery funding allocation are going towards funding the national and regional sports facilities strategy. The rest of the lottery money is allocated to the community sports clubs and so on who put in bids for it. I understand that the lottery funding is about £40 million. Is there any scope for increasing the amount of lottery money that comes into Scotland specifically for sport between now and when the London Olympics or the Commonwealth games take place? For Karen Gillon's suggestion to be valid, there would have to be such scope.

Stewart Maxwell: I have a good deal of sympathy for Michael Matheson's and Karen Gillon's points. I have signed up to the agenda of maximising the legacy for sport in Scotland from the London Olympics and the Commonwealth games. How we do that is part of the debate that we must have. It goes without saying that I want to maximise the amount of lottery funding that is available to sport. However, we face the difficulty that, irrespective of the effect of the London Olympics, lottery funding has declined. The amount of lottery money available to sportscotland has gone down over the past few years, which creates difficulties for the future.

On the wider question of participation in sport, we want to maximise the impact that the two games, and other events, will have on our young people. We want such events to impact on their vision for themselves not only as participants in sport, but more broadly as people who undertake general physical activity.

The Government intends to introduce a strategy for community facilities. Members will be aware of our manifesto commitment to establish a sports facilities fund. That is one reason why I am doing cross-portfolio work with other ministers. I want to ensure that they are aware that investment in sport from their portfolios' budgets—if at all possible—would help them to achieve their goals.

An obvious example of that would be diversionary activities in the justice portfolio. We are in discussion about how we can maximise the leverage of money from other areas into grass-roots sport.

We also want to ascertain what other parties, such as private individuals and organisations, are willing to do to invest in grass-roots sport. In recent weeks it has been suggested that investors who talk about sport in Scotland should put their money where their mouth is. There is an opportunity for me and others to discuss with entrepreneurs in Scotland what they can do to help grass-roots sport. We can discuss what role entrepreneurs and large businesses envisage for themselves in helping to build the legacy, perhaps through matched funding arrangements with the Government or investment in other projects, for example to upgrade facilities. Members of the committee know as well as I do that an audit that took place—two years ago, I think—showed a massive deficit in the money needed to upgrade facilities throughout the country to an acceptable standard.

There is much work to be done and we are considering the situation as part of the spending review. I want to maximise the money that we get from the lottery—and other sources, because we should not think that the lottery is the only source of funding for sport. I am sure that we all agree that we want to maximise the legacy benefits of major sporting events in our country.

The Convener: Thank you. It would be useful for the committee if you could write to us to advise us of the steps that the Government is taking to maximise funding from the lottery and other sources in the light of the current squeeze on funding. Sometimes a series of questions and answers does not generate clarity, so a pause in which we seek clarity would be useful.

Stewart Maxwell: Thinking on how we maximise income is in its early days, but I will be more than happy to update the committee as soon as we have concrete information.

The Convener: I understand that the process is on-going, but it would be useful to know the current situation and even what steps the previous Administration took, given that we are awash with news about the impact on sports facilities.

We will now move on to questions on general issues.

Karen Gillon: You said that you are reviewing sportscotland. The Scottish National Party manifesto contained a commitment to abolish the agency. How will the abolition of sportscotland benefit sport?

Stewart Maxwell: I have written to the committee about the remit of the review. Throughout the Government a central issue is the reduction of the number of public bodies. The public sector landscape is complex and convoluted. Many—if not all—people who work in sport would say that the number of bodies involved in sports development in Scotland makes for a complicated landscape.

We are reviewing the situation because we want to ensure that when we invest in sport the system is fit for purpose and can maximise the return on our money. We want a simplified structure that allows us to invest directly in sport and ensure that there is a clear pathway for organisations and individual athletes, so that they get the maximum return for the public money that we invest, and so that the Government has a clear handle on its responsibilities in relation to sport.

We were not convinced that those objectives were being met in the current structure, in which sportscotland is an arm's-length body. I remember questioning previous ministers about who had responsibility for sport and concluding that the situation was unclear. It seemed that, often, a minister would pass an issue to sportscotland, but the agency would pass it back to the minister. There seemed to be a bit of a gap in responsibility and it was not clear who was driving overall strategy and policy for sport in Scotland. I want to ensure that we drive policy. More direct contact between ministers and people involved in sport would enhance the ability of sport to deliver for our country.

11:15

Karen Gillon: You suggest that you want to bring in a more simplified structure than the one-stop shop that we have in sportscotland. If we abolish sportscotland, who will co-ordinate all the work that is going on in Scottish sport? Who will co-ordinate the pathway that you mentioned from beginners to Olympians, taking account of the active schools programme, clubs, facilities at national, regional and local levels, coaching, volunteers, governing bodies, support, the institute network, lottery funding and specialist activities? Most important, who will be the independent voice of sport for sport's sake if your agenda is for the ministers to have greater control of it?

Stewart Maxwell: I am not talking about the minutiae of day-to-day direction or the micromanaging of sport.

Karen Gillon: Who will do that?

Stewart Maxwell: I am talking about directing the sports policy and strategy so that we are all heading in the same direction. That is the purpose of the review that Francesca Osowska, the head

of the sports division, is leading. With other officials, she has spoken to a number of bodies, including sportscotland, the Scottish Institute of Sport, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and VOCAL—the Voice of Culture and Leisure—to get their impressions and opinions about how to take the policy forward.

As you will be aware, that review was delayed. There should have been a review of sportscotland a year or more ago. I have now implemented that review to ensure that we have a body or structure that is absolutely fit for purpose. It is entirely appropriate for a new Government to conduct such a review. I will not pre-empt its outcomes because the work is being done at the moment but, when I get the report, I will be more than happy to come and discuss it with the committee.

Karen Gillon: Very briefly—

The Convener: Bear with me, Karen. I will let you back in, but I want to let other members get a bite at this cherry as well.

Helen Eadie: Minister, your answers have not convinced me about the efficacy of your proposals. You say that you will eradicate sportscotland, but your manifesto says that you will establish

“3 national centres currently run by sportscotland as not-for-profit trusts.”

That does not tie in with what you said about decluttering the landscape. You said that you want to minimise the number of public bodies—how does that tie in with setting up three national centres?

Stewart Maxwell: We are not setting up three national centres, because there are three national centres already. The centres exist; the commitment is simply about their status. I am not sure what point you are trying to make.

For clarification, our manifesto did not say that we would eradicate anything.

Helen Eadie: Well, you are going to abolish sportscotland. “Eradicate” means the same at the end of the day.

Stewart Maxwell: I dispute that. There is an emotive difference between the words “eradicate” and “abolish”.

Helen Eadie: The people at the end of the queue are wiped out.

Stewart Maxwell: We have made our position clear. We made it clear in the manifesto, we took it to the country and we are now in the process of implementing it. We have instigated a review, which will consult all the stakeholders who have a role to play in the future of sport in Scotland and in sportscotland's role. That review will take our and

others' views into account and, when it is complete, I will be more than happy to discuss its outcome with the committee.

I will not prejudge the review. Our view is clear. You may disagree with it, but we are pretty clear that we want a less cluttered landscape in sport, as well as in other areas, and that we should maximise the effort that goes into the delivery of sport rather than into the structures.

Helen Eadie: On decluttering the landscape of sports governing bodies and the abolition of sportscotland, how will that work if the governing bodies, local authorities and clubs rely on several sources of funding including lottery distribution, the minister's department and the Scottish Institute of Sport? How will abolishing sportscotland reduce the myriad of sports organisations? As Karen Gillon pointed out, how will activity be co-ordinated? That simply is not good enough.

One thing that politicians in this place have learned is that there is real value in ensuring that specialist areas have an independent voice. Rather than simply controlling everything, ministers should set out the policy framework and strategy. Why will you silence a voice for independence in Scotland on sport?

Stewart Maxwell: I promise you that the last thing I will do is silence the voice of independence for Scotland—

Helen Eadie: On sport.

Stewart Maxwell: —on sport, or on anything else for that matter. The review is on-going and we will bring it to the committee when it is complete. I am hopeful that we will complete the review before the end of this year.

Clearly, you have a view about the structure of sportscotland and others have different views about the future of sportscotland. It is entirely reasonable for us to conduct the review and for the committee then to comment on it. As I said, I am happy to come back to the committee to discuss the detail of our proposals. However, I will not prejudge the outcome of the review or the outcome of the committee's response to our proposals. I think that there is a better way of doing things and I do not think that things are perfect at the moment. That is why we are carrying out a review. I genuinely think that we will be able to deliver a better structure for sport in Scotland than that which is in place.

The Convener: Given that the minister has said that he is carrying out a review and that he is prepared to come back with proposals at the end of December, I propose to allow only a question from Mary Scanlon and a short question from Karen Gillon before we conclude this discussion. With the leave of the committee, in light of that

undertaking from the minister, we will have only these last two questions. Is that agreed?

I will take silence to mean agreement.

Mary Scanlon: I welcome the review. Looking at how a body could do things better is always a healthy approach. However, although the minister claimed that he will not prejudge the review's outcome, the decision on abolishing sportscotland was included in his manifesto. If that is not prejudging the outcome, I do not know what is.

I have two short questions. First, the minister mentioned in his introduction that local authorities receive significant levels of funding for sport. I understand that not all the money that is allocated to local authorities finds its way to the grass roots or to the chalk face of sport. Will consideration be given to ring fencing the money that is given to local authorities for sport?

Secondly, I understand that it is proposed that the Scottish Institute of Sport will run performance sports. How will breaking up that pathway help Scottish sport, given that different organisations will work in their own silos instead of being co-ordinated under the auspices of sportscotland?

The Convener: I thought that your questions were on sportscotland.

Mary Scanlon: Both questions are on sportscotland.

The Convener: Okay. I ask Karen Gillon to put her question as well.

Karen Gillon: Mary Scanlon makes a valuable point. The minister said that he has made his position clear and that he has instigated a review. Like Mary Scanlon, I have no difficulty with having a review. Indeed, there is an interesting article on the subject in today's edition of *The Herald*. I understand that the responsibility of civil servants is to implement Government policy. How can civil servants who are implementing Government policy carry out an independent review of an organisation that the Government has said it wishes to abolish? For me, that is not an independent review. Holding a review is fine, but its end currently seems to be predetermined by Government policy. How will the minister ensure an element of independence in the review process? Will he undertake to ensure that his officials come to the committee to discuss with the committee their views on the future of sportscotland?

In relation to our inquiry on pathways, how will the pathway from beginner to Olympian be enhanced by abolishing the only sporting body in Scotland that co-ordinates sporting activity and which is the only independent voice of sport?

Stewart Maxwell: It is clear that we are not going to agree on future structures. That comes as

no surprise to either of us. However, it does not follow that the establishment of a new structure will break down pathways for athletes and create a situation in which everyone works in silos and there is a lack of co-ordination. I disagree with you and Mary Scanlon on that and I do not see how you make that leap. I would not support changes if I thought for a moment that by making them we would end up in such a situation. That would make no sense. The premise of your question is false: we do not intend to create silos and break down co-ordination.

It is not for civil servants to come to the Health and Sport Committee and express their view on the review process. As you said, civil servants are impartial in their work to implement policy, so it would be inappropriate for them to express a view to the committee.

The purpose of the review is to consider the current structure and to ask all stakeholders for their views on what is right and wrong with the current arrangements, what the difficulties are and whether the current structure is delivering. It is right and appropriate that individuals and organisations should have an opportunity to feed back their views before a final decision is taken. That is what is happening and there is nothing wrong with such an approach. We made our view clear, but it would be a mistake not to pause and seek stakeholders' views.

I agree with Mary Scanlon that there is wide variation in spend between authorities across the country. Spend ranges from about £36 per head to about £136 per head. It is clear that some local authorities are more committed than others are to investing in local sport, so we need to work with them on that. However, ring fencing is not the right approach. We are trying to move away from ring fencing, to give local authorities enough flexibility to implement the policies that they are elected to implement and to take forward Government policy in the areas for which they are responsible.

The way forward is to ensure that we have detailed, tight outcome agreements with local authorities. We will give authorities the funding and the flexibility to achieve the outcomes locally. There must be clear outcome agreements that set out the endgame on investment in sport and help for grass-roots sport in each area.

The Convener: I overlooked Michael Matheson, who is sitting on my blind side.

Michael Matheson: Perhaps I should move.

I seek clarity from the minister on the status of sportscotland. Several members have referred to sportscotland as an independent sports organisation. It is nothing of the sort; it is a non-departmental public body that takes forward Government policy on sports matters. If

sportscotland was abolished, the independent voice of Scottish sport would not be affected, because the Scottish Sports Association, which is the lead agency for governing bodies in sport, would continue. The idea that an independent voice in Scottish sport would be lost is nonsense.

Stewart Maxwell: You are right to clarify the status of sportscotland, which is a non-departmental public body—

Karen Gillon: He is wrong—

The Convener: Can comments off please cease, so that we can hear from the minister?

11:30

Stewart Maxwell: Michael Matheson is also right to say that sportscotland takes forward policy. That is one of its roles. It is clear that governing bodies have an independent voice through the SSA. Some members are not clear about the role of sportscotland and its position in the Government structure.

In addition, we must not make the mistake of confusing sportscotland's overarching structures with the valuable work of the staff. They do tremendous work to make progress on sport in Scotland, and I value that work. It is the overarching structures that are in question. They are a different matter from the valuable work that is going on, which must be maintained, improved and made more efficient in any new structure that is introduced.

The Convener: I call Lewis Macdonald, who has been terribly patient. I applaud him for that. Does Jamie Stone want to ask a question after that?

Jamie Stone: Yes, but it is not on sportscotland.

The Convener: That is fine. We are moving away from that topic.

Lewis Macdonald: I return to the minister's comments not on lottery funding but on other matters that relate to the Olympic games and the Commonwealth games. I am disappointed that you endorsed the view that Scotland will gain little benefit from the London 2012 Olympic games. You suggested that the greater the distance from London, the less the benefit will be. Clearly, the Scottish Government will want to do something to mitigate that effect.

I was more encouraged by your positive comments on the legacy of the games. In particular, I note that you said that the Scottish Government will back bids for training camps for the London 2012 games. However, I want to focus your attention on the hard work that has been done in the past two or three years on the possibility of having an Olympic-sized swimming

pool in Aberdeen. Such a pool could be both an immediate benefit and a legacy from the London Olympics and the Commonwealth games, which we hope will be held in Glasgow.

You would not want the Scottish Government to stand accused of failing to mitigate the effect of distance in relation to the Commonwealth games. Where do things stand with the proposed pool in Aberdeen? Ministers in the previous Administration worked with local partners on the proposal, but I am not aware of any developments since the election. Will you bring us up to date?

Stewart Maxwell: I believe that there is a possibility that Scotland will gain some benefits. I do not say that there is no possibility of that. The point that I was trying to make is that the task is a hard one. Distance is a difficulty—I am sure that you agree with that.

I will update you on the specific issue of a 50m pool in Aberdeen. In case you are unaware, I was in Aberdeen during the summer recess and I met the leader and deputy leader of the council and their officials to discuss the matter. We made it clear that, in principle, a 50m pool could make a significant contribution to training facilities in the north of Scotland. There is no argument about the principle that such a facility would bring benefits. I am sure that that was also the case in the previous Administration.

The difficulty that the previous Administration faced, and which we face, is how to develop the project and how it can be cost effective. The current proposal is ambitious. I am concerned that, if we get stuck in the rut of having only one option and a particular model for a 50m pool in Aberdeen, we will not achieve it. I am concerned about that because I want the project to happen. It is for Aberdeen City Council and the other stakeholders in Aberdeen to reach a view on what is feasible from their point of view rather than sticking to the single proposal that we have had thus far, which is large, complicated and expensive.

Previous ministers took the view that it was difficult to envisage the Government having sufficient funds to bridge the gap between what is available and what would be needed to bring the project to fruition in its current form. Therefore, as I said to members who were at the meeting, I want to ensure that the stakeholders bring forward a proposal that we can work together to achieve rather than having a proposal that, to be frank, it is difficult to see how we will ever be able to fund.

Lewis Macdonald: Your visit and those discussions were some weeks ago. Have you had a response yet from local partners to suggest that they may come forward with an alternative proposal?

Stewart Maxwell: I am not aware of any further response.

Lewis Macdonald: You will be aware that John Swinney also visited Aberdeen in August. He was asked whether what was required was a full-blown facility of the kind that you have described or a training-pool approach. He said that that was a decision for you. What is your view? What responsibility do you take for making the project progress?

Stewart Maxwell: That was very kind of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth. Clearly, there is a big gap between a tank and Aberdeen City Council's ambitious proposal. It is my job to encourage the council and its partners to develop a proposal that is somewhere in the middle—cost effective and realistic in terms of the funding required to achieve it. We can then examine in some detail how to take the project forward.

The problem is that there seems to have been a ping-pong battle. There is an ambitious project, and if we say that we cannot really afford it or it is not realistic, we are told, "You just want a training tank." Previous ministers faced exactly the same retorts, but there is a halfway house, and that is where the debate has to be taken forward.

Lewis Macdonald: I appreciate the need to be realistic about the project that will succeed. However, do you recognise that, if the pool is to be part of the benefit from London 2012, decisions need to be taken quickly? If you do, will you go back to local partners with some urgency, take the initiative on behalf of the Scottish Government and press them to reach an agreement on what can be delivered in time to secure that legacy benefit?

Stewart Maxwell: I agree that the sooner we reach a resolution the better. I am not trying to sound passive, but the partners in Aberdeen must make a realistic proposal. They know our view, and they knew the view of the previous Administration. Thus far, they have stuck to their guns on the proposal. Let me say now, for the benefit of Aberdeen City Council and others, that it would assist not only the council and its partners but all of the people of Aberdeen if it made a much more realistic proposal to us. I am more than happy to engage on a realistic proposal, but at the moment we do not have one in front of us. It is not for me to sit down and draw up a proposal; it is for the partners to bring one forward.

Lewis Macdonald: I understand that, but do you accept that you or sportscotland might have an active role to play in advising and pointing local partners in the direction of a proposal that would attract Government and sportscotland support?

Stewart Maxwell: I would be happy to discuss that.

The Convener: Lewis Macdonald got a good stab at that, but he deserved it for having waited so long.

Jamie Stone: I want to make a couple of general points. Let me take the minister back some years to the 1990s, when local government in Scotland was reformed. First, in the Highlands, the councils were aggregated—a number of district councils came together to form Highland Council. Inverness District Council and one or two other authorities put ambitious sports spending plans in place before they disappeared, leaving the successor authority to pick up the bill. Caithness District Council, for example, was caught out as it did not do that.

Secondly, general services capital was rather more generous in those days than it is today. Councils now simply do not have the same ability to build. Given what you have said about the audit of community facilities, I suspect that you have a problem. There are gaps—we know the historical reasons why they exist—but the way forward is not obvious as the capital is not available. If you do not have an answer to how that problem can be tackled, I would welcome an undertaking to consider it.

Stewart Maxwell: This goes back to the fact that we have to wait for the outcome of the spending review to see exactly how much money we have to invest in sport. Beyond that, I emphasise that I am working with other ministers to see what they can bring to the table for investment in sport. I think that it will be possible to lever in additional finances for community facilities. Those cross-portfolio discussions are at an early stage, but I am keen that we relatively speedily get to a point at which we can announce additional funding for community facilities. That desire is set against the context of the spending review but, over and above that, I hope that other ministers will see the benefit of investing in sport for the outcomes that they want to achieve in their areas of responsibility.

We intend to produce a strategy on community facilities and I intend to try to maximise the amount of money that is available through the spending review. However, in addition, I want money from across the Scottish budget to be brought in to help with community facilities. I would be happy to share the negotiations with the committee as soon as they make progress.

The Convener: In areas that I represent, a lot of community facilities are being lost. Will the additional funding for community sport facilities be ring fenced?

Stewart Maxwell: In what way do you mean ring fenced?

The Convener: Will it be an allocation to local authorities?

Stewart Maxwell: No. We have not yet reached the stage of determining how that funding will be distributed. At this early stage, I say that the money will be spent on community facilities. It will not go into some general pot and be lost; it will be directed at specific projects to ensure that they happen.

The Convener: If that is the case, I am pleased. I think that members round the table have experience of lots of local community facilities being sold off, which flies in the face of the policies that you have been expounding today.

Ian McKee: The policy paper “Reaching Higher: Building on the Success of Sport 21” set a target of 60 per cent of Scots taking part in sport at least once a week. There is a clear link between multiple deprivation and non-participation in sport, especially among women. We know that 35.9 per cent of the population of Glasgow live in the 15 per cent most deprived areas. If we do not deal with that situation, the targets for the country will not be reached. It is a matter not only of providing facilities but of knowing how to encourage people to use them and what the barriers are to their using them. Having worked in a deprived area, I can think of a few barriers myself, but I am sure that there are others that people can think of and that research can show. Do you have a policy of researching the matter so that you can provide local authorities with not only the money to build facilities but the knowledge that will help them to encourage their use?

Stewart Maxwell: I agree absolutely. If we do not have facilities, nobody can use them. Having the facilities is the first step—and a major one—towards encouraging participation, but there is no doubt that if that were all we did we would not achieve our ends and targets. The targets are ambitious and, as you will be aware, it is really difficult to shift participation in the long term. We can get occasional blips of additional participation, but it is difficult to sustain.

The points that you raise about areas of deprivation and the fall-off rate in girls' participation in sport, particularly in the teenage years, are highly concerning. The first purpose of the strategy that we want to implement is to ensure that we target young girls and the sports and physical activities that they want to get involved in. Much of that work will be taken forward by the active schools co-ordinators in secondary schools. Beyond that, I am keen to encourage out-of-school use of facilities and the re-introduction of volunteering on a much wider scale than at the moment. Those are big and ambitious things to do, but it will be difficult to achieve what we want to achieve if we do not

target deprived areas, young girls' participation and other problems.

One way of encouraging young people to take up sport initially and, I hope, to sustain their involvement in physical activity is by holding major sporting events in our country that excite people and encourage them to participate. I think that the legacy of 2014 will be more participation. The opportunity for young people to see sporting superstars close at hand will encourage them to get involved in sport. We need to co-ordinate the efforts of Government, local authorities and the sports governing bodies to maximise the legacy from events such as the 2014 games. Those are obvious hooks by which we can increase excitement and interest and, I hope, sustain that interest over a period of time. However, I do not underestimate the task involved in doing that.

11:45

Ian McKee: I accept entirely what the minister has said, but there is a practical problem with the way in which sport is organised these days. Elite sport, which attracts people's interest, tends to be linked with a whole load of associated things, such as sponsorship by manufacturers of expensive shoes and kit. People who come from areas of poverty may feel that they cannot afford to kit themselves out in the equipment that is necessary for participating in such sports. That gives entirely the wrong message. We need to find some way of encouraging the ordinary person to take up sport at a low level without feeling that they need to spend a fortune on kit. Sport should be a much more natural part of society. One problem with using elite sport as an example for people is that it has that link with very expensive clothing and so on. We need to find some way round that.

Stewart Maxwell: I accept that point to a certain extent, but it is also the case that people start hitting tennis balls over the washing line on back greens every time that Wimbledon is on. It does not necessarily follow that people need to buy the £100 pair of boots or other clothing that is associated with a particular sport.

We should perhaps actively consider setting up community outreach programmes that try to attract young people to sport. Those programmes can provide much of the equipment that is required to enable people to participate. Personally, I hope that—assuming that we get the 2014 games—a built-in element of the programme in advance of the games will be to attract those who are out there in communities, especially some of the communities to which you refer. Through not just the legacy post-games but in the build-up beforehand, we can maximise interest and development among young people. A lot of good outreach work could be done in communities to

involve people in sport in advance of the games. The games are a hook in the several years in the run-up to them as well as in the years afterwards.

The Convener: I point out that several members are queuing to ask short supplementaries on that issue. Lewis Macdonald has intrigued me with a note saying "Dance"—I do not know whether he is asking me to dance, but I am delighted if he is offering—and I know that Mary Scanlon also wants to ask a brief question. Michael Matheson can ask his question at the tail-end of the discussion.

As the minister has been giving evidence since 9 o'clock this morning—he appeared before another committee as well—I suggest that, in fairness, we should have only short supplementaries. I know from the gestures that members have been making at me that they will keep their follow-up questions short. We will have a question each from Mary Scanlon, Helen Eadie and our dance expert. They will be followed by Michael Matheson, whose question will be on an entirely different subject and will be the last question in today's evidence-taking session. I suspect that the minister will be around for a long time, so members will be able to have another bite at this rather large cherry, but we have questioned him for quite a long time today.

We will proceed on that basis. We will have a question from Mary Scanlon, then Helen Eadie and then Lewis Macdonald—whose question will be delightful—who will be followed with a concluding question from Michael Matheson. I say that just to let the minister know what lies ahead. Off we go.

Mary Scanlon: The sport 21 target is for all children to receive two hours of high-quality physical education classes a week. At the moment, primary school children receive only 70 minutes instead of two hours. Is the minister committed to achieving that target? When will we be able to offer two hours of high-quality PE to all children in Scotland?

Stewart Maxwell: The simple answer is yes. It is essential that we achieve the baseline target of two hours. Two hours should not be the limit of our ambition, but it should certainly be the baseline of our target. Clearly, that is another area for cross-portfolio work. I will have to work on it with the ministers who have the education portfolio.

Some of our councils are achieving the two-hour target—they are there or thereabouts—but many others are not. Again, it is a matter of discussing with local authorities how they can achieve the target. For me, it is not a matter of choice—they must achieve the target. I am committed to ensuring, as much as I can, that children get the

opportunity of a minimum of two hours of physical education a week.

The Convener: Helen Eadie is next, to be followed by Lewis Macdonald. The minister can then answer both members' questions.

Helen Eadie: My question follows on from Dr McKee's points. An important issue for the older generation in Scotland, of whom I am one, is physical activity. We must encourage more older people to take part in healthy activity. However, a problem in my community, and in others throughout Scotland, is the lack of a swimming pool. Can the minister audit every community in Scotland to check where their nearest swimming pool is? We ought to have a swimming pool in every community with a population of 10,000 or more—that should be the basic level of provision. However, I would prefer a better level of provision than that, if we can achieve it.

I have a final, sneaky question, convener.

The Convener: No—no final sneakys.

Helen Eadie: I just want to ask the minister for a copy of the letter that the cabinet secretary wrote to ministers in London about funding for the Commonwealth games in Scotland. Can the minister obtain a copy for all committee members?

The Convener: You have achieved your goal. I am far too tolerant.

Helen Eadie: Thank you, convener.

The Convener: Before you answer, minister, I will allow a question from Lewis Macdonald in order to move things along and let you deal with the questions together.

Stewart Maxwell: Okay. I will come back to Helen Eadie's points.

Lewis Macdonald: I had a meeting the other day with Ewa Goljanek-Ritchie, the director of the Adagio International Academy of Ballet and Music, which is based in my constituency. Ewa came to Scotland from Poland, as so many have done in recent years, where dance and related activities have strong support from local and national government. Her point to me was not directly about dance and ballet; it was about related sporting activities, such as ice skating and rhythmic and artistic gymnastics, that use the skills and discipline of dance but are also competitive sporting activities. Her point was that, because many people do not view such activities as being either a sport or a cultural activity, the Government does not have an obvious way of providing support to them. However, they are critical for the agenda that you have just addressed, minister, in response to other questions.

Can you comment on those areas? Should sportscotland give a higher priority to them,

particularly given the number of people who are coming to Scotland from eastern European countries in which such activities have high status?

The Convener: I am not commenting particularly on Lewis Macdonald's question, or on other members' questions, but I think I will have to begin redefining what a short question is.

Stewart Maxwell: I will take Helen Eadie's questions first, if I may. I agree with your point about physical activity in its widest sense. You will be aware that a physical activity strategy is in place. However, we have a long way to go in developing participation in physical activity. Too many people think that in order to be physically active they must, for example, climb a Munro a week. In fact, effectively all that is required is for people to take a half-hour walk. We must do more to increase people's knowledge about the levels of physical activity that they can easily achieve, if they so desire.

On the audit question, sportscotland is conducting an audit of local facilities, but I am not sure whether we know when it will be completed.

Steve Paulding: There are on-going reviews, and a database of all facilities is being created in sportscotland, which also has a mapping model of where facilities such as swimming pools are in relation to populations. Those things exist and can be reviewed and updated.

Stewart Maxwell: On the letter to which I referred earlier, members will be aware that it is not, and never has been, normal practice to release correspondence between UK ministers and Scottish ministers—that protocol must remain in place. Lewis Macdonald used to be a minister, so he is aware that the release of such correspondence is not normal practice. My hands are tied, because I do not intend to breach protocol on that issue.

Ice dance is a winter Olympic sport and gymnastics is an Olympic sport. Those sports should receive appropriate funding through the normal channels. If I did not voice my support for dance I would have an angry daughter on my hands. Dance plays a critical role in attracting young girls into sport—they are naturally attracted to activities such as dance and cheerleading, which are starting to be introduced in schools. In the past fortnight, I visited a primary school in which cheerleading has been introduced, and it is very popular with the older pupils. We hope that when kids have had an opportunity to become physically active, they will move on and be pointed in the direction of other activities, such as gymnastics. Kids who get involved in dance or cheerleading develop the physical fitness and stamina that enable them to participate in sport.

There is an important role for active schools co-ordinators, who can help to direct children into sport after the kids have become involved in physical recreation. That is why we want to develop that and ensure that there are clearer links between schools and governing bodies. In some areas links are good; in others they are not good. It is important to have a standard throughout the country, so that young children have the opportunity to taste a sport and, if they show an interest, to be directed to the right places in which to develop their talent. Dance, cheerleading and other such activities attract young girls in particular, but young boys also get involved. Kids who participate can be encouraged to take up ice dance, gymnastics and other sports that follow on from such activities. There is a clear pathway that active schools co-ordinators can develop.

The Convener: Michael Matheson will ask the final question.

Michael Matheson: You never know; there might be supplementary questions.

The Convener: No, there will not.

Michael Matheson: The minister mentioned the importance of good role models in encouraging people to get involved in sport. I am sure that he shares my disappointment at the decision not to select Shirley Robertson, one of Scotland's most successful Olympians, to be part of the Great Britain team that goes to Beijing. The decision appears to have been influenced by the fact that she took time out to have a family, which raises serious issues about the messages that are sent out to young women who want to succeed on the international stage. I have no doubt that a Scottish Olympic team would be much more sympathetic to an athlete who chose to take time out to have a family.

The minister said that facilities play an important role in the development of pathways for young people who get involved in sport and want to reach an advanced level. He expressed disappointment about the lack of progress on projects in the national and regional sports facilities strategy. The strategy was published in a blaze of publicity in 2004, but as far as I know not one facility has opened its door to the public. Why are so many of the projects seriously late?

12:00

Stewart Maxwell: In my opening remarks I expressed my disappointment about progress on the strategy. Ten projects were announced, of which five are at stage 2. Members will be aware of the difficulties in Edinburgh with the proposals for Meadowbank, Sighthill and the royal Commonwealth pool. I hope that the City of Edinburgh Council decides swiftly how it wants to

make progress with those projects. The other seven projects are at various stages, but I think that most of them will progress—I hope that they will finally be completed. The Glasgow projects are going ahead, but some of the others are less sure, although I am confident that most of them will be completed.

The problem that we and local authorities face is that insufficient funding was provided in the original package. That has left local authorities in difficulties and trying to bridge the funding gap to bring the projects to fruition. Others may comment on whether there should have been a different strategy back in 2004, but that is the problem that we now face. I am trying to ensure that we get as many of the projects as possible up and running, but it is difficult to confirm at this stage whether we will complete them all and what the timescale will be for completion of any of them, although some are beginning to get off the ground, particularly the Glasgow ones. We are left with the legacy of the strategy. It is difficult for us to guarantee additional funding to complete some of the projects, given the tight spending review. That is disappointing, but my efforts will be to maximise the possibility of the projects being completed as quickly as possible. I just cannot guarantee that all of them will be completed.

Michael Matheson: I ask the minister to consider the bureaucracy that is holding up the proposed football academy at Falkirk Football Club's stadium. Falkirk Council has for almost two years proposed an academy at the stadium with a structure similar to the David Beckham Academy building in England, which is Football Association approved. However, sportscotland has refused to approve such an academy here in Scotland, largely because the height of the roof at the Beckham academy is lower than the height that sportscotland would like. However, the council's proposal would be cheaper to deliver and would provide the necessary facilities. That type of bureaucracy ties up resources that could be used to provide the facilities that kids need. Will the minister and his department take action to deal with the unnecessary red tape that is holding up such important facilities?

Stewart Maxwell: I am aware of some of the difficulties with the project in Falkirk. I bumped into the leader and the chief executive of Falkirk Council at an event at Murrayfield a few weeks ago, when they expressed some of the difficulties that the member has just reiterated. The technical specification is a matter for sportscotland. We want to maximise the quality of facilities and we do not want to build them on the cheap—I am sure that the member shares that view. However, from that initial informal chat with those individuals, which took place only a couple or three weeks ago, I understand that they are hopeful that

progress will be made on the project. After the conversation, I was more optimistic about the council making progress on the project than I was previously. Michael Matheson may have more up-to-date information than I have, but I believe that we are beginning to make progress on the project.

Michael Matheson: The most recent information that I have from the council is that its patience is running out and that it wants to go ahead with the project.

Stewart Maxwell: I will speak to sportscotland about the background. If the council wishes to write to me on the issue, I will examine it. As I said, in the recent conversation that I had with individuals from Falkirk Council, they were reasonably optimistic that the project will go ahead.

Karen Gillon: I seek clarification about an answer that the minister gave that suggested that I had asked for something for which I had not asked. I said that the civil servant who is responsible for the review of sportscotland may wish to come and take the committee's views, not that she should come and give the committee her views on what the review should do.

The Convener: That is now on the record.

Stewart Maxwell: I thought I heard Karen Gillon say "express their views".

Karen Gillon: No.

Stewart Maxwell: I apologise.

The Convener: That is now on the record.

I thank the minister. It has been a long morning and our questions, I think, constituted a grilling in some respects. I advise him that the convener is doing a 30-minute walk to work. Although I am not intending to go up any Munros in the near future, I will at some point take up Lewis Macdonald's offer to dance. At that suggestion, he has left the room.

With members' agreement, we will press on until we go into private session. However, I know that it has been a long morning, so I am in members' hands. Are members content to move on to the next two items on the agenda?

Members indicated agreement.

Subordinate Legislation

National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) (Scotland) (No 2) Regulations 2007 (SSI 2007/389)

National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts) (Scotland) Amendment (No 2) Regulations 2007 (SSI 2007/392)

National Health Service (Primary Medical Services Performers Lists) (Scotland) Amendment (No 2) Regulations 2007 (SSI 2007/413)

12:05

The Convener: Item 4 is consideration of three Scottish statutory instruments under the negative procedure. The Subordinate Legislation Committee raised no issues in relation to the instruments, no comments have been received from members and no motion to annul has been lodged.

Is the committee agreed that we do not wish to make any recommendation on the three SSIs?

Helen Eadie: I do not know whether it is appropriate to move against SSI 2007/389 at this stage. I will probably not do that, but I flag up my concern about schedule 3 to the regulations, which states the charges for fabric supports and wigs, including surgical brassieres, abdominal or spinal supports, modacrylic wigs, partial human hair wigs and full bespoke human hair wigs. I assume that we have to let the instrument go through this morning—

The Convener: I am advised by the clerk that we can bring the regulations back for consideration and invite officials to the committee to answer any questions that you have. I am content to do that.

Helen Eadie: That would be helpful. My concern is about the charges for wigs, which has been a big issue in the Parliament. Lewis Macdonald has been active on the issue. I raise the matter on behalf of the Skin Care Campaign Scotland, so I declare an interest.

The Convener: I think that many members of the committee share your concern. I am glad that you raised the matter.

Are we agreed that we do not wish to make any recommendation on SSI 2007/392 or SSI 2007/413 but that we will consider SSI 2007/389 again next week and call for officials to speak to us?

Members indicated agreement.

Public Health Bill

12:08

The Convener: For item 5, I ask members to look at paper HS/S3/07/4/7, on forthcoming legislation on public health. Last week, the Scottish Government announced that it is likely to introduce a public health bill shortly. It is reasonable to assume that the Health and Sport Committee will deal with the bill and we need to make a couple of preliminary decisions.

First, does the committee wish in principle to appoint an adviser if required, given that the bill will be quite technical?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Secondly, in relation to our approach to the bill at stage 1, does the committee wish to dispense with an open call for written evidence if the provisions in the bill are similar to provisions on which the Scottish Government has already consulted?

Members: No.

The Convener: Do members wish to reserve our position?

Karen Gillon: We should call for written evidence. The committees' scrutiny role is important.

The Convener: I agree. The options are that we can wait and see what the bill contains, look at the consultation that has already been done, or reserve our position and make no decision today.

Karen Gillon: The important point is that, when an initial Executive consultation takes place, some people miss the boat. I am reluctant for us to close off the opportunity for those people to comment.

The Convener: I think that we have agreement.

Mary Scanlon: I think that we agree. Only 98 individuals or organisations responded to the consultation, which is a low number given the subject of the bill.

The Convener: I take the committee's views. We will do the usual consultation. I remember that, even though the Government held a large consultation on the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Bill, the committee that I was on still pressed ahead and took interesting evidence.

First, we will appoint an adviser. Secondly, we will have an open call for evidence when the bill is published.

That ends today's business in public.

12:11

Meeting continued in private until 12:32.

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