

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 22 May 2001
(*Afternoon*)

Session 1

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EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

16th Meeting 2001, Session 1

CONVENER

*Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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

*Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)

Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP)

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

*Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 3

Scottish Parliament

Education, Culture and Sport Committee

Tuesday 22 May 2001

(Afternoon)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:40*]

Item in Private

The Convener (Karen Gillon): I call the committee to order. Agenda item 1 is to agree to take agenda item 3 in private. Is that agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Assessment of Educational Need

The Convener: The Scottish Executive's report "Assessing our children's educational needs: The Way Forward?" has been circulated to members. I put the document on the agenda because I thought that it was important, given our debate last week and the report that we made, to respond formally to the paper.

I flicked through the document briefly and I suggest that clear anomalies exist between the Executive's suggestions and our suggestions. If committee members agree after discussion, it would be useful if Cathy Peattie acted as a reporter and tried to tie up our evidence and recommendations with the Executive's proposals. We could progress from that to a fuller committee debate towards the end of this parliamentary term.

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): I agree to that proposal. Everyone welcomes the consultation, but I have read the entire document a couple of times and feel that the Executive is not committed to suggestions such as those that we made. Other members probably agree about that. The document does not show that the thinking of whoever wrote it was opened up as the committee's thinking was when it was convinced of the need for radical change.

If Cathy Peattie drew together the issues, to be faithful to what the committee said and to introduce that as evidence, we could make a strong contribution. We could show that virtually nobody from whom we heard and none of the arguments that were made took some of the positions in the paper, even though it is a consultation paper. That was surprising. The committee would help the Executive by reiterating and expanding on what it wanted to happen.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): I should be delighted to do that. I was pleased that the consultation document arrived but, like Mike Russell, I was concerned about some of it, particularly the proposals on recording and possible changes. Some of the evidence that we took and some of the other information that we received from the national special educational needs advisory forum were not included in the consultation paper. Our report contains much that we should consider in comparison with the categories in the consultation document. I should be happy to line up the documents and present the result to the committee for discussion.

Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I am happy with that, too. I welcome the consultation and I take it that this is a full consultation, but the document has the feel of a position paper, which does not quite meet all our aspirations.

The Convener: My understanding is that the consultation paper was drawn up by the SEN forum and was submitted as a consultation paper without amendment. The paper is a genuine attempt at consultation, which we should welcome. However, we have a role to play. If members agree, Cathy Peattie will act as reporter.

Michael Russell: There is some urgency because of the concluding date, so we will have to sign off our response before the end of the parliamentary term.

Cathy Peattie: It would help if the committee had an idea of when it will need to respond by, because one or two other events will happen in the next couple of weeks.

The Convener: What is the closing date for responses?

Cathy Peattie: The date is in July, but we would want to sign off our response before then.

The Convener: I suggest that we should try to sign off our response on Monday 18 June, but we have quite a heavy day then.

Michael Russell: That is the day of the Gaelic television evidence, and I do not think that it would be possible to deal with our response to the consultation then. Several bodies are asking for the opportunity to give evidence on that day.

The Convener: I suggest that we will need to meet on Tuesday 26 June to tie up everything, perhaps for an hour, on top of our meeting on Monday 25 June. I ask that we meet at 3 pm on 26 June, as I have a constituency commitment at a special needs school that I do not want to change. We could tie up all outstanding work during that hour and sort out accommodation now. Do members agree?

Members *indicated agreement.*

14:45

Meeting continued in private until 16:12.

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