

PUBLIC AUDIT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 17 December 2008

Session 3

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PUBLIC AUDIT COMMITTEE

19th Meeting 2008, Session 3

CONVENER

*Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)

*Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)

*George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab)

*Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP)

Nicol Stephen (Aberdeen South) (LD)

*Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con)

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)

*John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Mr Robert Black (Auditor General for Scotland)

Angela Cullen (Audit Scotland)

Susan Lovatt (Audit Scotland)

Mark Roberts (Audit Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Tracey Reilly

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Joanna Hardy

ASSISTANT CLERK

Rebecca Lamb

LOCATION

Committee Room 4

Scottish Parliament

Public Audit Committee

Wednesday 17 December 2008

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:02*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Hugh Henry): Good morning. At the start of this 19th meeting in 2008 of the Public Audit Committee, I ask everyone to switch off their phones and electronic devices. I welcome staff from Audit Scotland, members of the public and the press. I offer a special welcome to members of the Audit Committee of the National Assembly for Wales, who are taking in our meeting this morning. Welcome to the Scottish Parliament.

We have received apologies from Nicol Stephen. John Farquhar Munro is in attendance instead.

Agenda item 1 is to decide whether to take items 4 and 5 in private. Is that agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Review of SPCB-supported Bodies

10:03

The Convener: Item 2 is consideration of correspondence from the convener of the Review of SPCB Supported Bodies Committee. I hope that members have had time to reflect on that. Are there any comments on whether the correspondence raises issues that are of specific interest to this committee? The matter seems fairly straightforward.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): In the past, I have certainly raised informally with Audit Scotland issues to do with the operation of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. I am not sure that such issues are entirely a matter for this committee but, given this opportunity to comment on the bodies that are supported by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, it might be worth exploring briefly whether other committee members have concerns about how the commissioners operate.

The Convener: We can certainly ask for comment. The review will look at the management and structures of SPCB-supported bodies rather than the detail of their work. Murdo Fraser has mentioned some of his concerns to me on previous occasions, but I am not sure that it would be entirely appropriate to consider those now. However, members might want to comment on issues to do with governance and how that might be strengthened. Do other members have any thoughts or comments?

George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab): I am not clear how this relates to the discussion about the position of the Auditor General for Scotland that the convener and I, and other members, had at the meeting of the Scottish Commission for Public Audit. It is mentioned in the report, but I am not sure how the SPCB—all these initials—is picking it up.

The Convener: It would be open to the committee to make specific comment about the role of the Auditor General and Audit Scotland. We have discussed the need to ensure independence of the audit function—that would be of primary concern. As George Foulkes has indicated, we expressed a view that linking up with other bodies should result in no diminution of that independence. Anything that is done should ensure that that is a central tenet. If the committee wishes, we could reinforce that view.

George Foulkes: It would be helpful if we did. We had a long discussion on the matter at the SCPA. We discussed it with the Auditor General

and recommended that, although the SPCB determines the terms and conditions of the appointment, the Auditor General must not just be independent and seen to be independent but be unable to be influenced from outside, either by members of the Scottish Parliament or, particularly, by members of the Government. If my recollection is right, the SCPA's recommendations underline that.

The Convener: Do committee members generally agree with that point?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Okay, we will send a response to that effect.

Do members have any thoughts on Murdo Fraser's point about governance issues and other, broader aspects?

Murdo Fraser: I am happy to take your advice on the matter, convener. It may not be appropriate to this item to pursue that further. I have made my views known.

The Convener: Your concerns are about how the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman functions.

Murdo Fraser: In effect, yes.

George Foulkes: Is the SPCB suggesting some kind of bringing together of the responsibilities of the different ombudsmen, apart from the Auditor General, in order to try to streamline the system?

The Convener: That could be an option. Indeed, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth has already indicated that he supports a bringing together of the administration of certain functions. That is a possible outcome. There may be some streamlining.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): It is early days yet. As I understand it, the whole area has to be considered in detail by the new ad hoc committee. This might be the committee's last chance to submit a formal response, but I imagine that there will be opportunities for members to respond further down the road.

George Foulkes: I agree with Murdo Fraser, but my only worry is that as the Public Audit Committee we do not necessarily have a locus for that. I feel strongly about one aspect of the issue, which relates to the Scottish Parliamentary Standards Commissioner. After a complaint about me by a Scottish National Party researcher, the commissioner, Dr Dyer, had to undertake a huge inquiry, which I had to answer to.

In the end, Dr Dyer wrote to me to say that not only had this guy not provided sufficient evidence, he had provided no evidence. Dr Dyer spent hours

and hours dealing with a mischievous request. That seems ridiculous.

The Convener: I am not sure that that is a function of this inquiry or of this committee. Your points are on the record and we shall leave it at that.

Do we agree that the committee will respond in the terms discussed previously?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Section 23 Report

“Improving energy efficiency”

10:10

The Convener: Item 3 is to consider a section 23 report entitled “Improving energy efficiency”. I invite the Auditor General to provide us with a briefing on the report.

Mr Robert Black (Auditor General for Scotland): Angela Cullen, who is with me today, led the project team and will give you a brief introduction to the report, if that is acceptable to you.

Angela Cullen (Audit Scotland): The Auditor General and the Accounts Commission published their joint report on improving energy efficiency on 11 December. The report considers the performance of councils, the national health service and central Government bodies in improving energy efficiency.

I will highlight three key areas from the report. Energy consumption in the public sector has fallen, but spending on energy has increased significantly; the Scottish Government and the public sector have made funding available to improve energy efficiency; and there must be stronger leadership from both the Scottish Government and public bodies to improve energy efficiency.

Before I go into more detail on those areas, I will provide you with some brief background on energy efficiency. Climate change represents a real threat to the world and energy efficiency has a vital role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As members will be aware, the recently introduced Climate Change (Scotland) Bill includes a duty on Scottish ministers to promote energy efficiency.

Improving energy efficiency is one of the most cost-effective ways for the public sector to contribute towards national targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The efficient use of energy can also provide more short-term benefits for the public sector by helping to minimise the financial impact of rising energy prices on public services.

I return now to the three areas that I want to highlight from the report. Exhibit 4 in the main report shows that energy consumption in public sector buildings has reduced by almost 5 per cent over the three years to 2006-07. It is worth noting that that has been achieved at a time when changes to public services might have increased demand for energy—for example, as a result of using more advanced technologies and having longer opening hours for some services. Overall

energy consumption has decreased, but it varies by sector. Although consumption in the council and NHS sectors has decreased by 5 per cent and 7 per cent respectively, there has been a 3 per cent increase by central Government bodies.

At the same time as energy consumption has fallen, public sector spending on energy has increased by around 47 per cent to over £200 million in 2006-07. That is largely as a result of energy prices over the past four years, which we have illustrated at exhibit 1 in the report.

The Scottish Government provided £24 million between 2004-05 and 2005-06 through its central energy efficiency fund to support improvements in energy efficiency in councils, the NHS and Scottish Water. Our report shows that just over £10 million of the fund has been used by those sectors to implement measures to improve their energy efficiency, such as installing better heating and lighting control systems, improving insulation and replacing boiler systems. The funding has also helped to raise the profile of energy efficiency in public bodies and attract additional internal funding as a result.

The Scottish Government provides funding of around £10 million each year to the Carbon Trust and Energy Saving Trust, which provide information and support to the public, private and domestic sectors. In 2007-08, those bodies estimate that they spent around £4 million carrying out their work in the public sector.

Just over a third of public sector bodies have specified a local budget for investment in energy efficiency and a total of £11.5 million was invested in the three years to 2006-07. Councils have allocated the most, with more than £9.3 million, NHS bodies have allocated over £1.8 million and central Government bodies have allocated more than £500,000.

Our report states that the Scottish Government has a vital leadership role to play in improving energy efficiency. However, it has provided limited central direction and guidance to support improved energy efficiency in the public sector. There is also a lack of robust national monitoring arrangements to review the performance of the public sector in improving its energy efficiency.

Within individual public bodies, greater leadership is also needed at senior levels to promote energy efficiency and encourage the necessary behavioural and cultural changes. We must remember that improving energy efficiency is the responsibility of all staff. However, changing the culture of organisations and the behaviour of individuals to reduce energy consumption is difficult, and it remains a significant challenge for the public sector.

10:15

An important element of leadership is the development of organisational strategies and targets to improve energy efficiency. We found that around 70 per cent of public bodies have a specific strategy, and a similar percentage of bodies have set targets. There is generally a lack of comprehensive data on energy consumption in the public sector, particularly in relation to the use of transport. The frequency of reporting is also variable, which makes it difficult to monitor accurately the progress that is being made in improving energy efficiency.

The report makes a number of recommendations that are aimed at the Scottish Government and public bodies, which are summarised on page 5 of the main report. The team and I are happy to answer any questions from members.

The Convener: You have highlighted the significance of climate change and the contribution that energy efficiency will make to tackling it. It seems, therefore, rather peculiar that you state in the report:

"The Scottish Government does not formally monitor and report progress by public bodies in improving energy efficiency."

If the issue is so important, why are no efforts being made to monitor and report on progress? Did that come up in your discussions?

Angela Cullen: We did examine that. In my opening remarks, I mentioned that there is a lack of comprehensive data across the public sector on energy consumption. A large majority of bodies rely on energy bills, rather than measuring their consumption themselves. There is a lack of data to enable local bodies to measure their own improvement in that area—it is not collected on a national basis. Mark Roberts and Susan Lovatt might want to comment on that.

Susan Lovatt (Audit Scotland): Health Facilities Scotland monitors performance in the NHS annually; energy consumption data are collected and reported through an annual environmental report. In the other sectors, however, that reporting mechanism is not in place.

The Convener: Do you think that that is a significant weakness?

Angela Cullen: We have recommended that information be collected and reported locally and to the Government, and that some sort of public report be made available.

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): My question follows on from the convener's point about the role of the Government, which is addressed in the report recommendations. Has a lack of direction on that issue been present for a

long time? Did it exist under the previous Executive, or has it been there only for the past 19 months or so?

Angela Cullen: I will start on that one and then I will ask Mark Roberts to come in. It is a complex area and, in the report, we identify the policy and guidance that are currently available. It is not clear to public bodies, however, how they should use the policy and guidance to develop their own strategies and set targets to improve energy efficiency at a local level.

Mark Roberts (Audit Scotland): There are different patterns across the three sectors. Within central Government, the Scottish Executive set up the environmental performance of public bodies initiative in 2004. That was an initial step, and the focal point for work with central Government bodies. As Susan Lovatt mentioned, Health Facilities Scotland takes the lead in the NHS in collating and reporting information. In the council sector, there is a different structure altogether: councils have all committed to the climate change declaration, which from 2009 will require them to report on the progress that they have made. Each of the three sectors has a very different structure in place.

Stuart McMillan: I wanted to comment on the three sectors. Appendix 2 of the report on page 24 shows that 29 out of 32 local authorities responded; 17 out of 22 NHS bodies responded; and 34 out of 44 central Government bodies responded. Why was there not a 100 per cent response rate from all those public bodies?

Susan Lovatt: There are probably various reasons for that. We chased up survey responses, but the size of central Government bodies limited how much information they could provide, so they did not feel that it was appropriate to complete the full survey response. We were dependent on getting data back directly from the bodies and we chased that up, but there came a time when we had to put a deadline on the process and analyse the data that we had received.

Stuart McMillan: That stuck out like a sore thumb. One of the local authorities that did not respond is the local authority for the area in which I stay, which is one of the smallest councils in Scotland.

Susan Lovatt: Another reason could be that it tended to be energy management staff who completed the survey responses. If, for some reason, there were no such staff in post or, as we highlighted in the report, staff had other duties, it might have been difficult for them to respond to us in addition to doing everything else that they had to do. The fact that we did not get a 100 per cent response rate confirmed some of the issues that

we highlighted regarding the lack of energy management staff.

Stuart McMillan: My final question relates to paragraphs 32 and 33. Paragraph 33 says:

“Only 27 per cent of public bodies have installed automated systems”.

I found that figure startling, to say the least. As has been said, the environmental awareness or energy efficiency drive has been going on for some time, so 27 per cent is a shocking figure.

Angela Cullen: The percentage is relatively low but, as we go on to say in paragraph 34, the Scottish Government is piloting automated metering systems in 12 councils and Scottish Water. Depending on the results of the pilot project, there might be further roll-out of automated metering. We hope that that happens.

Murdo Fraser: Once again, Audit Scotland has produced an extremely interesting and useful report. There is a lot that the committee can do to progress some of the issues that are identified.

The general thrust of the report is that good progress is being made, but quite a lot remains to be done to improve the situation. Among the key messages on page 13, you mention the need for

“stronger leadership by the Scottish Government and within public bodies to improve energy efficiency”.

You go on to say:

“A robust strategy is central to the coordination of activities to improve energy efficiency”.

In paragraph 40, you say:

“The Scottish Government has decided not to publish a final strategy but intends to develop an action plan instead”.

Can we take it that you feel that what the Government proposes does not go far enough?

Mark Roberts: We are talking about two different strategies. In the key messages, we are saying that it is a core component of public bodies’ leadership and an important part of the process of setting out what they ought to be doing that they have a robust strategy. The issue of central guidance from the Scottish Government is more important in the context of setting the overall national picture. We were highlighting two tiers of strategy.

To date, the Government has said that it will issue guidance on energy efficiency once the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill is enacted. That will follow on from previous discussions about the energy efficiency and microgeneration strategy.

Murdo Fraser: In your first key message, you say:

“There is a need for stronger leadership by the Scottish Government”.

Can you be a bit more precise about what you mean?

Mark Roberts: We mean that the Government should be clear about what it expects of public bodies. During the fieldwork, we found a degree of uncertainty among public bodies about what they were expected to do in this area and exactly how they were expected to proceed with energy efficiency strategies. They wanted guidance.

Murdo Fraser: That is helpful.

Appendix 2 lists the bodies that you surveyed. I note that the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body is not on the list. Did you approach the Parliament to find out whether it might be included among the bodies that were surveyed? Anybody who drives past this building at any hour of the day or night sees it lit up like the Blackpool illuminations. I cannot imagine that the energy efficiency of the building is particularly good. Did you survey the Scottish Parliament? Did you consider doing so?

Susan Lovatt: No. The Parliament was not included in the sample.

Murdo Fraser: That is a pity. Perhaps a future piece of work could be done to look at the energy efficiency of the Holyrood complex.

Mr Black: I have a piece of information that might help fill out the answers that members of the team have given. I draw to your attention exhibit 8 on page 17, which attempts to capture on one page the quality of the strategies by sector. You would give some credibility to the fact that a number of local authorities and, to some extent, national health service bodies, have strategies that are reasonable or good. Central Government has further to go. The report talks about clear strategic leadership. One practical implication of that is that the Government should be taking an interest in the quality of the strategies that are being developed by individual bodies in the public sector and it should try to obtain some kind of assurance about whether they are appropriate.

Even more important is the self-evident point about implementation. You can have strategies that are perfect on paper, but it is the implementation and follow-through that matter. The single biggest challenge is how Government and the Parliament will be assured that the good strategies that are in place are being implemented with a degree of urgency, given the concerns that we all share about the impact of climate change.

The Convener: You referred to exhibit 8. It strikes me as worrying that central Government bodies are generally the worst performers. To some extent, that chimes with some of the other discussions that we have been having about the way that Government bodies are being run—if we

separate the management from the political aspects. There is either poor management or complacency, or something else that I have not noticed. There should be no reason for central Government bodies to score so consistently low.

Mr Black: We cannot provide the definitive answer to that, but there are some structural and systems explanations for what is going on. One interesting point is that the central energy efficiency fund has been concentrated on the NHS and local Government. We can see from exhibit 8 that benefits from that are coming through. Related to that is the fact that it tends to be in local government and the NHS that experts in the organisation can drive the agenda forward. That is more difficult for smaller bodies. The message that comes out of that is the importance of the Government finding ways of creating at the centre that sort of expertise, which is available across the public sector to help drive the strategy forward.

There are other practical aspects, such as the fact that smaller bodies tend to be in leased buildings, where it is not possible for them to have complete control of energy efficiency strategies. The Government requires to take all those things into account when it is driving the strategy forward. As Angela Cullen said in her introductory remarks, the area is complex and, therefore, clear-sighted leadership is important for the future.

Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP): As ever, the Auditor General gets to the heart of the matter. The money is there, whether it is £24 million from the Government or £11.5 million from public bodies. The will to implement energy efficiency is there. However, the report says that it is really not happening. I get the impression that it is all diffuse. We have loads of titles. We have a method—the Building Research Establishment environmental assessment method. We have a staff training tool, local champions, leads energy management lead and energy management teams.

However, out of all that, who is responsible? Responsibility seems to be scattered across various titles, status levels and organisations. Who has the expertise? Who can allow staff and organisations to get the expertise or training that they require to implement the energy efficiency strategy? Do sources of training and qualifications exist? For example, are the colleges or universities involved? The system is diffuse, and I wonder how trained and qualified people are. I get the impression that it is early days and that there is a lack of direction in energy use and efficiency. There is the will and money to undertake the strategy, but in practice the system is diffuse and everything needs to be gathered together. I think that the Auditor General was pointing us in that direction. Until somebody grabs hold of the

responsibility, there must be Government leadership and implementation.

10:30

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): I wish that I had a pound—or even a euro, given that it has about the same value these days—for every strategy that circulates in Government. As Mr Black said, it is much better to focus on direct action that delivers results. I am glad to see that the Government seems to be taking that approach in articulating the strategy.

Hidden away in the report is a point about the use of videoconferencing to reduce energy consumption at corporate and local levels. I wonder whether the Scottish Parliament or the councils have fully embraced the opportunities that such technology offers. A week or so ago, there was a severe weather warning in Scotland, yet probably all 129 members of the Scottish Parliament turned up to press a few buttons at five o'clock at night in the chamber. Given the weather conditions, it may have been possible for members to remain in their constituencies.

My understanding is that it is not entirely possible for members to do that and exercise their democratic right to press a button and vote. Perhaps it is time that the Parliament and other bodies took a fresh look at that situation. For example, if there were severe weather conditions, videoconferencing would be safer, save the public purse a hell of a lot of money and reduce energy and carbon emissions considerably. There is, therefore, a wee hidden message in the report that I think is important. We might have to consider that matter a bit more closely in the future.

The Convener: We could have a virtual Parliament and perhaps dispose of this building; that would help Murdo Fraser to resolve his problems with its energy inefficiency.

Willie Coffey: Face-to-face meetings are always preferable, but they are sometimes impractical. Sometimes it is dangerous for members to take to the road or the air to be here.

The Convener: I suppose that it depends on the face as well.

Willie Coffey: I suppose so. I think that it would occasionally be possible for us to do videoconferencing. The technology allows us to embrace that kind of opportunity, but we do not do it particularly well.

George Foulkes: If we are not careful, some people might question whether we need to be here at all.

My understanding is that the targets for reducing CO₂ emissions have just been increased at the

United Kingdom level and at Scottish level, which means that they are even more challenging.

I agree with what Stuart McMillan said; I think that he put his finger on something. I find it astonishing that some public bodies did not reply to the Auditor General's invitation to provide information. Robert Black said that he is not clear whether there is poor management or complacency in some bodies. However, exhibit 9 suggests that the issue is complacency, because an awful lot of bodies are confident about meeting targets—that confidence seems a bit misplaced.

What happens now? My constant question about the excellent reports that the Auditor General produces is how we can ensure that departments pay attention to a report and do something as a result. What will happen to this report? We will consider it later on, but does the Auditor General plan to do any follow-up to it?

The Convener: Just before the Auditor General answers, I put on record that the comments about incompetence and complacency were not his, but mine.

George Foulkes: Yes, but he was not sure which was the problem. I think that it is complacency. Anyway, what should we do to follow up the report?

Mr Black: It is always important for the committee to consider what it can do as part of the process of holding to account. This is a good example of how we can present analysis in which we have confidence. It is for the committee to determine the extent to which it should take evidence from appropriate accountable officers and how that should be done. That focuses Government attention quite usefully, if I may be so frank as to say so.

We will return to energy efficiency. It would be inappropriate for an audit organisation, given the environmental agenda and the concern about global warming, to leave the issue.

Angela Cullen: We normally follow up our reports, but we do not have this report down to be followed up in our current programme, which we will bring to the committee in January. However, we will probably start to follow it up within the next two years and report to the Parliament and the committee in about two years.

Mr Black: There is also a wider issue of the best way in which an organisation such as ours can engage in this developing area of public policy. During next year, I imagine that we will have discussions with various stakeholders about the role that we might play.

George Foulkes: That would be helpful.

Earlier Murdo Fraser picked up on the recommendation that

"There is a need for stronger leadership by the Scottish Government".

The Parliament building ought to be included the next time. The vehicle fleets, which are mentioned in paragraph 36, produce a large percentage of the carbon dioxide.

I have another bee in my bonnet. The First Minister has never travelled by public transport on any of his official visits. That is not setting an example. I came here by bus and on foot today, just in case anyone says that I am not doing what I say. Surely we all ought to set an example and not just talk about it. Is there some way in which we can address the fact that, although we have increasingly efficient train services, the ministerial vehicle fleet is constantly going around the country? The First Minister has not travelled by train on any public engagement, which is quite ridiculous.

The Convener: That is outwith the competence of the Auditor General. It is a political issue that can be pursued elsewhere.

George Foulkes: It is a practical issue.

Andrew Welsh: It sounds like a recommendation that would make a good episode of "Yes Minister".

Cathie Craigie: I have a small point about exhibit 9 on page 19, on the confidence of local authorities and public bodies in meeting the targets. It is disappointing that only half the public bodies are confident that they can meet the targets. The targets are set by central Government, which makes it even more concerning that, in the three years up to 2006-07, when energy consumption reduced in the public sector overall by 4.8 per cent, there was an increase in central Government departments' energy consumption. How can central Government crack the whip, if you like, over our local authorities and the national health service when bodies that are answerable to the Government and to us are not delivering? Obviously, they cannot deliver 100 per cent, but they do not appear to be setting an example for councils to follow.

Angela Cullen: It is not clear to us why central Government's energy consumption increased, albeit slightly, over the three years. However, it is worth stating that the funding that we mentioned earlier and much of the concerted effort has been around the council and NHS sectors. The NHS has set a national target. In their single outcome agreements, councils have agreed to contribute to meeting energy efficiency targets. Both sectors have forums in place and have made a huge

effort, probably because they are the largest consumers of energy in the public sector.

Mark Roberts: The central Government sector is quite diverse compared with the council and NHS sectors. It includes quite a large number of small bodies that occupy or lease parts of buildings. It is hard for bodies that lease accommodation from private landlords actively to improve their energy efficiency.

Cathie Craigie: If the people who are expected to deliver on our behalf have no confidence in their ability to do so, where is the deficit? Why are people not confident in their ability to deliver? Do they not have the cash or expertise to do so? Has any work been done to break down the deficit in confidence that has been identified?

Susan Lovatt: The problem is highlighted in the report because we asked public bodies how confident they were and, if they were not confident, what the reasons for that lack of confidence were. They highlighted a number of issues, including the possibility of expansion in the estate, vehicle fleets or staff numbers, and the requirement to use more energy-intensive technology, which has a significant impact on their energy consumption in any year.

Cathie Craigie: So negative issues were highlighted. Was no reference made to positive uses of technology to reduce energy consumption, as my colleague Willie Coffey suggested?

Susan Lovatt: The use of energy-intensive technology is particularly relevant to health bodies. For example, computed tomography scanners impact significantly on their energy consumption. Facilities such as videoconferencing can counterbalance that, but their use is linked to behavioural and cultural change. Changing the emphasis and leadership to ensure that staff use such mechanisms to reduce consumption was highlighted as a particular challenge by public bodies.

Andrew Welsh: The Scottish Environment Protection Agency energy management team was formed only recently, but has it yielded any improvements? Once it is established, will it provide a model for others?

Angela Cullen: We highlighted SEPA as a case study because its approach represents good practice. One reason why we include examples of good practice in our reports is that we hope that they will be picked up and rolled out in other organisations. Mark Roberts can provide the committee with further information on the impact of the initiative.

Mark Roberts: Against a baseline of 1998-99, by 2006-07, SEPA's overall carbon dioxide

emissions had fallen by 23 per cent, so it has made significant inroads into the problem.

Andrew Welsh: So we are beginning to get a model that could serve as an exemplar for others.

The Convener: Thank you for your evidence. The next item on the agenda is consideration of our approach to the report. That concludes the public part of the meeting.

10:44

Meeting continued in private until 11:46.

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