

# HEALTH COMMITTEE

Tuesday 10 June 2003  
(*Morning*)

Session 2

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## HEALTH COMMITTEE

### 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting 2003, Session 2

#### OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER

\*Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)

\*Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)

\*Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)

\*Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)

\*Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)

\*McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)

\*Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)

Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)

\*attended

#### THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP)

#### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Jennifer Smart

#### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Peter McGrath

#### ASSISTANT CLERK

Graeme Elliot

#### LOCATION

Committee Room 2



# Scottish Parliament

## Health Committee

*Tuesday 10 June 2003*

*(Morning)*

[THE OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER *opened the meeting at 09:20*]

**Dr Jean Turner (Oldest Committee Member):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the first meeting of the Health Committee in the second session of the Scottish Parliament. I have received apologies from Mike Rumbles. Helen Eadie is not here.

Thanks to my age, I am in the chair—I have lots of experience in life, but none in this committee. I look forward to the hard work that is ahead of us and to working with members.

## Interests

**Dr Turner:** We must declare our interests—I shall begin. I have a part-time job at the University of Glasgow as a vocational studies tutor. I work half a morning a week, on Wednesdays, and my earnings fall into the bracket of £1,001 to £5,000 per annum. I intend to submit my resignation for the post because it is difficult to do that job and to travel to and from Parliament. Under the heading “Miscellaneous”, I mention that the Stobhill campaign paid £3,225.51 towards the expenses for my election campaign.

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I am a patron of Scottish HART—Heart at Risk Testing—which is a Borders-based charity that considers the causes and prevention of cardiomyopathy. The position is unpaid.

**Janis Hughes (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):** I am a member of Unison, which represents health service employees and which made a donation of £1,675 to my election fund.

**Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** I have no interests to declare.

**Kate Maclean (Dundee West) (Lab):** I have no registrable interests, but I am a member of T&G Scotland, which made a donation of £750 to my election campaign.

**Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP):** I have no registrable interests.

**Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con):** My interests are in the register of interests. I highlight the fact that, although I am a registered

pharmacist, I do not practise in any shape or form and I no longer have a connection with any pharmaceutical company. The directorships that I hold are unremunerated. For the record, the companies of which I am a director and which were involved with pharmacy are no longer involved with it.

**Dr Turner:** Are those all your registrable interests?

**Mr Davidson:** I have a list of them, if you want me to go through them. I hold unremunerated directorships of Carse Ltd, which is a holding company, Earlstoun Ltd, which is an agricultural company, and the Scottish Parliament and Business Exchange. I am a member of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, but did not draw down money from its parliamentary fund for my election campaign. I am a member of the National Farmers Union Scotland and an unremunerated member of the advisory group to the Scottish centre of tourism at the Robert Gordon University. I am also an unremunerated postgraduate course adviser to the school of public administration and law at the Robert Gordon University.

## Convener

**Dr Turner:** We come to the important part of the meeting, which is to choose a convener. The Parliament has agreed that members of the Scottish National Party are eligible for nomination as convener. I seek a nomination.

**Shona Robison:** I nominate Christine Grahame.

*Christine Grahame was chosen as convener.*

**Dr Turner:** I will now get out of the chair. Congratulations, Christine.

**The Convener (Christine Grahame):** I thank members. I welcome the new members of the committee and Carolyn Leckie, who has joined us. I know that she is disappointed that she is not a permanent member of the committee—many other members were also disappointed about that. However, she is welcome to attend meetings on the same basis as other guest members. Carolyn has a professional interest in some of the committee's work and I am content for her to come along, but I make a rule that committee members will be allowed to ask questions first.

## Deputy Convener

**The Convener:** We must now choose our deputy convener. The Parliament has agreed that members of the Labour party are eligible for nomination as deputy convener. I therefore seek the nomination of a member from that party.

**Kate Maclean:** I nominate Janis Hughes.

**The Convener:** Only one nomination has been received.

*Janis Hughes was chosen as deputy convener.*

**The Convener:** Excellent. I welcome Janis Hughes, who, along with Shona Robison, was a member of the Health and Community Care Committee in the previous session of Parliament. No doubt they will guide other members when we come across issues that we have not met before.

## Legacy Paper

**The Convener:** I hope that members have read the legacy paper. From my experience as convener of the Justice 1 Committee, I know that members will have to get used to receiving an awful lot of papers. I hope that, even though there is a great bulk of papers, we will receive them in sufficient time. The clerks have a hard job, but I hope that members will have the opportunity to read papers thoroughly before committee meetings. Have members had a look at the legacy paper?

**Members:** Yes.

**The Convener:** Given that there is a great deal of detail in the paper, perhaps the informal away day in September would be the best time for members to discuss it and to come up with other ideas about the way forward. I know that members are longing to get together and discuss matters. Given that most members are not new to the job, we should be able to come up with ideas about the way forward and about how to balance the usual tension between legislation and any inquiries that members might want to undertake. Does the committee agree that it would be better to go into the detail of the paper at another meeting? I am content for members to raise issues now, if they wish.

**Shona Robison:** I am content to leave the discussion of the bulk of the paper until the away day. However, I draw members' attention to the on-going issue of financial assistance for sufferers of hepatitis C, which the Health and Community Care Committee pursued vigorously in the previous session of Parliament. Before the recess, we should as a minimum seek a written update from the Minister for Health and Community Care on the negotiations with Westminster.

**The Convener:** Can members remind me what the minister said previously on the issue?

**Dr Jean Turner (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind):** I think that the minister agreed that the people involved should be given compensation, but said that we would have to wait for a decision from London on the clawback of benefits. I imagine that the minister wanted to give the people involved a lump sum—I will not go into the details of the two types of lump sum. The minister is in favour of giving compensation, but he must wait for an okay from London that there will be no clawback of benefit.

**Janis Hughes:** There has been discussion with the minister about levels of payments that may be made to sufferers. A number of issues arose with regard to the report of the expert group on financial and other assistance for national health

service injury, but the main issue, which Jean Turner mentioned, was whether payments might have an implication for benefits. We await the outcome of the discussions with Westminster on that matter.

**The Convener:** We should send a pushing letter to the minister to ask whether he has had a reply on the issue and, if he has not had one, why not and when we will get one.

I welcome Helen Eadie to the meeting.

**Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab):** My apologies for being late, convener.

**The Convener:** That is perfectly all right. When you get your breath back, perhaps you would declare any interests that you have.

**Helen Eadie:** I am a member of the GMB, the Fabian Society and the Co-operative Party.

**Mr Davidson:** I have a question, rather than a comment. Will we meet between now and the recess?

**The Convener:** Yes.

**Mr Davidson:** Do we have an indication of the matters that we will deal with? I believe that there are a number of pieces of subordinate legislation to be dealt with.

09:30

**The Convener:** I will deal with subordinate legislation in a moment. From an e-mail that I received from the clerk, I note that we are to consider a Scottish statutory instrument at our meeting next week.

**Mr Davidson:** In that case, I will leave the matter to you, convener.

My second point relates to whether it would be possible to hold the away day in the last week of August. That would allow us to hit the deck running in September when we return from the recess. I believe that we might also have to scrutinise legislation before we go into the recess.

**The Convener:** Members will take holidays at different times over the recess, which is why I suggested September. However, we could hold the away day as early as possible in September. I would like all committee members to be there—indeed, I am sure that we would all want that. The issue is finding a common date.

I suggest that we discuss the matter at our meeting next week, when members have their diaries and a better idea of what they are doing. I take David Davidson's point, but people will have made arrangements for the recess.

**Mr Davidson:** My last point is highlighted in the legacy paper. The Health and Community Care

Committee was one of a number of committees that complained to the Scottish Executive about the way in which information flows from the Executive and about the late delivery of papers for consultation and discussion. Perhaps, before we go into the recess, a Health Department official could come before the committee to respond to the paper and give a brief outline of the Executive's procedures.

**The Convener:** We hope to have the Minister for Health and Community Care and a civil servant from the Health Department at the away day. It would be better for us to speak informally to the minister and his officials about our requirements rather than to call them before the committee as witnesses.

**Mr Davidson:** That will not be on the record, however.

**The Convener:** We can put it on the record shortly thereafter. I am sure that you will have no difficulty in doing that.

The legacy paper refers to correspondence, some of which we might want to follow up. The committee also considered several petitions—petitions can be a valuable means of bringing issues before this and other committees. Without going into the details of each petition today, I suggest that we check on progress, including whether responses have been received from ministers with whom the committee corresponded.

We need to see a progress report from the Public Petitions Committee on health-related petitions. That will allow us to incorporate petitions timeously in our agendas over the months to come.

**Kate Maclean:** How do you propose to plan the away day, convener? Would it be helpful if members, having had a look at the legacy paper, made suggestions about what they would like to see in our work plan? That would give us a draft document to work from, so that we do not have to start work in September based solely on the legacy paper. It would also address some of David Davidson's concerns about starting our work as soon as possible.

**The Convener:** The clerks could e-mail members, asking them which topics from the legacy paper they would like to take up. That would allow us to formulate a work plan.

**Kate Maclean:** We should do that.

**The Convener:** Absolutely.

I wanted to talk about SSIs, but I will have to ask the clerk to help me out—I think that she mentioned the matter in her e-mail to me. Members will find reference to SSIs in the legacy paper.

The Food Supplements (Scotland) Regulations 2003 are shortly to come before the committee. The instrument was the subject of a petition that the Public Petitions Committee referred to the European Committee. We are fortunate to have Helen Eadie on the committee, as she was the European Committee's reporter on those controversial regulations. Her report is now on the European and External Relations Committee's pages of the Parliament website.

Shona Robison has lodged a motion to annul the instrument. The Subordinate Legislation Committee is to consider the regulations on 17 June and possibly also on 24 June. Our deadline for completion of consideration of the regulations is 10 September 2003. It is suggested that, at our meeting next week, we should agree which witnesses to call to give evidence at our meeting on 25 June and that we should seek and gather written evidence over the summer recess. It is also suggested that we either take further evidence or debate the regulations in the first week of September. The second week of September is the latest time that we can have a committee debate on the subject. Are members content with that proposed timetable?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** As members have no further comments to make on the legacy paper, I will close the meeting. I cannot guarantee that we will always have such a sharp finish. I anticipate that meetings will last about two and a half hours. At least our first meeting was brief.

*Meeting closed at 09:35.*



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