



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

Thursday 21 March 2013

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

10th Meeting 2013, Session 4

CONVENER

*Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)

*Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)

*John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)

Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Douglas Thornton

LOCATION

Committee Room 4

Scottish Parliament

Equal Opportunities Committee

Thursday 21 March 2013

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Mary Fee): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Equal Opportunities Committee's 10th meeting in 2013. I remind everyone to switch off their mobile phones or set them to flight mode.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on taking business in private. Do members agree that the committee's consideration of its forthcoming work programme should be taken in private at future meetings?

Members indicated agreement.

Draft Budget Scrutiny 2013-14

10:00

The Convener: Agenda item 2 is consideration of the Scottish Government's response to the committee's report to the Finance Committee on the 2013-14 draft budget. Paper 1 includes that response, which we have been asked to note, including the aspects that are highlighted in paragraph 2.

Do members have any comments on the Scottish Government's response? Is there anything further on which members would like to seek clarification, or can we agree the report as is?

Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP): I am content with the report as is.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): There is one comment in particular that I would like to make. In paragraph 89 of our report, we made a point about zero-based budgeting. I had an interest in that matter and we discussed it, but the answer does not really deal with it; in fact, it does not even mention it. I was a little bit disappointed by that.

The Convener: Okay. Would you like further clarification on that?

John Mason: I think that we have got the answer. I am not enthusiastic about it, but we have got it.

The Convener: Okay. We could press the Government to firm up the answer that we have been given, or to give us more detail.

John Mason: I do not know what anyone else thinks about that issue.

The Convener: I am quite happy with the response, but there are a few things that I would like a bit more information on. On the response to including gender in the decision-making process and how the Government will take forward the issue of gender, I would be happy to get a bit more detail on what it will specifically do, how it will monitor, and what it will do if that is seen not to work. I would like a bit more information about that.

We will pick up on equal pay later. I would like a further response on what is happening with equal pay and how it will be taken forward. Given that we are picking up that issue later, I would like a bit more information about that.

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): If you are going to contact the Government about that, would it be worth saying that we will be

looking at the matter in more depth, so it would be good to get its response at this stage?

The Convener: Yes.

Dennis Robertson: We could qualify why we are asking for more detail at this stage.

The Convener: Yes.

Marco Biagi: I was pleasantly surprised by how much the Government was able to pass on about equal pay. Obviously, that is just the top of an iceberg anyway.

The Convener: Yes.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): I agree with John Mason on the response to zero-based budgeting. I thought that a number of presumptions were made that, quite the reverse of being critical of the need for zero budgeting, suggested that it might be needed. There is the idea that the current system does not involve

“silos of activities bidding for resources”.

Like John Mason, I was a bit disappointed by the response. That said, I thought that there was a lot of useful information that will inform the committee’s future work.

John Mason: I would not want you to write especially on that paragraph, but if you are responding with a number of points, I would be happy if—

The Convener: I am happy to write about that paragraph alone.

John Mason: That would give it a little bit too much emphasis. However, we could ask for a bit more comment specifically on incremental budgeting against zero-based budgeting.

The Convener: I ask the clerk to draw up a response that is based on the issues have been raised.

Does Dennis Robertson want to raise another issue?

Dennis Robertson: Yes. Although we are making comments, I think that the response was fairly comprehensive in many other areas. We are not saying that the Government did not respond. It has done so in a fairly positive manner, and we need to reflect that. There are only one or two points.

The Convener: Yes. That can be reflected in the letter. We can thank the Government for the response and say that we are happy, but we would like further clarification on a couple of things. The clerk is happy to draw up that response.

It seems that there is nothing further that members think we should pick up on from the

Government’s response. I thank members very much for their contributions.

That concludes the public part of our meeting. Our next meeting will take place on Thursday 28 March, and will include oral evidence in our women and work inquiry.

10:05

Meeting continued in private until 10:51.

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