

# **EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE**

Wednesday 27 June 2001  
(*Morning*)

Session 1

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## EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

† 21<sup>st</sup> 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

### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Judith Evans

### ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

### LOCATION

Committee Room 2

† 20th meeting 2001, Session 1—held in private.



## Scottish Parliament

### Education, Culture and Sport Committee

Wednesday 27 June 2001

(Morning)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 11:14*]

### “Assessing our children’s educational needs: The Way Forward?”

**The Convener (Karen Gillon):** The first item today is the report from the deputy convener on the Scottish Executive’s consultation document “Assessing our children’s educational needs: The Way Forward?”

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** My response to the consultation document is based on the recommendations of this committee, which I have put into the appropriate slots for answers. The consultation document did not include some issues surrounding the question of reporting and I felt that it was important to raise them. I hope that members have had a chance to read the response, although I know that you received it only yesterday.

**Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** I commend the way in which Cathy Peattie managed to slot almost all our 29 recommendations into an appropriate section of the consultation document. It is right that we do that, as it reiterates the outcome of the considerable time that we spent on the issue.

The report reads well. I note that Cathy Peattie has helpfully included some points in the additional comments section. Given that, when we had the debate on our committee report, the minister indicated his willingness to examine the issue of special educational needs in a wider context and mentioned the probable development of a national strategy, we should highlight that that has already been mentioned and that people in the field believe that examining not only the record of needs but the issue of special educational needs in the round would be a good way in which to progress. We should endorse that view as well.

**The Convener:** I have raised that with the minister in formal written communication. I do not know whether members have seen the minister’s response yet. It would be useful to include that in our response.

**Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** I am happy to endorse that.

**Cathy Peattie:** Irene McGugan is correct. Because the idea of the national strategy was not part of our report, I did not include it. However, I believe that mentioning it as part of the additional comments would be correct. We took evidence from the national schools and agreed with them that a national strategy was needed. I am happy to write a paragraph to that effect.

**The Convener:** Given the minister’s announcement this week that he intends to double the number of new community schools, working in partnership with local authorities, it might be useful to include a paragraph to the effect that there should be an expectation that children with special educational needs should be catered for in any new initiatives by the setting of standards and targets. I am not sure of the exact form of words that we would use, but we should state that ensuring that children with special educational needs are taken account of in the planning process of the new developments should be a priority.

**Cathy Peattie:** Yes.

**The Convener:** If there are no other comments, I suggest that Cathy Peattie e-mail the additional paragraphs to members. If there are no difficulties, we could send the response to the ministerial team as soon as possible, perhaps by the end of the week.

**Cathy Peattie:** I will write the new text tomorrow.

**The Convener:** Is that agreed?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Petition PE342

**The Convener:** Members will remember petition PE342 on rural school closures. The deputy convener recently met representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and members have received copies of the national guidelines that it proposes. I invite Cathy Peattie to tell us about her meeting and the guidelines.

**Cathy Peattie:** At the meeting I was pleased to learn that a draft report had been prepared, because previously the impression was that nothing had happened. That is a step in the right direction. The report was due to be sent to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee a few days later and I understand that it will go to local authorities this week. The report is going out for consultation, so I asked whether we could receive it. I felt that committee members might want to consider some of the issues.

Committee members have not had the report for very long so they may want to spend some time looking at it. COSLA has taken on board some of the issues that the committee has discussed. It has found what we have been doing helpful. However, we may be concerned about some issues, for example, decisions on whether a school is viable. Danny McCafferty of COSLA said that the financial situation would always have to be considered, but we have stressed that decisions on school closures should never be based only on financial considerations—they should be much wider. This committee has felt quite strongly about that in past debates. The draft report is generally fine, but we may want to raise one or two issues.

Another thing that we considered at the meeting was the link between this committee and the COSLA education committee. It is clearly important to have a formal link and I was asked to raise that with the committee.

**The Convener:** What is the time scale for any comments on the draft report?

**Cathy Peattie:** The draft report will go out to local authorities for consultation.

**The Convener:** I suggest that we consider the report over the summer. I ask Cathy, who has been quite involved with this issue, to prepare a report for our first meeting after the recess. If members have any comments that they would like to feed into the process, I ask them to give them to Cathy during the summer. We will then be able to feed that report into COSLA's consultation process. I ask the clerks to let COSLA know that that is what we intend to do—and also the Executive, because any decisions will have implications for the Executive.

*Members indicated agreement.*

**Cathy Peattie:** The debate is timely, considering what has been happening in the Borders.

**Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab):** Would there be any value in the committee having direct meetings with COSLA, as Cathy did, or should we just consider the report?

**The Convener:** I think that it would be valuable for us to have direct contact with COSLA's education committee. We should pursue that. It is not on the agenda for today so we cannot agree to it, but we should put discussion of a formal contact link on the agenda for the first meeting after the recess. We should begin to develop those kinds of relationship.

If anything develops over the summer, Cathy Peattie or I will contact COSLA directly if necessary. We should also ask COSLA to contact Cathy if there are any developments on its side. I doubt whether anything substantial will be agreed over the summer because of local authorities' timetables, but it would be helpful to have an agreement with authorities that they will not proceed with anything before we can have an input.

*Members indicated agreement.*

## Work Programme

**The Convener:** Members have in front of them a proposal that was put to the conveners liaison group yesterday, seeking permission for the committee to hold an away day. The committee agreed to a draft proposal at a private meeting. We decided that it would be useful for us to take stock of where we had been, to examine how things had worked over the past year and then to consider how to move forward in the final two years of the committee's work in this session.

I am happy to report that, after considerable lobbying by the deputy convener, the conveners liaison group has given us permission to have an away day up to a cost of £3,000. I will abuse my position as convener and suggest that the venue for the away day should be New Lanark, given its history in developing forward-looking education and the fact that the school has now been reopened for public use. There is a hotel there with conference facilities. I am sure that, with negotiation, we could get a rate that would allow us to hold the away day there within budget. Holding such an event outside Edinburgh would be useful as we could ensure that we were away from our telephones and staff who might want us to be doing something different elsewhere.

If members are agreed, we should invite various people along to assist our discussions. We need to look back at what has happened over the past two years. That will be a fuller process for some of us than it will be for others. The key element of the committee's work over the past two years has been undertaken in reaction to situations as they have developed. Obviously, we will need to have space in our timetable to react to situations, but it is important that the committee is proactive over the next two years. We want to have made some positive contribution to education, culture and sport in Scotland. We must not sideline any aspect of our work.

The deputy convener and I had a useful and helpful meeting with Lindsay Paterson and Carol Craig from Edinburgh University. They are currently working with parents, teachers and other people involved in education to develop a vision for education in Scotland. It might be useful to invite them to the away day to outline what they are doing and to consider whether the committee could have a role in initiating the debate on the shape of education in the future. That is one of the big issues facing Scottish education.

We might want to invite certain people to provide input on other issues around sport and the cultural strategy. I would like to ask both the ministerial teams with which we work to come along at some point in the day to give us an indication of what

they are planning for the next 18 months. It is important that we know what their thoughts are. The Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee had a full and frank discussion with Wendy Alexander, which gave it an insight into the direction in which the ministerial team is moving. The Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee can now plan its work alongside that of the minister's team. It would be helpful if we could do something similar.

I welcome comments from members on the proposal and any ideas for the away day.

**Mr McAveety:** The difficulty is our capacity to take in a whole series of critical issues in one day. Perhaps we should consider focusing on a particular area and work on it thoroughly. I have been on away days, as we all have. The problem is that you start with the good intention of covering many matters, but in reality it is pretty hectic. It gets to 2 o'clock and several issues have still not been addressed.

There are two key points. First, we should consider what issues the ministerial team is examining and investigate whether we can complement its work and fill the spaces that it has left. Secondly, some serious thinkers should be there to consider the way that education should be developed. We should examine critical issues such as the structure of education and the important role of leadership in educational institutions. We should focus on those issues. We could perhaps have an Edinburgh-based session to cover some of the other issues. We all view education as critical.

11:30

**The Convener:** It depends on what we want to do with the away day. It is not the appropriate occasion on which to have detailed discussions about policy development. The intention is that we should use it to form an agenda for the committee so that we can get into a detailed investigation of policy. It would be helpful for people to come to give us an overview of the situation in each of our areas of responsibility rather than discuss the nitty-gritty detail.

**Ian Jenkins:** I agree with Frank McAveety that packing too many matters in would be a problem, unless it is, as the convener suggested, an information session. One of the problems with this job is that you receive information about seminars that you would like to go to, which take a whole day to cover issues that we would cover in half an hour, but you can rarely attend them because you have so many other things to do. It would be useful to have an away day when we can stop and think, but if we are trying to cover education, culture and sport we must realise that what we can

achieve is limited. If it gives us a sight of where we are going, it could be valuable. We must get culture and sport into the agenda, because they tend to be sidelined or to be a more vague aspect of the remit. We must focus better than we have done.

**Cathy Peattie:** Like other members, I think that the away day is an important opportunity. Its success will depend on how good the convener is at negotiating the time that we have. It is an opportunity to do some visioning work on how education will develop in Scotland. We have been involved in several studies, in each of which it has been said that we must consider teacher training and expectations. A fair amount of academic comment has been made on where education should be going, but we have not had a chance to consider it and perhaps lead the Executive on where it should be going.

It would be a good idea to involve Lindsay Paterson. I also suggest that we invite Keir Bloomer, who is the chief executive of Clackmannanshire council. He has produced some interesting work on education.

It would be appropriate to take some time to consider culture and sport. We should consider how they impinge on our work and have a visioning exercise on those matters as well. I am pleased that work is continuing through the reporters on the cultural strategy. We will all have the opportunity to bring those issues back to the committee and discuss them.

Apart from the convener's report on sport in schools, we have not touched on sport in education and the participation of young people in sport. We must address those matters, because the nature of our culture means that people do not participate in sport in the way that they should. We should consider where we are going, what we want to achieve over the next two years and how we move the agenda forward over the next 10 years. I would be reluctant to spend time examining what we have done so far or what other people are currently doing. This is about moving forward.

**The Convener:** The idea behind having a brief session on what we have done is to get an idea of the time scales that we work to, to consider how long things take and to see what we have been able to achieve in the past two years. We have managed to do some good things. Before we start that process, it would be helpful to acknowledge what we have managed to achieve, despite everything. I envisage it being a short, half-hour session. We could have three presentations, one on each of the core areas of our remit. It is for members to decide how we run that.

The Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee

was away from lunchtime on Tuesday until lunchtime on Wednesday. If we did that it would mean losing a full morning, because members would need to be back in Edinburgh for Wednesday afternoon. It could be argued that the away day should be held on a Monday and Tuesday. Obviously, that would have constituency implications. However, for once it might be worth taking a Monday away from constituency work. We could meet at about 11 o'clock, if that suited members. I know that Irene McGugan would have to travel furthest. We could have three presentation sessions on the Monday and a dinner that night. On the Tuesday morning we could meet the ministerial team and in the afternoon we could have a go at planning for the future, before finishing about Tuesday tea time.

**Mr McAveety:** Are you suggesting that the event run over two days?

**The Convener:** Yes.

**Mr McAveety:** That is a very helpful suggestion. It would allow for more discussion, because people would feel less constrained than they do in normal sessions between 10 o'clock and 4 o'clock.

You mentioned inviting some big-name thinkers. Perhaps we could ask someone to speak at the dinner on the big vision, such as Lindsay Paterson or Keir Bloomer. Before the dinner we could have a brief résumé of the key issues, so that afterwards a broader discussion of the contribution that we have heard can take place. We could follow that through in the next morning's session.

From our constituencies, we all know that even in disadvantaged areas some schools are doing exceptional work. They have learned from models elsewhere in the UK, in Europe and in America. However, there is no consistency. We know that cheek by jowl there can be one primary school that is tremendous and one that is not. That has to do with the ethos, leadership and direction of schools—how children are involved and how their experience is shaped. The good practice to which I referred should be the future, but some of it has not percolated through to senior directorates of education throughout Scotland. There is still some negative thinking. It would, therefore, be very constructive to hear from someone such as Lindsay Paterson or Keir Bloomer.

**Ian Jenkins:** I think that the event should take place on a Monday and Tuesday; we should take as much time as we can. I always used to find lack of time an annoying aspect of in-service days at school. The whole thing is bloated anyway; the whole time should be available for the exercise. There is not much value in it unless one does that. It would be a good idea for us to stay overnight and use the whole second day.

**Irene McGugan:** I agree with what has been



said. If we are going to have an away day, we should do it properly and commit the necessary time to it. It is important that all members do that, so that we are all involved in the planning. We should not forget that it requires planning. It has been suggested that we invite speakers, but that can be done later. The most useful element of any away day will be prioritising and planning.

**The Convener:** I suggested that we invite speakers to give us an overview of the situation in their field. That might involve a 20-minute presentation as part of a two-hour session. The committee would then thrash out what we see as the priorities in the area that is being discussed. The next day we would hear from the ministerial teams, so that they could give us an idea of their position. We would spend the afternoon of the second day pulling things together and drawing up a plan for the committee. The in-depth, detailed discussion of issues would take place later. We could spend the next 20 years discussing some of them. We will need to be strict with ourselves and to identify priorities.

We have received a couple of suggestions for speakers on education. I do not have a problem with either of the people who have been mentioned. I suggest that we invite the new chief executive of sportscotland to speak to us about sport. He is a visionary young man. We may also want to hear from Charles Raeburn, who has already appeared before the committee. He has a slightly different perspective on matters and he has considerable expertise across the school sports sector.

We might want to ask someone from the Scottish Arts Council—perhaps Tessa Jackson—to give us an overview from the SAC perspective. We could also seek someone who works in that field. Two 15-minute presentations would be enough, and we could then have a one-and-a-half-hour discussion of the issues. We can try to fit in three two-hour sessions on the first day back, followed by a dinner. That will involve a lot of work, but I think that it is worth doing. We are moving along, and I think that we should do things right when we are there.

Do members have any preferences about particular days? We initially mentioned October, but I think that it would be more useful were we to hold the away day sooner rather than later. I think that September would be a better time to aim for. I suggest that we e-mail members and ask them for an indication of Mondays and Tuesdays in September when they will be available. If there are any items in members' diaries that they cannot cancel, we will need to work around those. I always hold surgeries in my constituency on a Monday, but I think that I can put them to one side for this purpose. I understand that members

include items in their diaries a long way in advance, which they cannot get out of. I would like members to indicate next week their availability. We can then begin negotiations on the venue. Are people happy with New Lanark as a venue? Is that acceptable?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** I abuse my position as convener. I promise that I will not talk too much about New Lanark's history. If we e-mail members today, I would like to get a response by the end of next week. We can then try to firm something up.

## Gaelic Broadcasting

**The Convener:** We now come to item 4. Mike Russell is not able to be with us today, and I suggest that we move this item to our first meeting after the recess.

**Martin Verity (Clerk):** I have had informal discussions with Michael Russell. He has indicated that there might be a need to hear from one or two more witnesses, but he suggests that we proceed quickly with a report thereafter.

**The Convener:** The report seems to be becoming much bigger than was envisaged, as is the committee's wont with reports. We have had two full days of evidence on the matter. It has been suggested that we take more evidence, but I am not minded to do so, unless members are desperate to hear more about Gaelic broadcasting. Are you aware of Mike Russell's view, Irene?

**Irene McGugan:** I should really try to represent him.

**The Convener:** You "should", you say, with a smile on your face.

**Irene McGugan:** I should indeed. The reason why Mike Russell is suggesting that we have just a little bit more evidence is that there has been a significant development: reference was made in the Queen's speech to a dedicated Gaelic channel. That can be treated as new information. Mike felt that it would be worth spending an additional half day on this, with one or two additional people being called to give evidence. If that could be done in September, Mike hopes that a report could be completed before the October recess. The term between the summer and autumn recesses is very short.

That is Mike Russell's proposal to take account of a new development, and to include people that we have not heard from yet, including the Gaelic parents group, Comann nam Pàrant, and the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning and Gaelic. To summarise, Mike Russell suggested including—if possible—half a day of evidence-taking, but with a definite finish to the inquiry by October, in order to include those additional elements.

**Ian Jenkins:** When he says half a day, does he mean an hour?

**The Convener:** My only reluctance about the proposal is that Westminster is taking forward the issue of a dedicated channel, and that it is for its members to decide on that and progress the debate. I did not understand that that was the focus of our inquiry, and we need to be clear about what we are doing as a result of the

announcement contained in the Queen's speech. We have had considerable evidence about the need for a dedicated Gaelic channel. We need to pull that together.

**Irene McGugan:** That is why Mike Russell thought that our minister should come to clarify what is happening at a United Kingdom level.

**The Convener:** Which minister?

**Irene McGugan:** Alasdair Morrison. He should come to clarify what he understands to be the way forward at a UK level and how that fits with the Scottish Executive's plans for the development of Gaelic.

You are right, convener. We heard a lot of discussion on a dedicated channel for Gaelic. Although that was not the primary focus of our investigation, a lot of our time in Stornoway was spent hearing about the pros and cons of such a channel.

11:45

**The Convener:** I suggest a compromise position. I suggest that we have a session with Alasdair Morrison to consider how to pull the evidence together. We have had considerable evidence from individuals. We can accept more written evidence—from the National Gaelic Parents Association, for example.

I accept that it would be useful to hear from the minister. However, to open the discussion up, we would need another whole committee day. I am not certain that we can justify that. I suggest that we have Alasdair Morrison along to the committee to finalise the evidence taking and allow Mike Russell to prepare a report for the committee.

**Cathy Peattie:** The nature of taking evidence is that we start off with one agenda. We then take evidence from people who take us down other routes and have other issues that they want to discuss. In my investigation at the weekend in Dingwall I found myself being lobbied by all sorts of people who wanted to talk about Gaelic broadcasting.

It makes sense and is important that the minister come to the committee whether or not that was our intention at the start of the inquiry. Those who are involved in Gaelic broadcasting are interested in how the inquiry develops. They expect that something will happen from our evidence taking. It makes sense to have the minister and get his perspective.

I was pleased to hear the announcement in the Queen's speech.

**The Convener:** I am happy with that approach.

I ask the committee for advice. I have been

asked to have a 15 to 20-minute session with John Angus Mackay from the Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig at some point when he is in Edinburgh over the summer recess. I am interested to know whether committee members think that it would be okay for me to go ahead with that. I would certainly report back to the committee, if I were to meet him, on what was said. Is that okay? I did not want to do it in the course of our inquiry when we were taking evidence.

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Consultative Steering Group Principles

**The Convener:** Committee members have in front of them paper ED/01/21/2 from the Procedures Committee. Item 5 is to consider whether the committee wishes to make a submission to the Procedures Committee's inquiry into the application of the consultative steering group principles in the Scottish Parliament.

Members have been asked for their comments on the paper. It would probably be difficult for us to reach a consensus on the issue. There is probably a wide range of views on it. When is the inquiry to be concluded?

**Irene McGugan:** I believe that the deadline for submissions has been extended. It was the end of June, but I think that it has been extended to the end of the summer recess. I cannot remember the date. It is the end of August.

**The Convener:** When is our first committee meeting after the recess?

**Martin Verity:** The first week in September.

**The Convener:** We do not have much information from the Procedures Committee as to what it wants the committee to discuss. Individual members will have their questions, but they are not all relevant to the committee.

Would it be worth seeking guidance from the Procedures Committee clerks on what they want us to discuss? I ask that we put that on the agenda for our meeting on 4 September. If the deadline is 31 August, the clerks will not be able to collate the information quickly, and certainly not by 4 September. It might be useful to have clarification on the questions that the Procedures Committee asks us by 4 September. We will respond by the end of that week. Do members agree?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Subordinate Legislation

**The Convener:** Agenda item 6 is to consider various statutory instruments that are subject to negative procedure. Unless members have strong objections, the committee will say that it makes no recommendation to Parliament on the instruments.

The Sports Grounds and Sporting Events (Designation) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2001 (SSI 2001/209) will amend the Sports Grounds and Sporting Events (Designation) (Scotland) Order 1998 to add the new grounds at Hamilton Accies and Dumbarton Football Club and to remove the old Dumbarton FC ground. The designation makes such acts as the carrying and consumption of alcohol criminal offences at those grounds. If the grounds are not included in the 1998 order, an offence at those grounds will not be created. I assume that members have no problems with that and accept the recommendation.

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** The Education (Assisted Places) (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (SSI 2001/222) consolidate the Education (Assisted Places) (Scotland) Regulations 1995 and amend the qualifying income levels for the remission of fees and charges. Full details are contained in the Executive note that is attached to the instrument. Are members happy with the recommendation on the regulations?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** The St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (SSI 2001/223) consolidate the St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) Regulations 1995 and make amendments to update the qualifying income levels for the remission of fees and charges. Full details are contained in the Executive note that is attached to the instrument.

The regulations take into account the effect of the McCrone settlement on fees that are paid to St Mary's Music School. The school was concerned about that. I and members of other parties have been involved in that issue. It is welcome that the fees that are paid will increase. Do members agree to make no recommendation on the regulations?

**Members indicated agreement.**

*Meeting closed at 11:53.*

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