

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 8 November 2000
(*Morning*)

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EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

35th Meeting 2000, Session 1

CONVENER

*Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)

*Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)

*Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)

*Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP)

*Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)

*Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP)

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

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

David McLaren

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 3

Scottish Parliament

Education, Culture and Sport Committee

Wednesday 8 November 2000

(Morning)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:04*]

Committee Membership

The Convener (Mrs Mary Mulligan): Good morning, everybody. We begin this morning's meeting by welcoming Irene McGugan to our ranks. Irene, I hope that you will find your time on the Education, Culture and Sport Committee enjoyable and productive. We have lost Fiona McLeod, whom I am sure members would like to thank for the work that she put into the committee over the past 12 months. We wish her well on her new committee. I now ask Irene McGugan whether she has any interests to declare.

Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP): The only thing that I need to mention is that I am currently the president of the Scots Language Society.

The Convener: Thank you.

Subordinate Legislation

The Convener: Item 2 on the agenda is subordinate legislation. We have before us the Teachers' Superannuation (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2000 (SSI 2000/366). Do members have any questions on this statutory instrument?

Members: No.

The Convener: Why are you looking like that, Brian?

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am eating a lovely gypsy cream.

The Convener: There is no answer to that.

There are no questions and we do not need to make any recommendations on this statutory instrument.

Work Programme

The Convener: Committee members have received an initial draft of our forward work programme, which will take us up to Christmas. I shall make a couple of observations, after which I shall ask for comments.

The first draft of the exams inquiry report will be discussed on 22 November and the second draft will be discussed on 29 November. That is not to say that there will be only two drafts of the report, but it is important to establish the timing of the production of the report, which, as we are all aware, people are waiting for. On 22 November, we will be joined by Andrew McGettrick, the information technology adviser to the committee. He has met the clerks, has been brought up to date on our progress so far and is preparing a paper on the IT issues, which we will receive prior to that meeting. He will join us on 22 November to address any comments or questions that members may have.

Following the publication of the exams inquiry report, there may be two or three weeks before the recess. During those weeks, I suggest that we try to tie up the special educational needs report, a draft version of which is now available. We should also consider Mike Russell's film industry report and begin taking evidence for our Hampden inquiry.

I have not asked the clerks to plan ahead into the new year, partly because it will be important for the new convener to be involved in that. However, over the past few weeks, I have received a number of representations from various sporting and cultural bodies, which feel that the time is slipping away for them to get issues on to the committee's agenda. I suggest that the committee might consider certain sporting and cultural issues in its forward work plan for 2001. Last week, the Parliament debated the national cultural strategy, aspects of which I am sure people would want to address. A lot of work is also being undertaken through "Sport 21" and the local authorities' sport development programmes. Moreover, our school infrastructure inquiry is still outstanding. Those are issues that the committee might want to consider in the new year.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): It is important that we discuss culture and sport because, despite the committee's full title, we are in danger of becoming an education committee. Although education is very important, we have a broad remit and folk are beginning to wonder when we are going to address other issues.

I was asked to represent this committee before the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and I

wonder when it would be appropriate for me to submit my report. In a way, it has a bearing on our future work programme.

The Convener: We could take that report now.

Cathy Peattie: I attended COSLA's arts and leisure committee on Friday morning. I must say—and I have to be diplomatic—that that committee was fairly uptight about parts of the national cultural strategy. It felt that there was no reference in the strategy to local authorities and pointed out—probably accurately—that local authorities are at the forefront of the promotion of culture and the arts. The committee felt that COSLA and the local authorities should have a role in any review of the Scottish Arts Council; it will make that view known to the minister. In that sense, I met the committee at just the right time, although I stressed that I was representing this committee rather than a political party.

COSLA welcomes the link between this committee and its own and wants to build on that. It is felt that there are areas in which the two committees could work together. Perhaps we can get together to consider the issues on which we could work collaboratively. We could establish a standing partnership agenda, to keep members up to date with what is happening in COSLA in terms of the arts. Local authorities have concerns that their role is not being recognised, although they have a clear role to play in the implementation of any national cultural strategy.

The national cultural strategy was generally welcomed. A committee member from Fife said that it looked like the strategy that Fife Council introduced a couple of years ago. The strategy was recognised as a good idea, although COSLA felt that it should say more about the partners and people involved.

The Convener: Thanks for that, Cathy. It is useful to receive feedback when committee members have attended other committee meetings.

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): Convener, you and Cathy Peattie are right about the cultural issues and the fact that we have not considered them for some months. My report on the Scottish film industry, which is scheduled for 13 December, was always intended as a starter report to determine whether there were issues that were worthy of further examination. I suspect that there will be. We have a long-standing invitation for Greg Dyke to talk to the committee in the context of broadcasting, which we should take up.

Cathy Peattie is absolutely right about some of the issues that are contained in the national cultural strategy. We need to go below the level of the overall strategy to consider those issues. One of them concerns museums and industrial

museums, an issue that we should address as a matter of urgency in the new year. The minister indicated last week that temporary relief might be available, but the overall museums strategy needs careful scrutiny as there are huge discrepancies between what people in museums are thinking and what appears to be happening through the strategy.

We also made a commitment to take the inquiry into rural schools a stage further. COSLA, for example, is considering national guidelines. We should try to bring that inquiry into our programme for next year. An apposite time to address the issue would be in the early part of the year, when councils will be considering their budgets.

Finally, we have received a huge amount of evidence for our schools infrastructure inquiry. That issue is important and should be the subject of our next inquiry.

The Convener: I understood that the Scottish Museums Council was going to set off the consultation on museums. It might be worth while for the clerk to contact that organisation, asking it how far it has got and for a timetable for that consultation.

We asked for COSLA's involvement in the work on rural schools; Karen Gillon was our liaison person with COSLA's education committee. We have let that work lapse and should perhaps reconsider it. We should also ask COSLA for an update on its work on guidance on school closures.

Mr Monteith: The business listed for the week commencing 4 December is "Publish Exams Inquiry Report", but the space for business on Wednesday 6 December is left blank. Do you intend to publish the report on Monday of that week, or have you left Wednesday open because that might be when we publish it?

The Convener: The week commencing 4 December is when I hope that we will be able to publish the report. I have not yet set aside a day or a time for doing that. We should see how we get on with the first draft before deciding whether we have to wait that long. We may want to meet on the Monday and publish the report on the Wednesday.

10:15

Mr Monteith: So that week is left blank to allow flexibility.

The Convener: Yes. If we had still not agreed the report by then, we would have to meet on 6 December.

Mr Monteith: I have nothing to add to what other members have said. I am quite content and

agree with what Cathy Peattie and Mike Russell have said about items for future discussion. The one issue that I wish to raise is the Euro 2008 football championship. I do not envisage the committee reporting on that, but it might be useful if we continued to encourage the Scottish Football Association—I think there was general approval for that idea. From an interview with Allan Wilson that I read on Sunday, it seems that he has his hands full with the Ryder cup bid. If the committee could at least help with Euro 2008, I think that he would be as grateful as Scottish football fans would be.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): I have a question about the national priorities. I am not sure what procedure the national priorities will follow, although I assume that we will have a chance to debate them in Parliament. Will the committee have any input?

The Convener: Martin Verity has just told me about the statutory instrument on the national priorities, so I will let him explain what the timetable might be for that.

Martin Verity (Clerk): We have just received an affirmative statutory instrument on the national priorities, which the committee will consider. The committee might want to discuss it at the meeting on 29 November, for which the only other item at this stage is the second draft of the school exams inquiry report. The committee might want to invite the minister to attend that meeting.

The Convener: I suggest that 29 November might be a good time to invite the minister to speak on the statutory instrument. To enable us to make maximum use of our time, we should start the meeting at 9.30 am rather than at 10.00 am, as is written in the work programme. We should begin with the minister and move on to the exams inquiry.

Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Will the national priorities be detailed in the instrument?

Martin Verity: Yes.

Michael Russell: Ken Macintosh's point about debate in the chamber is interesting, because the procedure for the instrument would not lead to its being debated in the chamber unless we chose to have it debated there by indicating that the Parliament should affirm it.

Mr Macintosh: The subject is too important for it not to be debated.

The Convener: It may be worth while for the clerks to find out whether the matter is on the agenda.

Ian Jenkins: It is important to air views on the instrument.

Mr Monteith: There are ways of saying that the instrument needs to be debated. We could force the debate by saying that the instrument goes too far or does not go far enough—I am sure that I can work out which option to take.

The Convener: Are there any further comments on the work programme? Have we forgotten anything?

Ian Jenkins: Somebody said that we ought to spend more time examining sport. How will we decide what areas to consider? We could pick wee bits here and there, but perhaps we should take a strategic approach and have a general discussion before we examine a specific area. We could do good work on tiny things, but forget the bigger picture. For example, Brian Monteith recently mentioned that the Scottish Rugby Union was keen to speak to us about its coaching programme. We could easily miss such possibilities if we spoke only to local authorities. We should have a strategic discussion.

Michael Russell: Another issue was the review of higher still. I presume that we will want to consider that when it is published.

The Convener: On Ian Jenkins's point, I have spoken to a number of organisation in the past few weeks, as I said. I will ask those organisations to write to the committee so that the committee can decide what aspects of sport it wishes to cover in its forward work plan.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): In the words of Queen Dido, "Remember me" after I have departed the committee. You have my report on rural schools, and the issue of rural schools and what they mean to communities in the Highlands and Argyll and so on is still out there. My personal plea is that you "Remember me".

Michael Russell: The line continues "but ah! forget my fate".

What will happen to you, Jamie?

Mr Stone: Touché.

The Convener: He has been relegated to the Holyrood progress group.

Mr Stone: The cheerio, bye-bye, take-the-blame group.

The Convener: We will try to make progress in putting a plan together.

Michael Russell: It would be useful to have a work programme for the first few months of next year by about 13 December, so that our work programme rolls forward.

The Convener: Yes. The work programme for 2001 is included in business for 13 December on

the draft work programme—the clerks are very efficient.

Consultation

The Convener: Item 4 is the on-going project to consult children and young people, to which we had appointed Fiona McLeod as our liaison person. As we have lost Fiona, I suggest that we appoint Irene McGugan to that role, if she is willing.

Irene McGugan: Yes.

The Convener: Thank you. The final item on the agenda is the school exams inquiry. Is it agreed that we take this item in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

10:22

Meeting continued in private until 12:26.

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