ENTERPRISE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 16 January 2007

Session 2

£5.00

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by Astron.

CONTENTS

Tuesday 16 January 2007

ENTERPRISE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
2nd Meeting 2007, Session 2

CONVENER

*Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green)
*Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab)
*Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
*Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)
Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
*Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green)
Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD)
*Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP)
Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Linda Boyes (Scottish Council Foundation)
Tara Brady (B&Q plc)
Fiona Hird (Scottish Executive Development Department)
David Manion (Age Concern Scotland)
Ian Naismith (Scottish Widows)
Lord Sutherland of Houndwood (Scotland's Futures Forum Aging Project Board)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Stephen Imrie

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Douglas Thornton

ASSISTANT CLERK

Nick Hawthorne

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Enterprise and Culture Committee

Tuesday 16 January 2007

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

"Growing older and wiser together—A futures view on positive ageing"

The Convener (Alex Neil): It is 2 o'clock and most members who will attend the meeting are here, so I welcome everybody to the Enterprise and Culture Committee's second meeting in 2007. I ask everybody to switch their mobile phones off and not just to silent, please. I have apologies from Stewart Maxwell and Karen Gillon. Fiona Hyslop is here as the substitute for Stewart Maxwell.

Agenda item 1 is in two parts. First, we will hear evidence from Stewart Sutherland, who is the chair of the Scotland's futures forum's aging project board. After we have had a short session with him, we will open up the meeting to a wider panel for a wider discussion on aging. Since this is the Enterprise and Culture Committee, we are particularly interested in the economic aspects of aging, but that does not mean that we need to narrow the discussion. I declare an interest as a director of the futures forum, but I do not think that that should bar me from the discussion.

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): Can we debate that?

The Convener: Perhaps I should declare an interest as a person who is rapidly aging, too.

I welcome Lord Sutherland and ask him to say a few words of introduction.

Lord Sutherland of Houndwood (Scotland's Futures Forum Aging Project Board): I noted that you are a director of the futures forum, convener, and I hold that to your credit rather than hold you to account for it. I welcome the opportunity to meet the committee and to present the work of many others. The advisory board's role was to advise; the actual work was done by Robert Rae and his colleagues, to whom I pay tribute. Robert is sitting behind me and I am sure that several of the other people who were involved will take a close interest and welcome the interest that is being shown by a major committee of the Scottish Parliament.

I have enjoyed working with good people and stimulating ideas, but probably what I most liked about the project was the idea of the futures forum and of the Parliament and parliamentarians looking into the future. I will not say that that is a change of culture, because that would insult members. However, a welcome and important facet of any worthwhile Parliament's work is looking beyond, rather than being driven by, tomorrow's headlines—I understand it if members are preoccupied with May's elections; that is all right and is part of the job. However, looking to the issues that will shape Scottish society in 10, 15 and 20 years is essential if we are to get things right. It is also essential, as members will know from press coverage of the report, if we are to avoid throwing our hands in the air and crying crisis when to do so is unnecessary.

The report's theme and point are to provoke thought, discussion with the wider community—much of which is represented today—and action after that. To some extent, that is over to members, but not only to members. Three parties are involved in the issue. The first is the Executive, the second is the business community, for reasons that I am sure we will go into in great detail, and the third is the individual—what help does the individual need to think through the implications of a significant change that is taking place in our society?

Members will note that the report has a title and a strapline that follows it. I have covered the strapline, "A futures view on positive ageing". I do not know about the title, "Growing older and wiser together". I have got the growing older bit covered, but I am not sure that I have quite mastered the growing wiser. However, that is me rather than the report.

The point of the report is to focus minds on an issue that we know is already changing our society—the Parliament has been deeply involved in some of these matters—and will continue to do so at a wholly predictable rate, which means that we can make sensible preparations. The problem is not going to turn up out of the blue. We have known for decades that the demography of our country is changing. You have all seen the numbers and the way in which the population is moving towards the upper age range. The number of people who will, in the end, depend on those who are in work to provide the growth in the economy that will continue the quality of life for which we all hope is growing significantly larger.

I have an example. Statistically speaking, during this meeting our life expectancy will grow by between 10 and 15 minutes. I cannot allocate that to each person here individually, but that is the reality. During the time it takes to have this

meeting, our life expectancy will go up, so I hope that it is shared out equally all round.

Christine May: Only among the deserving.

Lord Sutherland: There is an optimist. I like optimism in politicians; it is very important.

The methods that were used by those who carried out the work under Robert Rae's direction were, to some extent, unusual for this type of report, but the outcomes were very helpful and positive. The wider community was involved in a series of consultations and events. For example, a theatrical event was held at which life was played out in two scenes that were each set in a different time period—now and in 25 years—and the audience and participants were then able to comment directly on what kind of changes they thought would be coming down the line and what they would like to see happen. The methods behind the report have therefore been very inventive in provoking the interest of the population of Scotland and of various representative groups.

The way in which the report uses scenarios was new to some of us, but it is very helpful. The most important point about scenarios is that they are not predictions. They are pictures of what might be. If someone thinks that they are unrealistic or they do not like them, that is the point. People are being asked what they think the shape of Scottish society will be in 25 years. What would they like to see? What can they see? How do we get from here to there? What kind of changes are needed in the way in which we operate?

It is difficult to overstate the kind of change that our society is going through. It is a radical change and it is not simply that there are specific tasks that some do now that they will not be there to do in future, but rather that the whole culture of our society has to shift. This is the Enterprise and Culture Committee, which is interesting. The way in which people think across the generations has to be transformed because it is only if that happens that we will begin to engage positively with the problems and issues that confront society.

However, it is easy to be overdramatic, which is why we reject the word "crisis". It will only become a crisis if we do not do any thinking and discussing, and certainly if we do not act. That would be a major mistake and this report will have failed if you are not provoked to think, discuss and act. Change happens one day at a time, which is why it is easy to put it off until tomorrow, so it is important to confront the issues now.

I will point the committee to two different places in the report. The box on page 11 quantifies the issues that most affect the Enterprise and Culture Committee. Members will see that the number of people of working age is projected to fall. Of course, the population of Scotland will at best stay even and may fall, which is not true of the rest of the United Kingdom. We are in a different situation; it is important that we take a realistic look at the numbers. If, as we all hope, the Scottish economy continues to make progress, our researchers estimate that 50,000 new job opportunities will arise. That means that an additional 50,000 people will be required to carry out some of the functions of society. In a declining population, and one that is aging, that will act as a double whammy against the kind of growth that all of us are looking and hoping for.

The additional point that is made in the box on page 11 is that we also have to consider the normal turnover in jobs—not only the jobs that are vacated through retirement and so on but the additional jobs that are coming into the Scottish economy. A triangulation of forces is at work. At the same time as the number of people who are normally thought of as being in the working age group is declining, the number of opportunities that we want to see filled is increasing. The questions on which Scotland, as a community, should focus are what that will do for our gross domestic product and, lying behind that question, what it will do for our quality of life. As I said, some of the stark numbers can be seen in the box on page 11.

On pages 4 and 5, we have set out a good summary of many of the issues that we confronted and which we want the committee to consider. For example, if we are to prepare for the future, what sorts of preparation should we undertake and what are the areas on which more thought, discussion and, in the end, action are required? The three main areas that we found are finance, employment and intergenerational well-being, the last of which includes the health, fitness and quality of life of the individual. Those are areas that can too easily be left aside. We have raised a number of questions that we pose for starters, so to speak—we know that they will not be the only ones. They are the questions that we would like folk to confront and we will play our part in that process.

On the second area, employment, a question that we posed is how we are to deal with the need for an increased number of people with skills. The third area, intergenerational well-being, relates to the culture change that I spoke about earlier. The question that we have posed in this regard is how to persuade young and old people alike that we are a single community in which, if well-being and quality of life are to be maintained, people will need to live interdependently. That is also the case if we are to avoid crisis and the nasty scenario that some are happy to paint of one group in the community—enlarged in number—living off a smaller and decreasing group of people.

A number of questions are raised on pages 4 and 5. Although each of us could take a shot at answering some of them, the point that we tried to make is that we are not yet at the stage of producing a blueprint in which, having answered all the questions, we can set out everything that we should do tomorrow and the problem will be solved. The issues will change and develop, which means that questions that we have hardly even thought about will come out of the woodwork.

We think that all our questions bear down on the main issues of how to finance the needs of the population, individually and as a whole; what shape and pattern we envisage for employment in future—that is what we majored on to an extent—and how we change the culture. I suspect that many of my colleagues around the table will have important things to say about employment and about how we get from here to there in that respect. Finally, in the Scottish tradition of apportioning some blame if necessary, we listed some of the key organisations that have a part to play in all this. We included ourselves in the list.

I think that that is enough from me by way of summary. I am happy to continue the debate in open session.

The Convener: Thank you very much indeed. That was excellent. The purpose of these round-table discussions at the Enterprise and Culture Committee is to identify some of the key issues that need to be addressed over the next three or four years. The results of this discussion will not simply be shelved but will inform the legacy paper that the committee will pass on to the successor committee or committees that will be established after the election on 3 May. Aging, dependency ratios and employment are clearly part of the committee's remit.

If there are any questions on what Stewart Sutherland said or factual questions about the report, I will take them now. After that, we can go on to the wider discussion.

I have a factual question on employment possibilities. Although the lifespan of people in Scotland has been extending over the past 100 or 150 years, the proportion of the additional lifespan during which people are unfit or unhealthy has also expanded proportionately. That appears to be the trend even though we read daily in the newspapers about new treatments for Alzheimer's disease or cancer. Does the research that you have undertaken so far provide any indication of whether people will be healthier, fitter and more able to work during a higher proportion of the extended lifespan than is the case just now?

14:15

Lord Sutherland: The report did not focus on that in detail, so there is no special set of research evidence, but I am happy to give you my tuppenceworth if you want.

I chaired a sub-committee in the House of Lords that produced a report called "Ageing: Scientific Aspects". One of that report's points of focus was the way in which research can play a part in dealing with some of the issues that you have raised. In broad-brush terms, two points have come out of that inquiry. The first is that huge advances are taking place in science, which I will illustrate by looking back. When I was a young man—which is probably before most of this committee's members were young—if somebody had an ulcer, they were in hospital for three to four weeks, a part of which was spent in intensive care, and then in bed at home for another three to four weeks. Now, they take a little pill every day and that deals with the same complaint. Tuberculosis provides another example. There were sanatoria all round my part of Scotland because the air was supposed to be clear and pure and people spent months and months there.

TB is always grumbling away in the background and there are separate issues with it, but those are two examples of illnesses that have been dealt with through the advance of research. It will be quite some time before Alzheimer's and dementia have that status, but there is change already. It is not the case that patients either have Alzheimer's or do not, because it can be contained and slowed up—all sorts of things can happen. Stem cell research is important to that, because it is one of the ways in which faster advance will be made.

Another thing that we discovered in the inquiry is that—to our mind, at least—there is no wholly clear and rigorous test of what a healthy life expectancy is. It is assessed on the basis of answers that people give to the census or the household survey. If I had had to fill one of those in over the past two weeks of weather, the researchers would have been given a sombre view of what the population felt. The census and the household survey basically ask, "How do you feel?" and then healthy life expectancy predictions are based on the responses. That is highly subjective.

We made a bit of an issue of that and we are looking for different measures. We think that the way to approach the matter is not through the subjective measure of asking people how they feel—I can tell you from experience that everybody who is older feels a bit slower—but through the capacity for independent living. That is a much more objective measure and will, I think, settle your question about how far people are

capable of making a wider contribution to the community.

There are two issues: science and finding a good measure of whether periods of ill health are extending.

The Convener: The committee's remit includes science policy, so that is highly relevant.

Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): Are we moving seamlessly on to the round-table discussion?

The Convener: Yes.

Susan Deacon: I want to pick up where the convener left off, not by asking a question, but by commenting on the thinking behind the report. The report is extremely helpful and it is excellent that, through the futures forum, the Parliament has taken forward such thinking, which helps to make us think about the future in a broader way. I also like the report's positive emphasis, but I have a sense that in moving away—rightly—from the language of costs and burdens that is all too often used in the debate on an aging population, the report is rather light on what some of the practical costs will be.

Lord Sutherland has played a significant role in the work of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, which held a symposium on the issue that I recall attending a few years ago. Dr Harry Burns, who is now, but was not then, the chief medical officer for Scotland, gave an interesting presentation on the costs not so much of health care as it related to age-related illness—although that was part of his focus—but of age-related health care in general, which could be described as health care that deals with wear and tear. For example, if more people live longer, there will be more joint replacements and more people will be treated for years on end for conditions such as hypertension. As Lord Sutherland mentioned in his introduction, scientific advances have been made in providing treatments that are more clinically effective and better for the patient, but they are not necessarily cheaper. In fact, some of the new medications are quite expensive.

I cannot remember in detail any of the data that were cited at the symposium, but I remember that some of the cost lines were quite steep. To what extent did the futures forum's project address that issue? I also want to find out the relationship between its report and the piece of work that the RSE did, which I found to be interesting in a number of areas. I will pause at that point, although I have another issue that I would like to raise.

The Convener: That is a good issue on which to broaden out the discussion. I will come back to Stewart Sutherland in a minute, but I should now introduce all the other participants. The easiest approach would be for people to introduce themselves and their roles when they speak for the first time. We do not want the discussion to be an us-and-them affair; we want it to be a genuine round-table discussion, so please feel free to chip in. Stewart Sutherland can respond to Susan Deacon's points and then I will bring in other people.

Lord Sutherland: I will be quick. We did not set out to analyse in detail some of the additional costs because, as Susan Deacon said, much of that work has been done and there is no point in reinventing the wheel. It is a given that those costs will be there. As people live longer, more of them will suffer from dementia. Statistically, that is a fact. Dementia is a very expensive condition to deal with, from the point of view of the provision of care and so on.

In a sense, that gives us all the more reason to focus on how we can get a contribution to GDP—to put it bluntly—from more people in the population. Moreover, the more people who continue to do some work and to have social engagement, the healthier we will be. The unhealthiest thing to do is to sit at home doing nothing, unless one has to. Although we did not deal with the costs explicitly, it is a given that they are there and must be analysed; we have not offered a rose-tinted picture.

The Convener: Does anyone else want to respond? I cannot believe that David Manion does not want to.

David Manion (Age Concern Scotland): I am the chief executive of Age Concern Scotland. It is a great pity that Professor Phil Hanlon is not with us to provide his insights on public health-related issues. In response to Susan Deacon's question, our evidence shows that it is unquestionably the case that people will get healthier. However, the situation might get a little worse before it gets a little better.

To paraphrase Professor Hanlon's analysis—which, having no public health credentials, I will probably not do terribly well—there will be a compression of morbidity in the age cohorts from 10, 20 and 30 years ago. Those age cohorts will have different health outcomes in later life—those of us who have just marked our 50th birthday are taking a keen interest in this—because, basically, the lessons that were given in school to people such as my daughter placed a big emphasis on health promotion. That was not the case perhaps 20 years ago. Therefore, although the group of people who will grow old in the next 20 to 30 years will still experience extended morbidity and long-term conditions, the age cohorts who come through beyond that point will have higher levels of health due to healthier behaviour in earlier life.

Therefore, the short answer is that the issue is age-cohort related. However, although the picture looks better in the longer term, it will not necessarily get better before then.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): My question follows on quite neatly from Susan Deacon's question on costs. The idea that an aging population will be a problem for the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Treasury is, I suppose, based on the assumption that people will stop working when they reach a particular age. As far as I can see—unless I have missed something—the report does not address the question of the retirement age. Was that perhaps outside the remit? Obviously, there is nothing magical about the age of 65. In fact, the Government has already proposed to increase the retirement age for those of us who are slightly younger. Given that the population is generally living longer, there must be some logic to saying that the retirement age will need to move upwards as well. Can we get some feedback on that issue?

Another part of that agenda is how we encourage employers to take on people who, for example, might be in their 70s. To most employers, that would be anathema. Perhaps Tara Brady will explain how B&Q overcame the prejudices that exist among employers about employing people of an older generation.

The Convener: We should also distinguish between the retirement age and the pension age, which are not necessarily the same thing.

Tara Brady (B&Q plc): As the employment relations and diversity manager for B&Q, I guess that I come from a very pro place. We believe that there are significant commercial benefits from employing not just older workers but people from the full spectrum of ages. To give some perspective on the size of B&Q's business, let me explain that we employ about 38,000 people, of whom about 24 per cent are over 50 and, balancing that, about 22 per cent are under the age of 24.

Our journey towards age diversity started over 15 years ago, when we started to recognise many of the salient points that are made in the report. As part of our people strategy, we wanted to attract the best talent. To do that, we had to consider people from different places and older workers were a key group for us to consider.

We came across significant challenges. It will come as no surprise to the group that published the report that we initially had to consider issues such as the extent to which older people would be able to cope in a fast-paced retail environment. Anyone who has been in a B&Q store will agree that our stores can be pretty scary in terms of size and products. We also had to consider the levels of technology and whether older people would cope with the demands as technology moves on.

We gained experience from our Macclesfield store, which we staffed entirely with over-50s. I do not suggest that that is a best-practice model, but it was the right thing to do in the context of 15 years ago. Follow-up studies that were carried out by the University of Warwick have blown out of the water some of the stereotypes. We found that there were significant business benefits in terms of staff retention, customer service and reduced labour turnover and absenteeism. In our stores that employ people from a mixture of ages, absenteeism is much lower.

Christine May: Could I pick up on something on page 16 of the report? Lord Sutherland referred to intergenerational well-being and the need for older people to mentor young people. Maybe Tara Brady could talk to us about the difference in attitude, because of life experience and everything else, between those who are under 25 and those who are over 50, about how she found that mentoring role and about how we can extrapolate from that to the wider debate.

14:30

Tara Brady: A related question that I am often asked is how our older employees feel when they are managed by somebody younger. It is a common stereotype that it is a good thing to be managed by somebody who is older than you are because their age brings experience, but that it is not such a good position to be in if the tables are turned. In our stores, we have found that different life experiences complement one another, so our older workers are keen to share experiences gained in previous employment and to coach and support more junior members of staff. Instead of formalising that relationship, we have found that the buddy role happens quite naturally. It is no great surprise to discover that a good manager is a good manager, and that that has nothing to do with age but is about the extent to which managers engage with their team. Our best managers range in age from 20-year-olds right up to people in their 70s, and they are just good managers, regardless of their age or experience.

The Convener: A former boss of mine used to say, "Age doesn't make you a sage. It just makes you an old man."

David Manion: I would like to say something about future costs. If we do not do something, the costs will be even worse, and it is the cost of not doing something that we should be most concerned about.

I draw your attention to page 14 of the report, where there is a quotation from Professor Mike Danson. He says that

"age discrimination against older workers appears deeply embedded in the cultures, policies and practices of some organisations and industries."

I would like to talk a little about what that means in practice for a great many older people now, and what it might mean in the future. According to research that we have undertaken, and according to research by the Department for Work and Pensions back in 2001, nine out of 10 people between the age of 50 and state pension age thought that they were likely to be discriminated against on the ground of their age while in employment. Research from Age Concern demonstrates that age discrimination is the form of discrimination experienced by more people in the United Kingdom than any other, and it comes to its peak in the employment field, which is presumably why there has been legislation on discrimination in employment. What will happen to people over 50 is an extremely important issue.

Some figures for the levels of economic inactivity in various areas of Scotland for those aged between 50 and 64 will give you an inkling of what I am talking about. In Glasgow, the level of economic inactivity for people in that age group is 42.3 per cent. In East Ayrshire it is 37.6 per cent, in Inverclyde it is 36.2 per cent, and in North Lanarkshire it is 38.6 per cent. That does not include those who are officially registered as unemployed. We are talking about large numbers of people over the age of 50 who may have left the employment market for one reason or another and who have been unable to re-enter it. If practical things are to be done, we ought perhaps to be looking at how we can give those people intensive help to re-enter the labour market, and how we can plan to enable that group of people between the ages of 50 and 64 to start up their own businesses. People over the age of 50 are some eight times more likely to succeed in small and medium-sized enterprises. When people are made redundant and they try to re-enter the employment market, they need to rebuild their confidence, and starting up their own business gives them flexibility in their employment that they might not have otherwise.

There is a correlation between the attitudes that we display to the employment of older people and how we plan to employ older people in the future. If we express positive attitudes now, people will not end up in the situation in which the over-50s find themselves at present. More support will be given to that age cohort and they will have a rosier future. That relates to the costs that we will face if we do not act now. Of people who come out of employment when they are over 50, only one in 10 will get back into the labour market. If we do not start to act on that now, I dread to think what the cost will be.

Scottish Enterprise and the associated agencies should be asked what they are doing proactively to help people who are aged between 50 and the state pension age to get back into the labour market.

Christine May: That is an extremely interesting point and I suspect that some of my colleagues will pick it up, but I will focus for one more moment on mentoring.

In a scheme in my constituency, young people for whom it had been difficult to find employment were mentored for an intensive 15-month period after they found work and their sustainability in their jobs was greatly increased. Is there scope for Government actively to encourage such programmes?

Lord Sutherland: Absolutely. We should look for such examples of good practice and, where appropriate, replicate them. It is not easy for people to move into the workforce, especially if they were previously jolted out of it. It is not easy for them psychologically or socially, and it is not even easy for them just to get onto the lists, so mentoring is critical.

Of course, mentoring is a two-way process. Anybody under 25 could teach any of us a huge amount about living in a digital world. The boy scouts' bob-a-job week used to be about gardening and so on, but perhaps it is now about showing people how to work their video. Sorry—that is out of date. I mean their DVD.

I have a specific suggestion. Digitalisation is coming to television. It will start where I live, in the Borders, which is the trial area. It will give us a marvellous opportunity, because people who have not had to engage with the wider electronic world will be able to engage in it. They will have to learn new techniques. Why are we not looking at enterprise and mentoring schemes whereby a contact will go into every home and give people instruction on how to digitalise? In due course, television will provide access to the web for most people. How can we use that to take skills into areas of the population that find things difficult? That is a specific opportunity.

On the point about incentives to employ older people, the biggest incentive, in due course, will be the fact that employers cannot find enough people to do the jobs that need to be done. Boy, will that have an effect. It is not the best incentive, but it will have an effect. In the meantime, all sorts of things could be done. There could be more detailed study of the use of tax and national insurance as incentives. There are funny rules about who pays and who does not. If someone stops paying national insurance because they have reached a certain age, their employer will

stop making contributions as well. That is an incentive.

The mix of pension and paid employment is another incentive. There is some experience of that in the university sector. We learned how to mix the two in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the cuts came. There are ways in which one can mix pension and part-time employment that will provide real incentives and we will get just as much out of people.

Ian Naismith (Scottish Widows): I am the head of pensions market development at Scottish Widows. We have examined employer attitudes and health. One aspect that we have examined closely is consumer attitudes, on which we do a fairly major piece of research every year. We found this year that, on average, Scots would be very angry if they had to work past 65. They see 65 and nothing beyond that as the absolute limit to which they are willing to work. We also asked whether people would be willing to work part time and the answer was that they aspired to ease into retirement but that they wanted to start easing in at 55 and be finished by 62.

We have a big job to do on changing consumer attitudes to when retirement is. When I talk to people about the state pension reforms that are coming, everyone has heard that they will have to work for longer, but they do not realise that they will receive a better pension—that message has not got through. People just think that they need to retire by 65. We have quite a big job to do in education on that.

The Convener: Is part of that the fact that in many parts of Scotland—particularly parts of Glasgow—male life expectancy might be 58 or 63, so men in those areas cannot expect to look forward to a pension at 65, let alone a free TV licence at 75?

Ian Naismith: Yes—that is probably an element. We did not examine cities specifically, but we did not find appreciable differences across the salary range on the age to which people were prepared to work.

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): The report is fascinating and I would like to pick up on many issues. I wonder whether the point that was made is just a question of perception. People may feel cheated—they have worked and paid into a pension scheme on the assumption that they would retire at one point, then they are presented all of a sudden with the possibility that they might need to work longer. That perception could easily be overcome.

I will pick up on the language that we use to talk about age and retirement. Could we begin to talk about phases of our lives? Before I was elected in 2003, I was expecting to slow down and begin to do things for myself, because my children had almost finished attending university. All of a sudden, I was bounced into the job of an MSP unexpectedly—no, not unexpectedly. I do not believe the amount of energy that I did not realise that I would have to do the job and how stimulating the job is. If we can remove the perception that, on retirement, people stop what they are doing, we can think of it as a phase in which we move away from the phase of work that we have done for two or three decades. Retirement provides the opportunity to move into a different phase. That is what the report says. Part-time work and voluntary work can all slot in happily and be acknowledged as positives for us.

I will raise two other issues. How will the report influence education at school? We need to rethink our lifespan of working, so we need much more flexibility in how we educate our children to take on board whatever comes at them. We have moved away from the idea of a job for life. Planning and design are also involved—I was fascinated by the idea of co-housing and lifetime homes.

All such ideas need to be taken on board. As a member of the Equal Opportunities Committee, I have worked with disabled people, who argue that a home needs to be designed to accommodate the possibility that we might need a wheelchair or aids if we want to stay in that home. The home needs to be designed to be flexible. We need to start considering all those fascinating aspects of the issue.

14:45

There is a gap in the scenario, which is the omission of environmental change—climate change. How we move to a low-carbon economy and, as we explore what that really means, how that economy will impact on skills and on how we are going to live our lives in smaller communities need to be explored. We might need to revisit and use the skills of older people, particularly the skills that they used to have but that have been lost. There is also the matter of how the global impact of climate change will influence population movements. We might not need to worry so much about not having the younger generation coming on, because inward migration will be vital as some areas become less habitable—I am looking two to five decades ahead. It is fascinating how, if we start this conversation now, we can prepare ourselves for all sorts of scenarios. The climate change scenario needs to be included and to be taken on board, because it will have a huge impact.

The Convener: I will bring in Linda Boyes at this stage, as the Scottish Council Foundation has probably considered some of those points. I will

then invite Fiona Hird, from the Executive, to speak. We are expecting the aging strategy to be published fairly soon, and some of the matters that we are discussing now will hopefully touch on that.

Linda Boyes (Scottish Council Foundation): As far as carbon emissions and things are concerned, that is not an area that I know anything about.

To go back to the subject of work and the working environment, Lord Sutherland discussed the new dialogue that we will have. Perhaps we have to think differently about how we define work and our working lives. Until now, it has been chronological: people go to school up to a certain point; they go to university; they go to work; and, at a certain point in time, they retire. That is based on chronological age, and is nothing to do with biological age or how people feel about working. Many people now continue working past the retirement age, whatever that might be, depending on their circumstances. People at that stage might go into different jobs. They can change their job role, perhaps downsizing a bit. They might shift into an entirely different area. In any case, they may work beyond our notion of retirement age.

There is a myth around this area. If we asked anybody in their 50s now, they would say that they were feeling young and vibrant. People in their 50s do not see themselves as older, or even as heading towards retirement. In the back of our minds, we might also think how great it would be if we could retire at 55 or 60 and do what we wanted to do. Perhaps we have to temper that with some kind of realism.

There are also a lot of people in work who are called "the fed up and 50s". Given the opportunity, they would like to leave work and do something else, whether that is setting up in business doing something different, or even switching careers in their 40s or 50s. It will be something that we do not normally do, however. We do not encourage people to do that, and the opportunity to do it is not always there. We should perhaps make such opportunities a bit more available to people.

Many people have to carry on working in later life because they cannot financially afford to stop. The days of people having really good occupational pensions in their 50s are long gone. Many people will have to continue working for longer, whether or not they want to. We need to ascertain how we can make their working lives meaningful and sustainable. It is not just about having a job; it is about the quality of work that people do and how that affects them, mentally and physically. Most people wish to carry on working if the job that they are in is enjoyable and if they find that it gives them some kind of personal satisfaction.

In work that we have undertaken, we have found that many employers do a lot around maintenance factors for their older workers. They might give an older worker a job, with certain tasks and certain hours. They can be told that they can still carry on, that they can still seek promotion and that they can still seek new job opportunities. Even in their 50s, people might still have a 10-year or 15-year working life ahead of them. We have to think about that. A big mindset change is required from employers and employees as we move into the future.

The Convener: I will bring in Fiona Hird now. I realise that you cannot tell us what will be in the aging strategy, Fiona, but I presume that the futures forum's report will be fed into the process.

Fiona Hird (Scottish Executive Development Department): Yes. The Minister for Communities is keen that we take account of this valuable report in the preparation of the strategy, which we hope to publish next month. We have been associated with the development of the strategy, through my colleague Jess Barrow, who also works in the older people and age unit in the Executive. The report provided a good deal of fascinating material, given its scenarios-based approach, and complements the extensive consultation and engagement that we have carried out in the development of the strategy, in which a lot of people here were involved in one way or another. Many of the themes that emerged during that process are similar to those raised in the report.

This afternoon, we have discussed the issue of links between generations, which consultees in a wide range of circumstances raised, unprompted. We will consider that issue in the strategy, because we recognise that it is significant.

The employment issue is interesting, too. We have had some discussion about the 50 to 65 group. On retirement ages, it is interesting that although state pension age is the most common age for people to retire at, most people do not retire at that age, but start dropping out of the labour market much earlier. In certain parts of Scotland, that is linked closely to the fact that people are on incapacity benefit. The problem is being tackled by bringing people back into work through pathways to work, but it will continue to be a challenge.

This sounds facile, but it is always easier to keep people in jobs than to get them back into employment in their 50s, once they have fallen out of the loop. There are issues around skills training for older workers and the sort of support that they need, which Linda Boyes mentioned. Such issues include the need for flexibility to allow people to change the sort of job that they do if they start to have problems with manual work or to reduce their

work if they start to have caring responsibilities, as many people in their 50s do.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): Shiona Baird raised the issue of migration. I do not go along with the apocalyptic vision of climate change, although it is really hot in here, but it is worth bearing it in mind that migration could make a big difference to the pressures on employers. I do not know whether you were able to factor into the report—which I think is excellent—the potential impacts of migration. The case has to be made that, whatever the demographic of the country, employers should recognise the benefits of having older people in their workforce, given the experience that they can bring. We keep returning to the same question: how do we get that message out to employers? Could employers organisations do more? We have a representative of B&Q here and it is great that it recognises the benefits of older workers, but such recognition needs to be much more pervasive among employers.

When I worked for Help the Aged, we received similar complaints to those that David Manion of Age Concern has received. Susan Deacon asked whether we had to change the focus of debate about older people in Scotland. We have had important debates about how older people are supported, but is it time to focus on how they can contribute to society? The report is important.

Christine May: I have a slightly different point to make, which picks up on what Linda Boyes said about working life—or life generally—being chronological rather than biological. One sector of the workforce has always experienced a biological impact on their working lives: women, certainly of my generation, have taken time out because they had to so that they could have their families. Have you factored in any of the lessons that have been learned about that? There is evidence that women like me who have taken time out to bring up families have gone on to have different careers, much lower levels of savings and much poorer pension arrangements. I would be grateful if the witnesses would comment on that.

Susan Deacon: I will comment on the point that Christine May just made. I am struck that certain issues that are raised in the report cast light on our attitude to aging, while other aspects cast light on some of society's other attitudes. I am desperately trying to remember the title of the Scottish Council Foundation's publication on that—I think it was something to do with working lives.

Linda Boyes: It was called "A Coming of Age: Re-Working Lives".

Susan Deacon: I knew that there was a sub-heading or something about working lives.

The inflexibility that exists in our workplaces is a much wider issue. Progress is proving to be stubbornly slow in respect of the transformation that is necessary for the workplace to accommodate not only the chronological or biological issues that face different people but the fact that people want more flexibility now. Because caring responsibilities in respect of children or parents, for example, change over time, people want and need more flexibility from the workplace. It is important that we distinguish between the issues that are specific to aging, and issues in respect of how aging affects people being a symptom of a wider culture change that we need to work towards. If I recall correctly, that was broadly where the Scottish Council Foundation was coming from in its work on the matter.

The Convener: Loads of people want to come in. Fiona Hyslop has been waiting for a while, so I will let her come in first. I know that Tara Brady and David Manion also want to get in.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): I am interested in intergenerational aspects. Grandparents day is by far the most exciting day in the school calendar in my children's school.

I will reflect on something that Susan Deacon said. There are different faces of age—chronological and biological, for example—and, as Shiona Baird said, there are also different phases, but there is also an in-betweeny group. I am probably part of the in-betweeny generation that will get the worst of all worlds, but I hope that, when my daughter comes through, all the scenario planning will have been done. Our difficulty is in dealing with the most immediate pressures, which will be different from future pressures.

What Tara Brady from B&Q said is interesting. Market forces will drive a lot of change by the time the next generation comes through. Companies will want the people who work for them to reflect their customers. Susan Deacon mentioned that some of the issues reflect wider society. In the future, wider society will be an older society anyway, so it will own that territory and become the norm. We have to deal with the transition issues.

On economics, there is an issue in respect of the current age discrimination in grants for business start-ups. We know the situation and there is a practical example at the moment with NCR in Dundee. I also know about the situation from the experience of people in their 50s who worked in Motorola or NEC in West Lothian and had to set up in business. That is an immediate problem.

Tomorrow, the Education Committee will consider the McCrone agreement. The McCrone report talked about step-downs in retirement, but

that proposal was not carried through to the agreement. That is another immediate practical issue that we should challenge, informed by the futures forum's thinking.

To return to the intergenerational aspects of the subject, currently 30 per cent of two-year-olds in Scotland are looked after by grandparents. We are considering skills and abilities, which bring us back to the report's quotation on caring from Professor Danson. There is a synergy, in that we have skills acquired from the caring responsibilities for our children and parents that we all face as individuals, but how should we reinvest?

The report is stimulating, but the challenge for us as politicians lies in the focus that we give it for delivery. There are some matters that we can think about immediately, but the main question is about how we will deal with the in-betweeny generation—the equivalent of baby boomers or whatever we will be called. Let us get the foundations right for the longer term.

15:00

Lord Sutherland: I though that we had asked a lot of good questions but, by jeepers, we do not match you lot.

The last question focused on what we do now. One of the suggestions in the report—it was always in the back of our minds—is that something like a national forum on aging should be set up. It would be a body with responsibility for keeping tabs on the issues and overseeing the order of priority—what can be done now and what is longer term. Two such issues are climate change and immigration. For example, the profile of the population of China will change the world. There are 101 reasons for that, one of which is China's one-child policy. In due course, China will not have enough women of marriageable age and not enough young and middle-aged people to support the remainder of its population. That will have a huge impact on China and the rest of the world.

We could have produced a report that laid out what should be done in this or that eventuality, but that is just not feasible in terms of both the immediate issues and those in the mid to long-term. Our view is that we should develop the skills of a monitoring body that could come before this committee, stimulate debate on the issues and set out the urgent areas that come under the committee's remit. Such a body could also go before the Education Committee or the Health Committee to highlight areas of urgency for those committees. We do not want the establishment of such a body to become lost from sight. We did not draw it in detail, but our proposal is a way of beginning to look at how we could go about things.

We need an analysis of the workforce. Why do people want to retire? There are a 101 different reasons for that, one of which relates to one's physical condition. I know a bit about the North sea fishing community. Physically, one cannot be a North sea fisherman at 60—it is just not on, albeit that one or two heroes could do it. Similarly, we have a major problem with burnout in professions such as teaching. Burnout does not necessarily happen just because a teacher reaches the age of 55; very often, it happens because of the nature of the work that they are required to do and the way in which they are required to do it. The Scottish Council Foundation raises important issues in that regard. We have to analyse why people want out of the workforce and we need to consider what changes, either in working practices or in the way in which retirement can be phased in, should be introduced to deal with some of those questions.

The Convener: You can be an MSP until you are 101.

David Manion: Age Concern's research found that the overwhelming majority of people are against any form of mandatory retirement. My organisation is using European legislation to take the Government to court on the issue through the European Court of Human Rights. Instead of having a fixation with retirement at 65, we found that people are against mandatory retirement. Obviously, no one wants to work for ever, but the clear expression is that 65 is an artificial cut-off point. The evidence shows overwhelmingly that what people want is greater flexibility, which is where self-employment and other provisions come into play.

The Convener: Was Susan Deacon's point not that that is also true throughout one's working life? For example, if it was possible to have a gap year every 10 years, I for one would take the opportunity.

David Manion: Yes—absolutely. However, on page 13 of the report, members will see some serious stuff from Mike Danson about economic activity rates. Basically, the big trend at the moment is for people to retire in their 50s. That trend will have to be reversed. The language that Mike Danson uses is slightly softer than that, but that message can be read between the lines.

I turn to women and pensions. One of the great nuggets in the report is that, from an early age—say around 15 or 16—people should receive schooling in financial literacy or life planning. That is a great little idea. I say to Christine May that, if she had known at an earlier age what she knows now, she would have started to save. If we ask old people who are living in poverty how they got into that situation, they say, "When I was young, nobody told me all about old age. I didn't expect to

have to face this." That nugget or great little idea also links to the intergenerational stuff that we address and to vocational training. The question is about how to encourage younger people to think about what they should do to ensure that they have adequate savings and so on for their later lives.

In terms of attitudes, Stewart Sutherland described the single most important idea in the report when he spoke about the need for a forum on aging. We know how easy it is for people to lose sight of report recommendations. It is unfortunate that employers have, because of the way things have worked out, been singled out in the legislation on age discrimination. What about the rest of society? I am thinking about provision of goods and services and the need to engender positive attitudes to aging. Of course, the legislation is a good step, but it begs the question: Who else is in the frame?

On Shiona Baird's point about greening the issue, the phenomenon that we are discussing is not unique to Scotland. I have read 25 aging strategies from around the globe, from the special administrative region of Hong Kong to the United States of America. The committee will not be at all surprised to discover that the issues that are contained in the futures forum's report are flagged up the world over, so aging has to be viewed internationally because it is a global phenomenon. The United States was the first country to enact an older people's act. Can the committee guess the year in which it was passed? It was passed in 1966, so we have a way to go.

Tara Brady: I will respond to some of the points that have come up. Age discrimination legislation is great and we welcome it, but one of the challenges is that many businesses still approach it from the perspective that they are managing a risk. In getting their heads round the new legislation, their aim is to shore up their businesses against that perceived risk. Instead, they should be asking what opportunities reports such as that by the futures forum provide in respect of attracting more talent into their businesses, and what insight they offer on tapping into disadvantaged groups by making themselves attractive as employers.

The people strategy is about companies such as B&Q providing flexible working, understanding their employees, asking the right questions and taking practical steps to make progress. That presents a significant challenge to businesses. I will give a recent example of action that B&Q has taken. We have a learning development framework for all our in-store customer advisers, but we found that a number of our staff were screening themselves out of such development, even though we can say that we have no age barriers. The problem relates to a point that Christine May made. There are complex issues to do with the extent to which such development is accessible in bite-sized chunks to people who work flexibly or part time.

We have taken positive steps completely to realign our learning and development framework in order to make it accessible. Guess what—it has had significant business benefits. When we talk to staff, we find that their level of education and training on B&Q and our products has improved, with the result that they feel much more positive about us as an employer. Their levels of engagement have gone up, which is great for people who shop in our stores. Businesses need to ask themselves what questions they are asking and to challenge themselves from an employment point of view.

From a B&Q perspective, the issue is not just about people—there is a wider consideration around the commercial strategy. We know that we need to employ people who represent our customers, whether they are disabled people, older people, younger people, people from ethnic minority groups or women. If we understand our customers, we will think and act like them and will make better decisions.

We need to consider what the fact that the population is getting older means from the point of view of inclusive design of products. We know from our research that when a disabled person comes into one of our stores, he or she will not want a bathroom that looks different from anyone else's. We need to mainstream products for such groups rather than give them a special badge to show that they are for disabled people or for older people with disabilities. Businesses in the commercial and retail sector in particular face a significant challenge in that regard. They must think about the business benefits of mainstreaming products.

Ian Naismith: I want to turn to the gender difference. We have done some reports on women's pensions, the conclusions of which are quite depressing. We found not only that women have less opportunity to save for their retirement, but that they have less inclination to do so. As soon as a couple starts a family, there is a strong possibility that the woman will stop saving for herself and will save only for the children, whereas the man will tend to keep going with pension payments and other savings. It is commendable that women have such a focus on their children, but there needs to be a change of attitude on both sides so that there is more balance in retirement provision for men and women. To an extent, the Government is, through its state pension reforms, addressing the fact that women take time out for caring, but that will not improve private provision.

We found that one of the side effects of what is happening with state pensions, especially with means testing, is that women will lose out compared with men, although overall they will be a lot better off than they are at present. A few groups of women, especially lower-paid women such as hairdressers, may continue to lose out quite heavily. We need to consider areas of women's lives, such as what happens if they go into caring and if they are lower paid, especially self-employed. At the moment they lose out heavily in respect of pensions.

The Convener: Does the fact that women have longer life expectancy than men—the difference is about four or five years—exacerbate the problem?

Ian Naismith: That is why retirement pensions for women cost a bit more.

The Convener: David Manion cited the figures for economic inactivity between the ages of 50 and 64. I would bet that the level of economic inactivity for men of that age is much higher than the level for women. That is another issue that needs to be addressed.

Ian Naismith: I think you are right. However, that is balanced to some extent by the fact that women are very likely to have caring responsibilities, such as looking after parents.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I read the report with great interest and have watched and followed for some years what the futures forum has been doing. I would like to carry out an audit of your communication channels. Coming from the far north, I have an in-built but entirely wrong suspicion of the coffee houses of Edinburgh, with all due respect to my friend Susan Deacon. The points that you have made do not mean a huge amount to a struggling elderly crofter in the Highlands who cannot retire because there is no one to take over the croft. I would like to hear your thoughts on that issue. What is your communication channel with people in remote places such as Lewis and Harris—even in Stornoway—who are caught in such a trap?

We are talking about state pensions. What is your communication channel to Westminster and the United Kingdom Government?

The Convener: Who does not frequent the coffee houses of Edinburgh and is, therefore, qualified to answer the question?

Lord Sutherland: I was born in Aberdeen, but I do not know whether that is far enough north for Jamie Stone. I had all the suspicions of the soft south—by which we meant the central belt of Scotland, not the south-east of England—to which he refers.

Everywhere I have ever worked, there has been a communication problem. That is always with us. It is resolvable in part, and the resolution will vary—for example, computers will be the communication system once we have a generation that is computer literate. The interim issue is the extent to which we can provide people who are already in the system with that capacity. That is why I made an off-the-cuff suggestion about digitalisation. The fact that digital technology will be in everyone's house gives us an opportunity. People will want to find out how to switch to the new system, because if they do not there will be no telly. At the same time, we may be able to begin to instil the ability to work with the net and the web. That will make communication a very different issue.

We must add to the agenda the specific questions that Jamie Stone asked. The report does not—and does not claim to—do everything; rather, it is what we have come up with in the short time that was available to the researchers. The point of this debate is that the likes of Jamie Stone can identify areas where further inquiries are required, and mechanisms for taking forward the report—hence the work of the forum. The capacity to work with information technology changes completely the picture of the kind of work in which people can engage and where they must be in order to do it. That is why I regard IT as being particularly important.

The Convener: I have introduced a member's bill to create a commissioner for older people in Scotland. It will not progress further this year because of the tightness of the parliamentary timetable, but if I am re-elected I will reintroduce it, because the bill is complete. It would provide the resources that would allow much of the required additional work that you have described. I thought that I would get in that little plug at the appropriate opportunity.

Lord Sutherland: All the people here will vote for you—they are nodding their heads.

15:15

The Convener: We have had a really good go at the issue and the debate has been exceptionally helpful. The report is one of the best that I have seen in almost eight years as a member of the Scottish Parliament. Obviously it deals with reserved as well as devolved matters, but it certainly gives Parliament an agenda to which it can work and which it can progress, although most of that will be done after the election.

I ask Stewart Sutherland to sum up before we move on.

Lord Sutherland: I do not think I could sum up because the debate has been so rich; we all look forward to reading the *Official Report* of it.

I will, however, stress two things. The first is on the convener's point about reserved matters. How can we at least impact on what happens to pensions, the retirement age and the age at which one can draw a pension? Sitting down there in the second chamber, as I do, I get the impression—some Scottish peers make this point—that communication is not as good as it should be. I throw in that little squib to go off. If that is the case, it means that both sides are losing out. Legislation could be made south of the border that does not take account of the impact north of the border, and vice versa.

Secondly, in summary, I will take a word that Susan Deacon used, which is "flexibility". When my generation was being brought up, you went into employment at 15—or 21 if you went to university—worked for 40 years in one job, got your pension and stopped. It is not like that now for 101 reasons. That way of working is out of date. I have seen the real issues for women in the workforce and in respect of flexibility through my own family and how well my daughters will be provided for in the future, as distinct from my son, to whom a different set of rules apply. We must also consider reintroduction to work, reskilling, moving careers and so on.

It is worth having a panel such as the Enterprise and Culture Committee to consider that flexibility at least every year to see whether change is taking place. The Scottish Council Foundation is already working on that.

I will leave the issue by saying that we want people to be flexible. We have asked some of the questions that we think will require that flexibility. The Enterprise and Culture Committee will add to those questions and we will be happy to take the agenda forward with you.

The Convener: That is great; thank you. I thank all members of the panel. The meeting has been helpful and informative. I am sure we will devote some of our legacy paper to suggesting that our successor committee or committees address the issues that have been raised.

We will take a short comfort break of three minutes before moving to item 2.

15:17

Meeting suspended.

15:22

On resuming—

Legacy Paper

The Convener: Agenda item 2 is consideration of our approach to our legacy paper. As the clerk has helpfully circulated a paper on the matter, I ask him to introduce the issue.

Stephen Imrie (Clerk): This is somewhat unexpected—

Murdo Fraser: He keeps you on your toes.

Stephen Imrie: Absolutely. You can talk among yourselves while I get my papers together.

I thought that it would be helpful to provide the committee with a suggested framework for a legacy paper. As several members have already talked to me about the importance of producing a legacy paper and some of the subjects that it should cover, I thought that members should have the opportunity to discuss an outline framework of such a paper before the clerks try to draft it. Therefore, I have put together a short briefing paper on how the legacy paper might look and I would appreciate some feedback on it before we start to write the legacy paper itself.

Assuming that the committee wants to produce a legacy paper, I have set out suggestions on the framework in paragraph 9 of my paper. I suggest that the legacy paper should have an introductory section to explain the purpose of legacy papers, which is basically twofold. First, any legacy paper should look back at lessons that have been learned during the parliamentary session, including feedback from members on what worked and what did not work, how the committee went about its operations and what things were particularly worth while. For example, members have said that the round-table evidence-taking sessions that the committee has had recently have been valuable. The first purpose, then, is to look back over the parliamentary session and record members' thoughts on ways of working.

The second purpose of a legacy paper is to look forward and to provide our successor committee or committees—there is no guarantee that there will be an Enterprise and Culture Committee as such in session 3—with our advice and thoughts. Of course, it is for any future committee to decide which, if any, of the ideas it will take forward. The proposed framework builds on that by suggesting that the legacy paper should include a review section, a lessons learned section and a future ideas section. For the future ideas section, because of the possibility that the committee's remit might be given to more than one committee in session 3, it probably make sense to list ideas by subject matter—enterprise, arts and culture,

tourism and so on—to make it easier to farm out our suggestions to any future committees. That is the basic framework.

Obviously, the future ideas section will be informed by the round-table session that we had on the employability framework and the strategy to help those who are not in education, employment or training as well as by today's round-table session on the aging population and our future round-table sessions on the sport 21 strategy and on creative Scotland and the creative industries. However, I would be grateful to hear, between now and February, any other ideas that members have for future priorities and inquiries so that we can work those into our draft legacy paper.

I should point out that the paragraph on the review section suggests that the committee, or a successor committee—it could be one of a successor committee's first tasks—might want to ask the Executive about the recommendations the committee made in a number of the important reports it published during session 2. The Executive has already commented on those recommendations. It agreed to some and did not agree to others. The committee might want to ask the Executive how it has implemented the recommendations it agreed to. Have the recommendations been held in abeyance or have they been acted upon? If there is time, the committee might want to undertake that work now, as part of its legacy paper, picking out its main recommendations, or it could suggest that the task be undertaken by a future committee.

That is the basic framework. I would certainly appreciate ideas from members so that we can take the issue forward.

The Convener: Thank you very much.

The purpose of today's discussion is to try to agree a general framework to which the clerks can work when they prepare a draft legacy paper. Obviously, there are two broad areas that the legacy paper needs to cover. First, it should look at general issues such as issues of process. For example, is there a better way of handling witnesses rather than some of the very formal procedures that we have used? How do we balance the need to get information in public and to be briefed in private? Members might want to make a number of suggestions on process issues that should apply to any successor committee.

As Stephen Imrie said, our committee in effect covers five portfolio areas: enterprise, including science policy and aspects of energy policy; lifelong learning; arts and culture; sport; and tourism. Committees tend to reflect—in a general way, rather than identically—the departmental structure of the Executive, but we do not know whether the enterprise and lifelong learning portfolios will remain within the same department and committee. We do not know whether arts and culture will remain alongside tourism and sport. Therefore, it seems sensible to divide our specific recommendations into the five portfolio areas so that any successor committee can follow them through logically within the common framework of our legacy paper.

By the way, I point out that the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee in the previous parliamentary session was the first committee to produce a legacy paper. Of course, our idea was copied, as usual, by all the other, more junior, committees. I think that legacy papers are a good idea. Obviously, a legacy paper cannot bind anyone, but I think that it will help any new committees that might be formed after the election. A legacy paper will give people a sense of what our priorities were and provide some degree of continuity in the work of committees for each of the portfolios. Committees are not duty bound to produce a legacy paper but, from the Conveners Group, I understand that most, if not all, subject committee are doing so.

Do members have any comments? Can we agree a general remit for the clerks, who will prepare the first draft of our legacy paper?

15:30

Mr Stone: I have three points—one about the subject area and two about process. First, I might be wrong, but after almost four years I have the impression that we could have done more on science. Perhaps we did not have enough time, but we all suspect that problems exist with the teaching of science both at secondary level and in higher education.

Secondly, my experience, again from a long period, is that round-table discussions are always positive. The one that sticks in my mind is the one that we had in a hotel in the west end—the name of which escapes me—about Scottish solutions. I do not know whether we would call it a round-table discussion. Maybe it was a brainstorming session. I hate to use this expression, but in that session we were thinking outside the box. We heard almost more ideas than we could include in our report and, at times, we got into some interesting new territory. I do not know whether that was other members' experience of the day, but I will remember it. Maybe it was to do with the fact that we were taken out of the Parliament into a different, more informal, environment—we moved between tables and so on. However, colleagues might not agree with that.

Thirdly, I remember our evidence-taking session in Argyll during our inquiry into renewable energy. I remember the night in the community centre in

Campbeltown when we heard some interesting new evidence that cleared the air in relation to the perceived wisdom about wind farms. That was useful. All our reports have been good, but our report on renewable energy was one of our better ones.

The Convener: I agree with your point about the session in the Edinburgh hotel. One reason why it was so helpful might be the quality of the advice that we got from Wolfgang Michalski. A lesson for the future might be that committees should go outside the club that is Scotland to find advisers, because doing so gives us a special perspective that we do not always get from people who are hands on in Scotland.

Susan Deacon: I am not sure that that is true, but the quality of the advice that we got from Wolfgang Michalski was particularly good and our relationship was particularly positive. There is maybe something to be picked up in that.

I have a suggestion about the process of drawing up our legacy paper. I have noted a lot of practical points about the sessions that we have had, but, rather than take up discussion time, it might be helpful to capture such points through a combination of e-mail and a wee chat outside the committee for those who want to meet. Obviously, if there are points of disagreement, we can discuss those at the drafting stage. If members agree with that approach, I will resist the temptation to go through all the points on my list and will mention only a couple of the bigger ones.

The question of our remit was touched on from another angle. I well understand the range of issues that govern how decisions about remits are taken. By definition, they are not taken by committees themselves, but it would be legitimate in our legacy paper to make the factual comment that our remit is too broad. I do not think that it is in our gift to recommend what any future remit should be. We should simply say that it is too broad.

I agree with Jamie Stone's point about science, but given the extent of our remit we have not done badly. We have considered a range of areas, but we have not done justice to some of them—as we could if our remit were divided into more manageable chunks. That should be carefully considered in the future.

I am not sure that we acted on our predecessor committee's legacy paper as much as we could. The issue is not just about producing the paper; the new committee will need to build in some time early in its timetable to ensure that it considers the paper. Also, instead of considering the paper only once, there is a case for the new committee revisiting it once a year, or certainly a couple of times during the parliamentary session, because circumstances change.

It is only when members have been around for a while that they become aware that they might be reinventing the wheel or revisiting something on which a good piece of work has already been done. We do not have enough institutional memory to build on such work and often rely on members who were previously members of committees to say that something was done before. We must get better at capturing such information.

I have been party to a parallel conversation in the Audit Committee about a left-hand, right-hand issue that concerns the interrelationship of committees. That is a corporate issue and, if members agree, it would be helpful to capture it in our legacy paper. That is an issue for the Audit Committee, because it covers subjects that overlap with many subject committees' remits.

The essential point is that knowledge, information and expertise are not shared enough between committees. The intention when the Parliament began was to have more mechanisms for that, but for all sorts of reasons—I do not know whether we can even identify them—sharing has not been nearly as systematic as it should have been. Two examples that involve this committee's relationship with the Audit Committee are the work on individual learning accounts and the work on further education, for which the mechanisms for feeding in learning and so on were not as effective as they should have been. It would be useful for us to acknowledge that point as a subject committee. I have not thought about them today, but I am sure that other subject committees have similar issues. I will leave that point for now. Perhaps we should consider the relationship with other committees.

I will not go through my full list of process points. What is bubbling under and what people have already talked about is the value of informal sessions. The constant discussion is about the balance between meeting in public and having the free flow of an informal session that does not have a full *Official Report* and so on. My firm view is that the Parliament needs much more of a continuum and that it is possible to strike that balance. Even from a cost point of view, the full-blown *Official Report* and all that goes with it are not needed, probably even for a discussion such as this. I know that I am raising wider issues. When, outside a formal session, we have received briefings and tried to get our heads around issues early, that has been more effective and more efficient. The outcomes can be captured or there can be a bona fide minute. I realise that the situation is different for a more formal process, whether in relation to

legislation or a later stage of evidence taking for a policy inquiry.

As I said, I have a host of other detailed points, but I am happy to pass them to the clerks.

The Convener: I encourage all members who have detailed points to feed them in. My attitude—I think that Stephen Imrie's is the same—is that we should put comments in the initial draft, after which they can be removed, rather than not put them in. What is in the legacy paper is up to members, as the committee owns the paper.

Christine May: I agree with Susan Deacon about our remit. The extent to which we have been able to do anything other than enterprise stuff is an issue. My experience of previous committees with a broad remit has been that the dominant policy occupies most of the time. We have not done justice to sport, culture or tourism, although we have tried hard. That should be in the paper.

Another matter that may be worth flagging up is the refreshing of the committee—consideration of rotating membership every two years. I know that people become comfortable—I have been here for four years and I have loved every minute—but I do not know whether some refreshing of the committee has merit because of the different ideas that that would bring.

A more general point is about briefings. The informal manufacturing advisory service briefing was superb. We could have spent twice as much time on it. Perhaps the balance of work between formal committee meetings and other initiatives is an issue.

As for the legacy paper's framework, I agree with having two fairly short introductory sections—the introduction and review. After that, we can cover the blue-sky stuff—what we think will be the dominant issues—and subjects on which it is for a future committee to do work. It will be up to a future committee to decide whether to take our advice.

Murdo Fraser: I have just a couple of brief points. In his paper, under the heading "Future ideas", Stephen Imrie refers to the idea of a skills summit. That should be broadened out. We have not spent enough time on the wider skills agenda in the past four years, which to an extent ties in with what Jamie Stone said about science. There is a definite overlap. We could perhaps give a steer to a successor committee or committees that how skills and the workplace tie in with subjects such as further education should be prioritised.

My only other comment is about Stephen Imrie's recommendation on annexes and an Executive update on what has happened to our report recommendations. That is a valuable suggestion. There is not much point leaving that until after the election when a new committee will be in place, because we may have a different Executive and all sorts of things might change. It makes sense to follow that suggestion before the parliamentary session ends.

The Convener: Alex Salmond will have only four departments, so there may be only four committees in the whole Parliament.

Murdo Fraser: And which ministerial office will you hold, convener?

The Convener: I call Richard Baker.

Richard Baker: I wanted simply to say that we should perhaps flag up in the legacy paper the value of post-legislative scrutiny, which is a good thing that some committees have done. One example is the Health Committee's work on long-term care. We dealt with the Bankruptcy and Diligence etc (Scotland) Bill, which was huge. It might be worth the next committee seeing how well that legislation works. There have been some other, smaller, but equally important, pieces of legislation that might also be worth reviewing. Such reviews are sometimes just as useful, if not more so, than inquiries.

I am not sure about being refreshed every two years. I have been here for four years and I do not feel particularly fresh, but I am not sure whether it would benefit me to be refreshed by going on another committee.

The Convener: I do not want to dampen Christine May's idea, because it is good in principle, but I suspect that the business managers may have something to say about it.

Fiona Hyslop: This is your committee, but as a former business manager I can perhaps give a wee bit of perspective on the idea of refreshing. Having gone through two sessions, I much prefer committees when they stay as a unit, as they work more effectively. It is hard to create a unit. Under Alex Neil's excellent convenership, you have a cohesive and focused committee, which makes a difference.

As well as post-legislative scrutiny, committees could carry out post-policy scrutiny. For example, one of the most useful things the Education Committee did was examine the recommendations on child protection and where we are relative to the Government's proposals. We have probably delivered more to improve child protection through that than by approaching the subject with a blank piece of paper, so it is worth considering post-policy examination as well as post-legislative scrutiny.

The Convener: Coming back to Susan Deacon's point about structure, I think that the Parliament misses an opportunity. Departments tend to work on particular subject areas, such as

enterprise and lifelong learning, but there is scope for the committees to provide a cross-governmental function. Economic development is a good example. If there were an economic development committee, it could examine the impact of education or transport on economic development.

Structuring committees along themes rather than reflecting the departmental structure needs to be looked at. They could be used to get joined-up thinking. I do not mean this in any derogatory sense, but the departmental structure is at the whim of the First Minister, and it tends to change over time. The creation of a culture, sport and tourism function was one change, and the question was whether enterprise should stay with lifelong learning. We might get a more stable structure if committees were themed along, for example, economic development or poverty and deprivation. We could perhaps give some thought to that.

15:45

Stephen Imrie is happy to meet any committee member to discuss their ideas. I encourage members to do that. The Parliament has grown up a lot in the past eight years and we now have a lot of experience, which we should try to impart. Irrespective of the changes in party fortunes, there will always be a churn at every election. For new members coming in and serving on committees for the first time, it will be helpful to have recommendations, even if they are not taken up. The legacy paper can be used as a kind of briefing on the work that has been done, to inform new members and to bring members who have been members of the Parliament but who are new to the committee up to date with what has been happening.

Shiona Baird: As a member who has been refreshed on committees—I came from the Equal Opportunities Committee to the Enterprise and Culture Committee—I can say that the downside is that it took me a while to get into the thinking on this committee. Other members had their heads round the subject, but it took me time to get into it. It also took time to get into the way in which the committee is managed, as it is different from the Equal Opportunities Committee, which has prepared questions. That was a fascinating change for me.

The Convener: I have been an ordinary member in a committee with prepared questions and I absolutely hated it. My personal view is that that practice stifles the committee.

Shiona Baird: I was anxious when I entered this set-up, but I can now see how valuable it is to members to have the freedom to go down whatever avenue suits them.

The Convener: At present, some committees use prepared questions and some do not. I personally do not like prepared questions, because the whole point of the process is to try to respond to what people tell you. If members sit with prepared questions, that looks dreadful.

Shiona Baird: At the same time, there is an opportunity. The clerks on this committee do good work in providing briefings and outlines, to give us information on which to base our questions. That is valuable and interesting.

I will repeat what others have said about the value of looking back. One of the most interesting pieces of work that the Equal Opportunities Committee did when I was a member was to refer back to the Gypsy Traveller measures and consider how well they have worked. We found huge gaps. It is also important to look back at reports, such as the one on aging that we discussed earlier. We should not lose sight of such reports. Once people have taken evidence and produced reports, it is easy for the reports to go nowhere, which undermines people's confidence in the parliamentary process. One important aspect for the successor committee is that, in moving forward, it should also look back.

I have other points, which I will give to the clerks, on topics that I would like the future enterprise committee to consider.

The Convener: We will not have a guess as to what they are.

Christine May: They will not include climate change.

Shiona Baird: The Confederation of British Industry is on to that already.

The Convener: I am happy to open a book.

Mr Stone: I have a point about the non-scripted questions in this committee. It is an incredibly important feature that was part of the dynamic of the committee. I take it that the clerks have taken note of that.

The Convener: The decision on that is really for committees and their conveners. My view is that having questions prepared to that extent takes the life out of a committee and is a bit of an insult.

Mr Stone: Not having scripted questions has made us think and listen more.

Shiona Baird: If members go into a committee with scripted questions, the danger is that they will have not done their research beforehand.

Christine May: To be fair, we had some guidance on questions from Nicholas Grier, when

he advised us on the Bankruptcy and Diligence etc (Scotland) Bill, which was extremely helpful, because it was a complex bill.

Mr Stone: It was just as well.

The Convener: To be fair, that was a very technical area and we were dealing with proposed legislation.

Christine May: Such guidance has its place.

The Convener: Exactly. That is the point—it is horses for courses.

We will bring back the draft paper in the first week in February, which gives members ample opportunity to feed into the clerks and, if you want, to have a one-to-one meeting with Stephen Imrie, which I encourage you to do.

Scottish Register of Tartans Bill: Stage 1

15:49

The Convener: I welcome Jamie McGrigor MSP, the promoter of the Scottish Register of Tartans Bill, who has joined us to participate in our discussion on agenda item 3.

Members may remember that we agreed not to take any further action until we received a response from the Scottish Executive. We now have a response, by way of a letter from the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning—members have a copy in their papers. If I may, I will paraphrase the letter. The minister says that there is something in the proposal, but that the Executive wants more time to consider it in detail to establish whether a register can be established without resort to legislation and how it could bring economic benefit to Scotland. In paraphrasing, I think that I am also quoting exactly what an Executive representative told me about the letter.

The Executive's response is encouraging. From the tone of the letter that we have received from Jamie McGrigor, I take it that he, too, thinks that it is encouraging. In his letter, Jamie McGrigor asks us to delay our stage 1 report until he has had an opportunity to have a meeting with the Executive on its response. I do not see any difficulty with that, but I am in the hands of the committee.

Christine May: I am enormously encouraged by both Jamie's letter and the Executive's response. After our previous meeting, I took the opportunity to discuss the matter informally with Jamie and other colleagues. There is merit in the proposal. Tartan is something for which Scotland has international recognition. We have registers and cataloguing of all kinds of other things. Jamie's proposal gives us an opportunity to do something that has not been done before. That said, I am not convinced that a piece of legislation is required. With good will on all sides, we should be able to achieve what we want without recourse to legislation. I welcome the discussions that are now to be held between Jamie and ministers on whether there is a way forward that does not require the spending of huge amounts of money on bureaucracy—which is not what we want—in order to create something we want.

Mr Stone: You are absolutely right, convener, to suggest that we should await the outcome of Jamie's discussions with the Executive.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Although everything the convener said is completely correct, I have now had a meeting with

Allan Wilson. I hoped that the meeting would also include Margaret Curran, but she was detained on other business that day.

Allan Wilson explained what he set out in his letter, which is that the Executive wants to look at the possibilities that a national register would create, by encouraging the profitability of the tartan industry and presenting tartan as a national icon of Scotland. The minister also said that the Executive wants to see whether Scottish Enterprise's textiles team can work with some of the people who have been involved in the discussions to date. He wants to see whether we can come up with a register without, as Christine May said, having to legislate.

In his letter, the minister talks of working with

"public and private sector bodies",

which is key to everything. In doing so, the Executive will probably hit a brick wall. It will discover how difficult it is simply to hand the register to one of the bodies that says it could do it. Of all the registers that are known to me, three out of the four have said that they want to hand over their stuff to a public register. Only one body is standing out against the proposal. In the past, registers have done well so long as tartan is fashionable, but they have withered on the vine when it lapses out of fashion. That is the danger that we face. If a register withers on the vine, we could lose something that is iconic to Scotland simply because the textile industry is not doing well at the time.

I am all for encouraging discussion. I do not care how long this takes. I would like to see some sort of historical record in the shape of a register of tartans. It does not matter to me whether the bill that is introduced to do that has my name on it or the Executive's; what matters to me is that something is done to protect tartan for Scotland rather than for a particular industry. Many different industries can benefit from tartan: it is not owned by the weavers or by any other sector of Scottish industry.

I have already had a meeting with Allan Wilson. He said that he would issue a statement to the Parliament—or to the committee—in which he would say what he is doing and thank me for the work I have done so far. I suspect that there will be no progress until the next session of Parliament—all things being equal and depending on who is in power—because although it is possible that the Executive will finish within the next month or so the piece of work that it has decided to do, the completion of that work will delay matters considerably.

The Convener: Are you saying that since you wrote your letter to the committee, you have met the minister?

Mr McGrigor: I have had one meeting with him.

The Convener: Will you have another meeting with him?

Mr McGrigor: No, but yesterday someone in Scottish Enterprise rang me up to ask for the details of some of the people who have been involved in the thought process. I have been told that I and other people will be kept in the loop so that we can hammer out something that might be acceptable.

The Convener: What I am getting at is whether there is any reason for us to hold up doing our stage 1 report next week or the following week.

Mr McGrigor: What did I ask you to do in my letter?

The Convener: You asked us to delay completion of our stage 1 report for a month, but I assume that because you have met Allan Wilson and he has said that he will provide us with a statement, we can schedule in consideration of our report for our first meeting in February. Would that be okay?

Mr McGrigor: I took advice from David Cullum, among others, on the technical side of things and I believe that he discussed matters with the committee's clerk. I am perfectly prepared to go along with what is best for the schedule.

Christine May: I have a brief comment. I agree with Jamie McGrigor that we cannot leave progress on the issue to the good will of a body that happens to be extant but which may not, because of economic circumstances, exist in five or 10 years' time. If a register is to be established, it needs to be done formally and with Government support, so that it will have a use and a future in the long term, like other registers and catalogues of artefacts that are of importance to Scotland. A register of tartans is just as important.

The Convener: Does the committee agree to schedule in finalisation of our stage 1 report for our first meeting in February?

Members *indicated agreement*.

The Convener: I draw members' attention to the final paragraph of the letter from Iain Brodie of the Scottish Enterprise Party, which I circulated. I thought that it was exceptionally sensible.

Mr McGrigor: I draw members' attention to the first paragraph, which I think is extremely cheeky.

The Convener: On that note, I thank everyone and look forward to seeing them again next week.

Meeting closed at 15:58.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Thursday 25 January 2007

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

Single copies: £5.00
Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75
Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Standing orders will be accepted at Document Supply.

Published in Edinburgh by Astron and available from:

Blackwell's Bookshop

53 South Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1YS
0131 622 8222

Blackwell's Bookshops:
243-244 High Holborn
London WC1 7DZ
Tel 020 7831 9501

All trade orders for Scottish Parliament documents should be placed through Blackwell's Edinburgh.

Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation Helpline may be able to assist with additional information on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament, their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries
0131 622 8283 or
0131 622 8258

Fax orders
0131 557 8149

E-mail orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Subscriptions & Standing Orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Scottish Parliament

RNID Typetalk calls welcome on
18001 0131 348 5000
Textphone 0845 270 0152

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

Accredited Agents
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers

Printed in Scotland by Astron