

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 26 November 2002
(*Afternoon*)

Session 1

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EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

30th Meeting 2002, Session 1

CONVENER

*Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
*Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
*Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
*Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
*Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP)

*attended

WITNESSES

Lee Cousins (sportscotland)
Alastair Dempster (sportscotland)
Ian Robson (sportscotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Susan Duffy

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Education, Culture and Sport Committee

Tuesday 26 November 2002

(Afternoon)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:03*]

The Convener (Karen Gillon): I call the meeting to order. I remind members that we are meeting in public. I ask everyone to ensure that all mobile telephones and pagers are turned off. [*Interruption.*] I said, “turned off”.

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): That was the “off” noise.

The Convener: That is okay.

Review of Sport 21

The Convener: Item 1 is oral evidence from sportscotland on its review of sport 21. Members have a series of papers in front of them. I understand that we are getting one of the papers enlarged for the sake of our eyesight and so that we can look at the targets in more detail. The clerks will circulate that paper when we have it.

I welcome Alastair Dempster, who is chairman of sportscotland, Ian Robson, who is the chief executive of sportscotland, and Lee Cousins, who is head of policy at sportscotland. This is a one-off evidence-taking session on the review of sport 21. I am the committee's representative on the ministerial forum on sport 21, but we felt that it would be useful for committee members to consider some of the issues and to question sportscotland in more detail on the matters that are of concern to them.

I invite Alastair Dempster to make some introductory remarks before we proceed to questions.

Alastair Dempster (sportscotland): I thank the committee for giving us the opportunity to speak to you today about the national strategy for sport in Scotland—sport 21.

First, I apologise for the quality of some of the information that you have received. We are working to a tight schedule to get the information ready to be distributed for comment. I am afraid that it has not been printed, so what you have is an advance copy. However, I hope that what we have provided will enable you to pick up things that you could not pick up before.

The convener is, as she said, a member of the ministerial forum on sport 21. We are grateful that the committee has been represented on that group.

Following discussions with the Scottish Executive at the start of the year, it was agreed that there was a need to update the document “Sport 21”, which was first published in 1998. An extensive consultation of all parties that are interested in Scottish sport took place over the summer. That led to the production of a consultation document, which has been made available to committee members, although it is not in the best format.

The consultation document is about to be distributed widely throughout Scotland to seek further views on the future of Scottish sport in advance of the publication of an updated strategy in March 2003. That strategy will include challenging new targets to be delivered up to 2007 and beyond. The consultation document invites

the various partners that are responsible for the delivery of Scottish sport to sign up for the challenges of meeting those targets. The work on updating sport 21 will also be linked to a review of the sportscotland lottery fund strategy, as outlined in "Levelling the Playing Field". That review must also be completed by March 2003.

The consultation period for both pieces of work includes a number of meetings throughout the country during December. The committee is welcome to join us at those meetings to hear the views of local people on the content of the consultation document and the review of the sportscotland lottery fund. It is useful that both documents are being produced together and that conclusions will be reached on them at the same time.

That is all that I have to say by way of introduction. Ian Robson and Lee Cousins will be happy to respond to members' questions.

The Convener: To pick up on your invitation, I am sure that members will be interested in taking part in some of those consultation meetings. Perhaps you could forward us details of when those meetings will take place, so that we can arrange for that information to be circulated to members.

Alastair Dempster: I am happy to do that.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): As you are probably aware, I am keen to find ways in which to encourage young people to participate in sport. The report that Karen Gillon drew up for the committee highlighted the lack of young women's participation in sport. Will the strategy that will be published in March take that on board and look at ways of encouraging young women to participate in sport, not only at school, but when they leave school?

Alastair Dempster: Absolutely. As you will be aware, one of our 10 targets is directed at young women. The point came home to us when we saw the results of the excellent work that was done by the physical activity task force. It showed clearly what the challenges are for young children, particularly young women and girls. A lot of what you read in the document is a reflection of what we learned from that excellent piece of work.

Cathy Peattie: Does work have to be done to influence teachers to get them to encourage girls' participation? Sometimes, that is the biggest barrier and must contribute to the turn-off for girls at an early age.

Alastair Dempster: A great deal rests on the enthusiasm of the teachers. There is also an issue about facilities. Many of the facilities that are available in schools might be okay for boys or all children up to a certain age but, around 12 or 13,

the girls want to have their own facilities, which are not always easy to find in every school. We are aware of that and are trying to ensure that that is taken into account when new school facilities are being planned.

Cathy Peattie: How do we ensure that not only the usual suspects—who might well deserve the money, of course—access the sports lottery fund money? How can we ensure that people with new ideas or people who want to encourage social inclusion in sport have access to the resources that they need to implement their ideas?

Alastair Dempster: As you are probably aware, we have specific lottery-funded programmes that are targeted at the social inclusion partnership areas. Obviously, we communicate information to the SIPs and are happy to work with them to develop new ideas.

Ian Robson (sportscotland): Not only will there be a review of our lottery strategy but the Department for Culture, Media and Sport will lead a broader review into lottery funding in general. I know that the department is keen to break down the barriers to the funding. The issue of accessibility at every stage of the process is being considered to ensure that not only the usual suspects, to use your phrase, apply. Aspects that are under consideration include the application process, the principle of match funding and the principle of reducing the levels of grants to ensure that there is a broader access at a community level. Sportscotland, as part of a Scotland-based distributor forum, is working with all our colleagues to ensure that we can achieve that goal.

It is important to reflect on the fact that the pool of lottery resources is rapidly decreasing. That in itself will create many pressures because of the reliance that has been built up over a relatively short period on lottery funding, not only in the capital sense but in a revenue sense—for example, support for our athletes who recently represented Scotland so well at the Commonwealth games.

Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Your report contains telling statistics about the difference between what various social groups spend on leisure, pointing out that the top 40 per cent of income earners account for more than 70 per cent of leisure spending whereas the bottom 20 per cent of income earners account for less than 5 per cent.

Given that access to sport, leisure and recreation always involves some expense, whether it is travel, membership, entry fees or equipment costs, how can we overcome the problem that your statistics highlight? I accept what you said about the targeting of programmes on SIP areas, but there are poor people all across

Scotland. How can we overcome the problem that some people simply cannot afford to participate in sport?

Alastair Dempster: I will let Lee Cousins answer that in detail, but first I point out that the accessibility of leisure facilities is important. A lot more needs to be done in terms of community solutions to ensure that school facilities are available to the community at large. Likewise, any facilities that the community has should be made available to the school, if possible. That will need a lot of co-operation between local clubs and local authorities.

14:15

Lee Cousins (sportscotland): Two major costs are involved. The first is travel. The solution to that problem is to increase accessibility to facilities. The more neighbourhood facilities that we have, the better. Those facilities should be indoors, if possible, particularly given the climate and what has been said about young women. Our current strategy focuses more on indoor facilities than the previous one did.

The second major cost relates to the pricing of the activity. The only solution to that is some sort of public subsidy to counteract the cost of providing the facility, including provision of the necessary staff and the coaches or leaders who will conduct the activity.

Alastair Dempster: Throughout Scotland, there are some good examples of initiatives that have worked well. In some places, people are allowed to use the facilities for free and the income is generated from what they spend once they get inside. There is no one solution, but we recognise that the challenge is a big one.

Irene McGugan: Could you expand on your comments about sharing school and community facilities? In a sense, that is not a new idea—everyone recognises the value of it—but we seem unable to act on it terribly efficiently. What are the barriers to making school facilities more accessible to the community?

Alastair Dempster: You are right to say that the idea is not a new one. People often talk about it, but there are few examples of its working in practice. Working with local authorities, we are keen to find a way of making the school facilities more accessible. However, the clubs have to be seen to be getting something out of the arrangement. I believe that what they can get out of it is future members. The clubs need to be encouraged to provide coaching facilities for the schoolchildren.

Our recent review of all the sports clubs in Scotland revealed that many of them teeter on the

brink of being financially unviable. We have to develop a stronger sports club culture in Scotland. No longer are all sports delivered by the schools, so we must work in partnership. We have an important role to play in facilitating that partnership.

Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I agree with what you are saying about the relationship between clubs and schools.

I am interested in the targets that are contained in your "Time to Speak Up" document, such as having 85 per cent of those aged between 13 and 17 taking part in sports. Where do those targets come from? Are they based on current figures plus 10 per cent or are they purely aspirational? Would you rather have ambitious targets that you do not meet or less ambitious ones that you do?

Alastair Dempster: I will ask Lee Cousins to answer that, but I will say that I would rather have aspirational targets. I think that we need to have targets that stretch us. If our targets are too easy, there is not a great deal of satisfaction in meeting them. However, I have one caveat. We must ensure that we have both the human and the financial resources in order to have a good chance of delivering the targets. That is a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation.

Lee Cousins: The targets are closely based on what is happening and being measured at the moment. "Time to Speak Up" shows, for example, that between the ages of 13 and 17 there is the first sharp drop-off in participation in sport, particularly among young women. Our target is to prevent that drop-off. If we can do that during the four years between 13 and 17, we would be taking a big step forward. The 85 per cent target figure is being met in relation to 12 and 13-year-olds, but our objective is to stretch ourselves to ensure that the figure applies to 17-year-olds, too, so that a naturally active part of the population continues to participate in sport.

All the targets are based on stretching current measurements. Our general position is that we need to prevent the decline in participation. People are relatively active, if not as active as the physical activity task force would like, but sport contributes to people's physical activity and we do not want to lose that.

Ian Jenkins: The physical activity task force's targets have a long time scale and I wonder whether you are exposing yourself to criticism later—it might not be justified practically—if you achieve good movement towards your targets but do not quite meet them.

Will you talk to us a wee bit about the coaching structure that you are trying to establish? On the target areas of club and coach development, the

"Time to Speak Up" document states:

"A national programme has not yet been created."

The document continues:

"It has also taken longer than expected to establish a national register of qualified and active coaches."

Coaches will be important to support volunteers, which you do not have in the numbers that you want. Will you talk a wee bit about that?

Ian Robson: The issue of coaching has gained prominence during the past 12 to 24 months at a UK level. I think that everybody recognises that in many instances the fabric of a community club is driven by and built around what we would call the key volunteer: the coach. Coaches enable people to learn in an appropriate and safe environment how to participate—how to find the appropriate level of participation and how to sustain that participation.

One problem with many of our sports is that we can be dismissive of our young people at too young an age if we do not understand that when they are 22 rather than 12 they could be playing their sport professionally, whether that be football, rugby or athletics. We need to have appropriately qualified people to sustain young people's participation and deliver their potential over a long time. A UK-wide task force is looking at that matter and sportscotland is an active participant in that inquiry.

In the most recent comprehensive spending review settlement, Scotland received money for an integrated coaching network. We are well down the track of working on that at a local authority level, which is where we need to make the networks happen on the ground. We are encouraged by the progress to date. However, as our chairman clearly stated, we need to stretch ourselves. We need to work harder at some of our relationships with local authorities to deliver the outcomes that we all wish to see.

Ian Jenkins: My next question is on a slightly different tack, because I know that the convener will not allow me any further questions.

Michael Russell: Never.

Ian Jenkins: You talked about the need for access to indoor facilities and all-weather facilities to allow sporting activity to take place. You also want to promote elite achievements in certain target sports. At what point does consideration of, for example, an indoor or all-weather velodrome come into your thinking? In your strategy, at what point will someone be able to say that, because cycling is one of the activities that they want to promote, a velodrome is essential? Where does that issue fit in with your plans for the next five years? I refer to the example of a velodrome because I know a wee bit about that subject.

Alastair Dempster: Perhaps Ian Robson will talk specifically about a velodrome. However, as we go forward, we will increasingly have to ensure that as many facilities as possible are multi-sport facilities. I believe that the future is not just about building facilities for specific sports. The answer is to build other activities into facilities so that those facilities can be used for a range of sports.

Ian Robson: For sports such as cycling, facilities are a challenging issue, as opposed to a sport such as basketball, which can be played on a badminton court and vice versa. The issue has been considered in the context of the property review on which sportscotland is due to report to ministers shortly. One of the reports' three strands looked at the existing and future provision of national indoor and outdoor facilities. Cycling was factored into those deliberations.

On the point that Lee Cousins made, all sports facilities, including velodromes, are not cheap to run. A sustained revenue investment is required from partners, over and above the capital resources to build the facility. The magnificent cycling facility in Manchester has secured the success of Chris Hoy, Craig McLean and others. However, we in Scotland need to ask whether we believe that we can sustain an investment in such a facility.

To take the agenda a step further, if we were ever of a mind to bid again for the Commonwealth games, we would clearly need to have a velodrome. Therefore, all those issues start to link and make us question whether a proposal for a velodrome facility should have to stand on its own two feet. However, we are fortunate that Craig McLean and Chris Hoy have had the benefit of a magnificent facility just down the road in Manchester.

Ian Jenkins: Wales has decided to build a velodrome. Sportscotland has a target of 110 Scots being medallists on the world stage. We have shown that we can have success in cycling if we have the facilities. The problem is that Meadowbank is deteriorating. It is not an all-weather facility. Groundwork with youngsters is being hampered and events have been cancelled because of bad weather. I would like you to think carefully about that aspect.

The Convener: You took advantage of my good nature, Mr Jenkins.

Ian Jenkins: I did.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I would not presume to take advantage of the convener's good nature.

Michael Russell: You could not find it.

Jackie Baillie: I never said that—it was Mike Russell.

Sportscotland made a laudable statement in the "Time to Speak Up" document:

"Promoting equality and social justice will underpin all aspects of the future development of sport in Scotland."

However, sportscotland has only one target in that area, so how does that underpin the rest?

Lee Cousins: On a page that you have not seen, there is a series of values and principles in which equality and social justice are mentioned as underpinning our strategy. However, in each of the targets we expect the right sub-targets. For example, we would expect the targets to aim also at an agenda target of some sort. We would take that down to another target—for example, targets relating to ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

We have headline key targets that we need people to coalesce around and understand that we are delivering. The expectation is that, in delivering those targets, we would work out what we thought were the right sub-targets, which relates to the values that you mentioned. The social justice and social inclusion agenda, to come back to the point that Irene McGugan made, has to be paid for because the delivery of such a service cannot be free.

Jackie Baillie: That leads to my second question. Earlier you referred to having the human and financial resources to meet targets. Have you costed the targets? If so, how much of an increase does that represent? I have a subset of questions that follow on. What percentage of your budget do you spend in disadvantaged areas or on disadvantaged people? By how much will that percentage grow because of your strategy?

Alastair Dempster: I will pick up the first part of the question, on whether the targets have been costed. To be frank, they have not, but we have not been unmindful of the potential cost of them, because to be so would be irresponsible. Therefore, we have kept aware of some idea of the costs. However, until the consultation document is finished and we know precisely what the aspirations are, it will be difficult to get into the detail. The last time that sport 21 was reviewed, lottery income was exceptionally high and it was anticipated that it would continue at that level. However, lottery income has dropped significantly, and the resources have not been available for many of the things that we have sought to do. To come back to the point about being aspirational, we also want things that are deliverable within at least some parameter of our resources.

On your second question about the percentages, I do not know whether we would have that information to hand.

14:30

Lee Cousins: This is a strategy for Scottish sport, not a strategy just for sportscotland. Our overall corporate plan involves £40 million to £50 million, which is a small amount of money in the context of the total investment that is made in sport across the board, particularly by local authorities. The delivery of some targets—especially the targets that you have mentioned—will be the responsibility of a range of partners, and we expect the strategy to influence their spending as well as ours.

When the strategy is in place, the first job for sportscotland will be to ask what its specific role is and how it can respond to the strategy. In our next corporate plan, you will see how we will adjust our spending and our plans to fit the strategy for Scottish sport that will exist in March 2003.

Jackie Baillie: Forgive me, I was not asking specifically about sportscotland. In your strategy, you state that your aims for social justice

"will be pursued by all partners with an interest in sport."

As you cannot give me concrete examples of programmes that you will run to underpin social justice across all your targets, and as we will have to wait for a subset of targets, I am trying to find out how much money has been spent since 1998—when the first plan on disadvantaged areas and people was put in place—and what difference this four-year plan will make to the income. If you do not have that kind of detail because you have not fully costed it, I would be happy for you to give me it at a later date. We can talk the language of social justice, but unless we demonstrate it in concrete ways we are not going to make a difference in the communities that we seek to serve.

Alastair Dempster: We will have to get back to you on that. To collect that information, we will have to approach our partners.

As we go forward, it is important that we identify the partners who need to work together to deliver each of the targets. It is also important that those partners recognise the potential financial contribution that they will have to make. I feel strongly that that is an area in which we need to tighten up. We have learned from the past that it will become more important to us as we go forward to ensure that all these targets are delivered. I hope that I am making myself clear.

Lee Cousins: We are already beginning to see the influence of the strategy. Many of the concepts in it are also identified in Glasgow City Council's best-value review, and the sorts of social justice programmes that it outlines—for example, free swimming for children—are starting to emerge in the council's service plans. The new programmes

that the council will put in place through its community action teams for ethnic minorities are starting to appear. I therefore have a reasonable expectation that the strategy will influence our partners, but it will take time for it to work that shift of resources through. That certainly will not take place overnight. Nonetheless, there is anecdotal evidence that that sort of shift of thinking and resources is starting to appear.

The Convener: In the discussion that took place at the ministerial forum, people were keen to have more than well-meaning phrases in the document: they wanted targets and sub-targets. Folk such as Marian Keogh from the Glasgow Alliance were keen to ensure that "Time to Speak Up" was not just a worthy document but a strategy that would deliver in the long term. I assure you that I am monitoring the situation with interest on behalf of the committee.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Let us return to the issue of lottery funding. Earlier this year, the New Opportunities Fund announced the award of some £87 million, through local authorities, for the improvement of levels of physical activity, especially among young people. What relationship do you have with the NOF and local authorities? Surely that will have an impact on progress towards your targets. What influence will you have on the spending of that money and decisions that are made about that spending?

Alastair Dempster: The £87 million from that source is very welcome. As you say, it is important that there is co-ordination to ensure that the money is spent wisely and that there is no danger of any duplication. We have been working hard with the NOF to put in place the liaison links to ensure that that is happening. Those links clearly extend through to the local authorities as well. Ian Robson may want to speak about the practicalities of that.

Ian Robson: At the practical level, we are represented by a member of the Executive and one of our non-executive directors on the Scotland panel of the NOF. Of the £87 million of which you speak, £55 million has been targeted for capital projects. As Alastair Dempster said, we want those investments to be focused through on-the-ground, joined-up thinking about community assets, whether they are built for a school, in school grounds or outwith school grounds, and whether they are school sports halls or community swimming pools. Regarding the portfolio approach with which local authorities have been presented, we would wish to work closer with them to ensure that best-value outcomes are achieved.

In some of our strands in the lottery funding, we are starting to see a focus away from areas in which applications have been taken to the NOF. That is inevitable. We believe that, in the context

of the four-year period of the strategy, it will create pressures elsewhere in lottery funding if an area has been the focus of attention and there is already speculation about the next round of the NOF that may or may not emerge in that area. As Alastair Dempster said, we are anxious to ensure that we work closely with our local authority partners and the NOF to get the best-value outcomes.

Mr Monteith: Just yesterday I met a youth organisation that delivers a number of programmes, some of which are aimed at physical activity. It was disappointed that, although it had written to 32 local authorities, only one local authority had replied—and it replied in the negative—to its request for the local authorities to be considered as partners to deliver funding for its physical activity initiatives. Has any of the partners or the organisations with which you are involved brought to light any difficulties in liaising with local authorities and accessing the money or becoming partners with them in delivering greater levels of physical activity?

Alastair Dempster: I have not heard of any. I do not know whether either of my colleagues has.

Lee Cousins: In respect of the NOF—if that is what you are referring to—

Alastair Dempster: I thought that it was a general question.

Mr Monteith: General in the sense that I am interested to find out whether organisations that are supported by sportscotland are having similar difficulties in accessing the NOF money that has gone to local authorities. The rationale is simple. If we have targets, which you are presenting to us today, there must come a point at which funding comes from the community fund, the NOF and sportscotland. If some of the money from each fund is to go towards promoting physical activity, should all the funding not be under your auspices rather than dissipated under different organisations? That is the larger question to which I was coming.

Lee Cousins: I will leave the larger question to Alastair Dempster. A number of governing bodies wrote to the local authorities in respect of NOF funding and asked whether there was a possibility of entering into partnership with them to deliver objectives. I am not sure whether any of those bodies received a positive reply. To be fair, however, a number of local authorities did quite a lot of local consultation work that took in community organisations—perhaps more work than the national governing bodies of sport did. As the organisation that you mentioned did, the national governing bodies tended to go around the 32 local authorities, but the local authorities started from somewhere slightly different and

consulted some of their local clubs and organisations. Perhaps there was not a connection.

One objective that we have not quite pulled off and that sport 21 initially sought is much closer relationships between local and national organisations and clubs in order to build partnerships. We aim for that again and still see it as the way forward. Members will see from target 10 that there is much reliance on the community planning process and bringing together connected local and national partnerships.

A number of sport's national organisations have still to learn how to deliver locally. Some of our national governing bodies are strong nationally, but they are not as strong at the district, county or federal level. An element needs to be strengthened. The approach that is alluded to in "Time to Speak Up" and the first part of the sport 21 strategy relates to the need to build regional strategic alliances. It is almost impossible for some organisations to connect to 32 local authorities, but perhaps they can connect to clumps and structures of three or four authorities. In "Time to Speak Up", there is a thought that we should start to build regional delivery units in which the national organisations, local authorities and clubs get together at a scale with which they can all cope in order to deliver. The connections that you are thinking about could then come to the fore.

The Convener: How do you stop people being precious?

Lee Cousins: I wish I knew the answer to that question. I hope that part of the sport 21 process means that if people are at least signed up to the same vision and ideas, some fraying of the edges in respect of being precious is possible. I would not like to say that having an agreed strategy is a solution, but at least it gets people to the table and gets them talking to each other. If people understand that they are going in the same direction, the ability not to be so precious is at least on the cards. However, I do not have a magic solution to that problem.

Alastair Dempster: Partnership working is the biggest challenge. We try very hard, as I am sure that others do, but one has to keep trying to make things work. There should be a shared vision and a shared target and people should know what they are expected to deliver. If there is clarity and people know what will be achieved by working together, they will start to get there. We genuinely think that we are making a little progress. I hope that more areas in Scottish life now understand the importance of sport and physical activity and the contribution that they can make. We are certainly not complacent; we have a long way to go.

Michael Russell: I am sure that you are not complacent.

Your targets can be divided into two broad categories. I am always suspicious of organisations that have exactly 10 targets. It is as if 10 is a magical number—presumably from the Bible—and 11 and nine are not. Some of your targets would be called aspirational—they are good things that you want to make happen—and I accept that partnership working with sports clubs and others will make them happen. It is clear that other targets relate to areas in which Government could make the difference. For example, one target is for

"All schoolchildren to take part in at least two hours of high quality physical education classes a week".

You cannot negotiate that with regional partners. That is not how it works. Without doubt, a political commitment is required for that to take place.

We discussed the funding of sports clubs in response to Irene McGugan's point. There are blocks to voluntary clubs getting access to new buildings built through the private finance initiative because of the structure of the contracts. Only Government can solve that.

If the strategy includes targets that require Government action, would it not be better to say that clearly, rather than to use the language of partnership and discussion, and to nod to government objectives? Is it not better to say clearly in each objective what Government should do? Lee Cousins is pointing out where you say it, but perhaps you should say it more loudly and more clearly, because you have not said it yet in the meeting.

14:45

Lee Cousins: On the target that you are looking at, we have listed the Scottish Executive as the lead partner. There is a clear understanding—

Michael Russell: The Executive is not the lead partner; it is the only body that can implement the target. To list the Executive as the lead partner is a wonderful evasion. It is the only body that can implement the target, so why keep talking about lead partners? Why not just say, "Do it"?

Lee Cousins: Although the Executive can make the place in the curriculum for two hours of quality physical education, if we are to deliver it, more teacher training and some teacher retraining will be needed, so training organisations at least will need to be involved. Some local authorities will also need to make a contribution, because some school PE facilities are not yet big enough to cope with delivering two hours of quality PE a week for every student.

To say that the Executive is the only body that can deliver that is not fair. The Executive is the lead partner, because it will have to make the decision and create the drive to do it. For that target, the ministerial forum has clearly fingered those who need to act. We expect the Scottish Executive to endorse the target, pick it up and say, "We will make it happen." That is what the concept of a lead partner means in that instance.

We are almost at the stage of saying that if we are to implement the target, we will expect the Scottish Executive as lead partner to form an on-going implementation group that will ensure that the target is met by bringing people together. For that target, we clearly identify the Scottish Executive as the body that will bring together an implementation group and deliver the target if it ends up in the final strategy.

Alastair Dempster: I assure Michael Russell that, at our meetings, there is no doubt—there is absolute clarity—on some of the important areas in the targets, particular the two hours of quality PE, which you mentioned. Nobody is in any doubt about the importance of that.

Michael Russell: What is your commitment to the relocation of jobs in Scotland? In the past, sportscotland has committed itself to getting out of Edinburgh and into some other place, but you are still in Edinburgh. What is going to happen on that?

Alastair Dempster: I cannot remember any occasion on which we have said that we would get out of Edinburgh. For the past six months, we have participated in a review of our national facilities, our head office location and major facilities throughout Scotland. That exercise is almost complete. We will put the final report to the sportscotland council tomorrow. Thereafter, the report and recommendations will go to ministers for their consideration.

We have not been sitting doing nothing about the matter. There have been six months of intensive work to find out what our options are. That is now coming to a conclusion.

Michael Russell: Should you be located somewhere other than Edinburgh?

Alastair Dempster: I agree completely with what the report contains. I would rather wait until it is published before I disclose my position.

The Convener: As Mr Russell knows, I am always more than eager for organisations to answer to the committee, but it would be inappropriate for any announcement to be made before sportscotland endorses the position.

Michael Russell: When will sportscotland announce what is in the report? When will the secrets of Alastair's box be revealed on the matter?

Alastair Dempster: I will be blunt: the staff will be the first to know. For me to allude today to where they will be would be totally wrong.

The report will go to the ministers. The decision is not for sportscotland. To be honest, I do not like dodging questions, but I do not have the answer. The timing is in the minister's hands. All that I can tell the committee is that I will pressurise the minister as much as I can, because when a lot of people are waiting and wondering where their families will be, it is important that we cut the delay and are as quick as we can be. I am sorry that I do not know the answer to your question, but I assure you that that is not for the want of us pressing the minister to decide as quickly as possible.

The Convener: I have raised the sports hall target with the ministerial forum. How realistic is it and how does it affect people outwith the central belt? Few people in my constituency will be able to walk to a hall in 20 minutes, unless they live in Larkhall, Carluke or Lanark. If we make such statements, we are saying that many of those folk are out of the equation. Will we develop village halls or school facilities? What are we saying to people who are outwith that central belt target?

Ian Robson: The access issue that you describe is a challenge. We should make it clear, so that the committee understands, that we are not talking about building 500 new sports halls in the given time frame. We are probably talking about building 30 to 35 sports halls and opening up existing ones, which, typically, involves overcoming staffing barriers. Cathy Peattie mentioned access barriers; if appropriate staffing levels are provided, we can access facilities that are presently inaccessible.

We always have to work with our partners in more rural local authorities on the challenge of ensuring that the targets apply and are relevant. When pulling all the information together in one national document that is mindful of urban and rural issues, the challenge is that, at face value, the document sometimes does not give due attention or pay due heed to an area's agenda. To say the least, I look forward to an interesting and challenging debate on the topic during our visits to Orkney, Shetland, the Western Isles, Inverness and Langholm down in the Borders.

From talking to schoolteachers, head teachers and local authorities, I am mindful of the practicality of access to swimming pools and the amount of time that is lost in a school day transporting students by bus to and from pools. Equally, I am mindful that in some high schools in Edinburgh, someone might have only five minutes on court, given the time that is lost in changing and transport.

Accessibility is an issue wherever people go. It does not concern price or location only; transport and a range of factors come into the loop. The challenge is to ensure practical ways of adopting the strategy. At sportscotland, we are committed in our work to moving forward and establishing relationships with local authorities, to enable the strategy to be delivered. If there is one lingering negative legacy of sport 21, it is that we could not get the number of local authorities to which we aspired to adopt a national strategy, break it down to the local delivery level and recognise the nuances and the uniqueness of their environments.

The Convener: You will know of my interest in physical activity in primary schools—perhaps it is an obsession. How will we ensure the target is met? We can have all the targets we like, but how do we get primary kids active at the beginning, rather than at the end, of their school life?

Alastair Dempster: I assure you that we will try hard. We have the resources. As you know, the comprehensive spending review made the resources available to us, although the main element cuts in not next year, but the year after that. To begin with, we were a bit disappointed about that, but then we reflected and realised that that will give us time to ensure that, when the majority of the resources come through, the plans to use them will be in place. I am confident that we will be able to do that. We have learnt a lot from the school sports co-ordinators in secondary schools about some of the things that we should perhaps have done at the start of that exercise, which we will certainly do in primary schools. Members will be aware that some people believe leaving physical activity until children are at primary school is too late and that it should be done even before that. I am sorry to use the words co-operation and partnership, but the work has to be done that way. I am convinced that we now have the resources to do it, and we will be setting clear and measurable objectives and going for it. That is an important point.

There are links when people move from primary to secondary school, and that is why clubs are important. Club links can provide a bridge and can be an important way of keeping children who move from one school to another involved in a sport. A lot of the statistics show a significant drop in activity from about the age of 10, which becomes pronounced at around 11 or 12. Those bridges will be very important.

The Convener: I have a final question—

Jackie Baillie: You are abusing the role of convener.

The Convener: Absolutely—this is the one time that I get to do so.

How can we use our medallists more effectively as positive role models whose achievements children and young people can aspire to?

Alastair Dempster: We are setting up the ambassadors scheme, which Ian Robson will say more about, but we also need to get sportsmen and women into schools. It is not just Commonwealth or Olympic medallists such as Lee McConnell and Graeme Randall who need to be involved, but also footballers, rugby players and hockey players.

Ian Robson: The ambassadors scheme is an appropriate and important priority. There is an access issue, because the Lee McConnells of this world are not in Scotland 52 weeks a year, so we need to deal with that challenge. We also need to be clear that the scheme cannot be like the circus that comes to town once a year and is gone again after an hour. It must be part of a rolling strategy that links in, at primary school and high school level, with the active primary schools programme and school sports co-ordinators to leave a lasting legacy. To people who have the romantic notion of believing in heroes—and I am happy to admit to that romantic notion—those folk are tremendous role models to put before our young people as a demonstration of what is possible with hard work.

The Convener: Thank you very much for your time. I am sure that other issues will come along, and we will be back in touch.

Scotland's Museums

The Convener: Item 2 is consideration of the amended report, by Jackie Baillie and Michael Russell, on Scotland's museums. I ask members to agree to the paper and to agree that it should be forwarded to the Scottish Executive as part of its consultation on the future of museums. Would you like to add anything, Jackie?

Jackie Baillie: There is just one tiny thing that we should bring to members' attention. Mike Russell and I have both received correspondence from Highland Council indicating that we may inadvertently have suggested that Tain and District Museum is due for closure. I have to say that, based on the evidence that was submitted, that was indeed the case, and Highland Council concedes that. However, we should place on record that we are neither implicitly nor explicitly criticising Highland Council and that we recognise all its good work. However, Tain and District Museum will lose its curator and close in due course; it is only a matter of time. Although we do not propose to amend the report, we should still place on record our reassurances to Highland Council.

15:00

Michael Russell: I have seen only Jackie Baillie's copy of Highland Council's correspondence—I have not seen the letter in my office. However, Highland Council appears to be arguing that it has adjusted the funding for Highland museums, with the result that there have been some losers. One of those losers is Tain and District Museum, which will lose its curator. However, although the council says that that is not the same as closing the museum, such a step will lead to closure unless new money is invested. As a result, there is no need to change the report. If Highland Council feels hard done by, we are sorry.

We need to release the paper if we are to submit it as part of the Executive's consultation. Can we use the appropriate channels to do that on behalf of the committee?

The Convener: Absolutely. I will ensure that that is done.

Scotland's Languages

The Convener: Item 3 is the committee's consideration of Irene McGugan's amended report on Scotland's languages, of which all members have received a copy. First, I seek the committee's agreement to adopt and publish the report. Are members agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

Irene McGugan: I am glad that people are happy with the suggested amendments and the little bit of revision that has taken place to the report. However, I want to suggest one more amendment to the very end of paragraph 124, which reads:

"To ensure the development of a satisfactory Policy, substantive research, consultation and reporting needs to be carried out to gather much more information than is currently available."

I want to add the phrase "on the specific needs of each language" to the end of that sentence to focus what we mean by the specific "research, consultation and reporting" that require to be carried out. We need to identify the needs of each language to ensure that any languages policy adequately deals with those needs and, as per the inquiry's remit, begins to establish supports and mechanisms to develop the languages in future. Is that acceptable?

Members indicated agreement.

Mr Monteith: I have two small points. I think that paragraphs 110 and 116 have been cut and pasted into the report, because paragraph 110 has a typo which is repeated in paragraph 116. I wonder whether that could be corrected before the report is published.

I am happy enough for the report to go forward. However, I want to put on record my dissent from paragraph 119, simply because it contains a commitment to increasing funding. I would like the conclusions in paragraph 122, 123 and 124 to recommend such a measure before I would support it.

The Convener: We have to consider the issue of translating the report, which will cost between approximately £150 and £250 per 1,000 words. The report contains 8,000 words, which will cost £1,200 to £2,000 per language. If we translated the report into the seven recommended languages—Scots, Gaelic, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Punjabi and Urdu—it would mean anything between £8,500 and £14,000. I am not sure whether we will be able to secure the necessary funding for such a substantial budget. I wrote to the Equal Opportunities Committee on the subject, but its reply was rather non-committal. As

a result, I have asked the clerks to provide this information for us.

A bid for the translation costs would need to be made to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. We are not sure what the funding streams are like at the moment. Obviously, as we are now in the final round of bidding for money, the pots are slightly smaller than they would have been at the beginning.

Jackie Baillie: I appreciate the amount of work that Irene McGugan has done, which is why I think that we should explore having the full report published in all the languages. However, given the lateness of the financial year, I wonder whether it would be possible to consider whether a summary version that captured the essence of the report might not have a radical impact on reducing costs.

The Convener: That is a helpful suggestion.

Michael Russell: We should certainly explore the possibility of publishing the report in each of the languages. Given the fact that the report will be an important statement that has been well researched over a period of time and will deal with language policy and how we proceed with languages, it would seem somewhat contradictory not to publish it in the languages concerned. Publishing it in full should be pursued as a first option.

If the SPCB refuses that option, we will need to be content with the report being published in the three languages of English, Gaelic and Scots—which are the languages that the bulk of the report deals with—and summary versions in the other languages. My first option would be for the full version to be published in each of the languages.

Mr Monteith: The very question throws up some of the difficulties that the report seeks to address. The main difficulty is with the language of Scots. As the report mentions, there is a degree of debate about what constitutes Scots. Notwithstanding those comments, as Michael Russell said, it would seem absurd to have a policy document on languages that was not translated into the languages that it discussed.

The summary that Jackie Baillie has suggested may be the most acceptable route. By all means, we can explore the other route of a full translation, but I am mindful of the fact that the greater the translation expense, the greater the likelihood that the document will be open to ridicule. I would rather see the document be given proper and serious consideration than be subject to attack by commentators in the media simply because of the cost of its translation. Without making a value judgment on the submissions that people have made or on the work that Irene McGugan has done in the report, I would simply highlight that it would be disappointing if the cost of the report

became the focus of people's attention rather than its content.

Cathy Peattie: It will be a great pity if the report is not translated into other languages. I support Jackie Baillie's idea that at least a summary of the report should be translated. Perhaps that could be our fall-back position when we seek resources. It is crucial that the report be available at least in Gaelic and Scots. I understand what people are saying, but it is vital that we be clear about language. Given the fact that the report highlights a number of the issues, it would be a real pity if it were not available in Gaelic and Scots.

The Convener: My only concern about that is that that might set greater store by indigenous Scottish languages than community languages. If we cannot have a full translation into the seven languages that have been identified, we should not have any translation as we would otherwise be saying that it is all very well to have a languages policy but Gaelic and Scots are more important than community languages. I would have some difficulty with saying that. In essence, that is what we would be saying.

Michael Russell: By having no translation, we would be saying that none of those languages is as important as English.

The Convener: I am not saying that. The Parliament produces all its reports in English as a matter of course.

Michael Russell: All the signage is in English and Gaelic.

The Convener: I can live with English and Gaelic. If we were to move away from the languages in which we have traditionally reported, we would be setting greater store by Scots than by Punjabi, which would be a dangerous road to go down.

Mr Monteith: The area of concern that you have highlighted is important. It is clear that there are people in Scotland—often first-generation Scots—who cannot read English. If they wished to access the report, they would find it difficult to do so if it were not available in a language that they are used to, such as Punjabi or Urdu. Therefore, it would be a negative move not to offer some form of translation of the report in every language. Not to do so would be to imply that those languages are unimportant, when some people would not be able to access the report without translations in those languages.

I have yet to meet someone who uses Scots, whether or not they are lovers of Scots, who cannot read English. Similarly, I have yet to meet someone who speaks, reads and writes in Gaelic who cannot read English. I am especially concerned about those who cannot access the

report. I return to the idea of a summary. It is important to treat every language as equal and to give people a choice of accessing the report, because that does not offer any view about the other languages. It is important for the committee to bear that in mind.

Irene McGugan: Given that the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body has a language policy that makes much reference to openness and accessibility and that paragraph 14 of the policy's action plan states specifically that the SPCB will

"consider requests by committees to provide translations of their reports",

I would want the committee to consider seriously obtaining full translations of the report into all seven languages as its first option. An opportunity exists. Although there are difficulties, for example with end-of-year funding, the corporate body's language policy allows committees to ask for translations of reports. We should do that in this instance. If that is not possible because of funding restrictions, we should consider the summary versions that Jackie Baillie has suggested.

It is difficult to decide whether Scots and Gaelic should be treated differently. The report suggests that they should be treated differently because they are indigenous languages and because nowhere else in the world will uphold them. Punjabi and Urdu will never die out, regardless of what the Scottish Parliament does or fails to do in relation to their development. There are millions of speakers of those languages elsewhere in the world; that is not the case for Scots and Gaelic. I accept that it is difficult to get that message across while keeping in mind equal opportunities considerations. I would not want the report to be jeopardised by, or caught up in discussion of, any of those kinds of issues. We should be careful about how we proceed. I suspect that we will get seven summaries of equal status.

That said, I accept Mike Russell's point that the corollary to that is that English is the most important of all the languages, because that is the one in which the full report appears. That is also a difficult message to convey, as the focus of the report has been how to support and develop all the other languages that there are in Scotland.

Cathy Peattie: I appreciate Irene McGugan's argument, but it must also be said that Scots is alive and kicking in our communities. Our bairns are growing up speaking Scots, but the majority of Scots cannot read Scots or do not have the opportunity to do so. Producing the report in Scots would be a wonderful way of progressing that issue. However, I am prepared to go with the proposal.

Ian Jenkins: I would like to commend the reasoned way in which Irene McGugan spoke

about the issue. The report should be published in full in all seven languages or a summary should be published in all seven languages.

Michael Russell: Should there be a summary in English as well?

Ian Jenkins: Yes, indeed.

Michael Russell: We already have the full version in English.

Ian Jenkins: I understand that; nevertheless, there should be a summary version in all seven languages. That is the way to go.

Mr Monteith: There is no translation fee for that.

The Convener: We may have to write the summary in English, so that it can be translated, so we would have a summary version in English. It would not be a big deal to make that accessible. Members of the public may not read an 8,000-word report, but they may read a 1,000-word report. The issue is also about accessibility.

Irene McGugan: Without a doubt, there will be a bit of outrage in the Scots and Gaelic communities that the committee's first substantive report on their languages is not in their own languages. I suspect that there are many people in the Scots and Gaelic communities, many of whom are members of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on the Scots language and the cross-party group on Gaelic in the Scottish Parliament, who will willingly translate the report for a fraction of the cost that the SPCB seems to feel is the going rate for translation, simply to get it into those languages. I accept that we could do that for Scots and Gaelic but that we do not have a comparable situation for the other languages, which still leaves me with a problem, but we ought to try to get the report into Scots and Gaelic.

15:15

The Convener: I will try my utmost, I assure you.

Jackie Baillie: We are in danger of going round and round the issue. It is quite clear that the convener will go and argue for the resources to be made available to translate the report into all languages in full. However, we have to be pragmatic. If the resources are not available, are we not going to have it translated at all, or is there a reserve position? Having it translated in summary version across all the languages is the right way to proceed. Once it is published, if we have to go for plan B—where members of the cross-party groups on Scots and Gaelic stay up to do the translation and do what they will with it—that is fine.

Michael Russell: I accept that, except that Gaelic is dying of pragmatism. I will not move

against the proposal, but there requires to be a commitment. The report does differentiate, difficult as it is, between Scots and Gaelic and the other languages. Frankly, my view is that the Parliament should publish everything in Gaelic, Scots and English, but then I am no longer a pragmatist on these matters; I am a radical, because I have seen what pragmatism does—it destroys the language.

The Convener: I am glad to see that you have developed your radical streak, Mr Russell. I will do my utmost to secure the necessary funding for translation into seven languages, but if I cannot, we should translate the summary into seven languages. I ask Irene McGugan and the clerk to get things together in a way that can be turned round quickly so that we can do that if necessary.

Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill

The Convener: Pertinently, item 4 on the agenda concerns the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill, in the name of Mr Michael Russell and Mr John Farquhar Munro.

Michael Russell: On a point of order, convener. Is it appropriate for me to remain and discuss the bill as a member of the committee, as I am also the proposer of the bill? If it is not appropriate, I am happy to withdraw. I might even be prepared to sit in silence in the corner, but I think that I would rather withdraw, because being silent is harder.

The Convener: The thought of you sitting in silence in the corner fills the committee with such glee that, if I was devious, I would suggest that that should happen at every meeting. However, there is no requirement for you to withdraw. The advice from the clerks is that, as a member of the committee, you are entitled to remain to discuss the matter, so I ask you to do that. However, I hope that you will not try to use your position on the committee to sway members before we discuss the bill.

Michael Russell: I hope that that was a joke.

The Convener: It was a joke.

Michael Russell: Even my silver-tongued eloquence could not sway you had you decided otherwise, given your well-known stubborn nature.

The Convener: I hope that you are not suggesting that the convener is stubborn, Mr Russell.

We have a paper in front of us. With the clerks, I have tried to draw together a way forward on the bill that I hope will help us to take it through the initial parliamentary process, as well as allow us to conduct stage 2 of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill and stage 1 of the children's commissioner bill. I hope that the paper is helpful. It sets out a timetable. I hope that members accept that it is a way in which to proceed.

If we accept the paper, I hope that we will seek written evidence as a matter of urgency, and that we will timetable the two oral evidence sessions. The paper lists a number of possible witnesses. I suggest that we timetable witnesses for 10 December and 17 December, and have further evidence sessions in the first weeks of the new year, because we should do the bill justice and discuss the issues in full, and that would be better done over that time scale. If members agree, that is the way in which I ask the committee to proceed.

Michael Russell: I am very happy with the paper and am grateful that it has been presented today.

I want to raise two issues. First, it seems appropriate to invite a reporter from the Local Government Committee, which was a secondary committee, to join this committee, if the Local Government Committee is agreeable to that. My second point is a query. On 10 December, Douglas Ansdell, the head of the Scottish Executive Gaelic unit, will appear before the committee. Members will recall the evidence that we received from the director of Historic Scotland. Given that the head of the Gaelic unit is relevant to this bill only in so far as the minister is relevant, and that advice to ministers may become part of the questioning, is it entirely appropriate for him to appear before the committee on that date? Should he be brought in once the evidence has been taken and perhaps appear alongside the minister?

The Convener: The situation that arose when we took evidence from Historic Scotland was, quite frankly, farcical. Until there is a review of current civil service practice, Michael Russell is right that we will not get any answers from the civil servant in question about advice to ministers. Unless the questions are on more general policy areas, for example, about advice given to ministers on the bill, I do not think that it would be worth while. If the questions are on more general policy matters, it may be worth while. It is really about guidance. If the head of the Gaelic unit appeared before the committee on the same day as the minister, and perhaps before him—

Michael Russell: If Comunn na Gàidhlig, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Highland Council, which has been a leader in this field, gave evidence to the committee on the same day, we would get the perspective of Commun na Gàidhlig. In addition—and perhaps more important at this stage—we would get a local authority perspective from bilingual authorities and from people who will be affected by the bill. Certainly, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is a bilingual authority and Highland Council has worked very hard in those areas. They are, after all, the focus of the bill.

The Convener: I suggest that we take evidence from Commun na Gàidhlig, and local authorities, sooner rather than later because that would be helpful. We are on a tight timescale. I do not know how busy we will be on 10 December and 17 December with amendments to the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill. I would be hesitant to invite people down from the Western Isles to appear before the committee, only for them not to be called until 6 pm if we have a series of amendments to consider.

Michael Russell: It will not make any difference if they cannot get a plane back until the next day.

The Convener: Exactly. For the committee to do justice to the issue, it will not help to hear evidence rushed at the end of the meeting after a

whole series of amendments. Much will depend on the number of amendments to the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill, especially on 10 December. I suggest that we hear more detailed evidence from folk who must travel a distance either on 17 December or in the first week back after the recess.

Michael Russell: It might be easier to hear Donald Meek and Dr Kenneth Mackinnon then, because their views are comparatively well known. The local authorities and Comunn na Gàidhlig could then appear on 17 December.

Jackie Baillie: For clarification, are you talking about all local authorities affected, which includes Argyll and Bute? There might be a difference between authorities that are very aware of what may be required and authorities that perhaps have been slow—

Michael Russell: North Ayrshire Council is also included, because of Arran.

Jackie Baillie: It is important to get that agreed.

Michael Russell: I accept that point.

Scottish Media Group

The Convener: Item 5 on the agenda concerns an update on the Scottish Media Group. I confirm that the minister has received a letter from me, in which it has been noted that

“if a proposal is noted to the DTI under the special newspaper merger scheme, the fact will be announced publicly and the clerk will be advised by the DTI of the announcement.”

Would there be any merit in seeking a cross-party meeting with the minister, Melanie Johnson? I do not know whether such a meeting would be forthcoming; it might not be possible because there is a quasi-judicial role and the minister may not be able to meet us. However, there might be some merit in seeking a meeting to put the committee's views on the record, if members are happy with that as a way to proceed.

Michael Russell: I entirely concur with that. It is a good idea. In addition, I wonder whether now is not the time to ask to speak to the Scottish Media Group and ask about the group's intentions? The group has not published the shortlist of three bidders, despite saying that it would. Clearly, there is an attempt to keep this away from the glare of public interest as far as possible, but that glare should be on the matter, and a meeting in open session with the Scottish Media Group would be very valuable.

The Convener: We have to be careful and decide whether such a meeting would be valuable. I understand your point about whether it would deal only with issues such as confidentiality and contract details, which, given that people may feel that they could not discuss certain subjects with the committee, could take away from its value. There would be merit in the committee writing to the Scottish Media Group and requesting that it supply information about the status of the bids for next week. I am happy for the committee to review the contents of the reply at next week's meeting.

Michael Russell: I am happy to return to the proposal next week once I have had sight of the reply.

The Convener: May I also abuse my position as convener and urge members to sign my motion and to urge their parties' business managers to include it as a subject for debate in members' business as soon as possible?

Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill

The Convener: The bill on the commissioner for children and young people will be introduced on 4 December and published on 5 December. On that basis, I suggested that the committee hold a press launch in Edinburgh on the morning of 5 December, and we are exploring the ways in which that could happen. I hope that the launch will involve children and young people but not in a tokenistic way, so I have shied away from launching it in a school. One of the options is to use the education centre, and, if children are using it on that day, to involve them in the press conference

Do all members want to attend, or will there be a representative from each party only? I have no preference. Jackie Baillie, Irene McGugan and I will deal with much of the detail of the bill, but I hope that representatives from each party will attend. I assume that the deputy convener will want to be there, and, if she attends, I assume that there would be merit in Mike Russell attending.

Michael Russell: I have the utmost faith in Irene McGugan and, of course, in you. I am happy to go along with whatever arrangements are decided although I have slight difficulty with using children who happen to be in the education centre.

The Convener: I understand that arrangements have moved on.

Michael Russell: You were speaking—

The Convener: As I was speaking, I was advised that arrangements have moved on since the last briefing that I received.

Jackie Baillie: I realised that the convener had not been copied into the e-mail. To make the launch more attractive to the print media and others, perhaps it would be better to set up a separate photo opportunity in the Edinburgh area. It will not be tokenistic; I hope that it will link the press launch to the original consultation process for the bill. Following the photo opportunity, there will be a follow-up press conference in the vicinity of the Parliament.

Michael Russell: I am happy to leave the photo call to Jackie Baillie, Irene McGugan and the convener. I will attend the later press conference.

The Convener: Members will be sent the details by e-mail, and we can discuss them either in a meeting or by e-mail. Are members happy with that suggestion?

Members indicated agreement.

Meeting closed at 15:28.

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