



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 13 November 2012

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HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

31st Meeting 2012, Session 4

CONVENER

*Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP)

*Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP)

*Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

*Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

*Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab)

*David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Eugene Windsor

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Health and Sport Committee

Tuesday 13 November 2012

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:01*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Duncan McNeil): Good morning and welcome to the 31st meeting in 2012 of the Health and Sport Committee. As usual, I remind everyone present to switch off their mobile phones and BlackBerrys as they can interfere with the sound system.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on whether to take consideration of the draft report on the committee's inquiry into community sport in private at future meetings. Are members agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

Petition

Sports Facilities (PE1434)

10:02

The Convener: Item 2 is to agree the committee's approach to PE1434, by Nairn McDonald, which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that every school can provide adequate sports facilities and resources for their students and to create a minimum level of available facilities. Members will have received the clerk's paper, which suggests that, as the issue raised by the petitioner has been covered in some detail in the community sport inquiry, the committee might agree to incorporate its consideration of the petition into that inquiry, to which we are due to return next week. If members agree to that proposal, the committee will be able to return to the petition once the community sport inquiry report has been published to decide on any other action that it might wish to take.

I invite comments from members.

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): Although I am sympathetic to what the petitioner is trying to achieve and although the petition itself is well meaning and runs along the lines of the evidence that we received about trying to ensure that young people are able to use sporting facilities, it is fundamentally calling for the Scottish Government to ensure that those things happen. Some people might well want the Government to take over education entirely, but the fact is that when it comes to education the Government simply does not have the powers to affect directly what happens in schools. As a result, the petition might be better directed not at the Government, but at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, where the power lies. I am sympathetic to what it is trying to do, but it is calling on the wrong people to take action and it would be quite catastrophic for us to suggest that we start taking powers away from local government. As a member of the Parliament's previous Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, I remember that the first couple of visits we made were about reassuring our local government colleagues that the Parliament was not about to take any powers away from local authorities.

I have reservations, not about what the petitioner is trying to achieve—indeed, I am very supportive of the petitioner's aims—but about sending a message that the Parliament or, to be more precise, the Government, might want to interfere with matters that are under local authority control.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I cannot disagree with what Gil Paterson said. However, when we consider our report into support for community sport we might consider the issues that are raised in the petition. We could give consideration to the petition in that way before deciding what to do with it.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): I am not sure that during our inquiry into support for community sport we took evidence on the matter that the petitioner raised. The petitioner seems to be asking specifically for the Government to set and enforce a minimum standard on adequate sports facilities in every school in the country. We have not taken evidence on that. We sought to widen the scope of our inquiry on a couple of occasions, but we were a bit nervous about doing that and diluting the focus of the inquiry.

We should not necessarily end consideration of the petition, but it does not sit well with our inquiry. When I looked at the papers for the petition, I noticed that in its letter the Scottish Government said that the School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967 set out requirements on sports facilities and a number of other things in schools. It would be interesting to find out how Education Scotland assesses the quality of sports facilities in schools and how that drives investment and change at local authority level. That is not something that we could do if we incorporated the petition into the inquiry into support for community sport.

It would be an easy fix to include the petition in the inquiry and then not do anything with it—and that would be consideration of the petition finished. We should either say that we are not taking the petition further or get additional information and keep a weather eye on the situation. In the past, we have corresponded on matters that have been raised in petitions, to get a clearer picture.

The Convener: I think that the consensus is that we should not consider the petition as part of the inquiry—I stress “consider”—and I think that many members would probably have reached that conclusion if we had done so. There is a difference between considering something and giving it credence or even accepting it. I accept that, as Bob Doris said, there has been no scrutiny of the area, but I think that throughout the evidence taking in our inquiry all members have accepted that there is a clear responsibility on local government to deliver on some of the issues that have been raised.

If we are not going to consider the petition as part of the inquiry, asking for additional information and dealing with the petition separately will take us down an altogether different road. Have we got agreement on that?

Nanette Milne: I am quite happy to go along with that.

The Convener: Are members okay with that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: As we agreed, we move into private session for item 3, which is draft budget scrutiny.

10:09

Meeting continued in private until 12:24.

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e-format first available
ISBN 978-1-4061-9952-9

Revised e-format available
ISBN 978-1-4061-9967-3

Printed in Scotland by APS Group Scotland
