



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

Thursday 13 June 2013



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**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

**19<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2013, Session 4**

**CONVENER**

\*Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP)

\*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)

\*Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)

\*John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)

\*Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab)

\*attended

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Douglas Thornton

**LOCATION**

Committee Room 4



## Scottish Parliament

### Equal Opportunities Committee

Thursday 13 June 2013

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 09:01*]

### Decisions on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (Mary Fee):** Good morning and welcome to the Equal Opportunities Committee's 19th meeting in 2013. I remind everyone to set all electronic devices to either flight mode or off.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on taking business in private. We are asked to decide whether consideration of candidates for the post of adviser on scrutiny of the draft budget should be taken in private. Are we agreed?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** Agenda item 2 is a decision on taking business in private. We are asked to decide whether consideration of a request to sponsor an event coinciding with black history month and African history month should be taken in private at a future meeting. Are we agreed?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** In addition, before I move on to agenda item 3, I want to mention that we have received the Scottish Government's response to our report "Where Gypsy/Travellers Live". I am minded to schedule that for a discussion in private at next week's meeting. I think that it would be useful to discuss the Government's response.

**John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):** I agree. We should, if possible, put aside some considerable time to consider the Government's response.

**The Convener:** Are we agreed that we should consider the Government's response in private at next week's meeting?

**Members indicated agreement.**

## Equality and Human Rights Commission

09:02

**The Convener:** Agenda item 3 is on correspondence relating to the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Members will see that paper 1 suggests two options: either to take no further action or to invite the EHRC to respond to the issues that have been raised.

I am minded to invite representatives from the EHRC to respond to the issues raised.

**Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP):** Should we ask them to respond in writing?

**The Convener:** We could invite them along to respond in person, but it is entirely up to us. We could invite them for a one-off evidence session.

**Marco Biagi:** Given current pressures, it might be best to see what they say in writing and then decide whether we want to bring them in to cross-examine them.

**The Convener:** Do we agree to write to the EHRC to ask for a response to the issues that were raised?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** That will be our initial response. Thank you for that.

## Gender Pay Gap

09:03

**The Convener:** Agenda item 4 is on the gender pay gap. Members will see that paper 2 suggests several options: that we give further consideration to the gender pay gap; that we give further consideration to occupational segregation; or that we take any other action that members may suggest.

**Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP):** Sorry, I am a bit lost because I did not receive an agenda and papers for today's meeting.

**The Convener:** Sorry. Douglas Thornton will rush round to provide you with a copy.

You will see from paper 2, which is on the gender pay gap, that the recommendations suggest three options that we might consider. Do members have any thoughts on how we should take the matter forward?

My view is that we should give further consideration to the gender pay gap but also look at occupational segregation, because I think that it is difficult to separate one from the other. My personal view is that we should look at both issues.

**Marco Biagi:** I think that we should fold this issue into the follow-up response that we get to the report on our women and work inquiry. Clearly, the issues are similar and the response to our report will interact quite substantially with the issue of occupational segregation and, probably in no small part, with the gender pay gap. We could decide to give further consideration to the gender pay gap but decide at a future date exactly what that further consideration should be.

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** I agree in principle that we should consider the gender pay gap alongside the response to our women and work report, but I worry that key issues relating to the gender pay gap might be lost in a bigger discussion. Therefore, this perhaps has to go both ways. I think that the gender pay gap should be a specific priority that we look at in the short term. As we have heard from a number of witnesses in our women and work inquiry, the gender pay gap is an absolutely critical consideration for a number of key issues.

**The Convener:** I agree. The clerk will correct me if I am wrong, but I think that we agreed that we would pick up the gender pay gap as a separate issue. In a discussion that we had a while ago, we talked about looking specifically at the issue of the gender pay gap. It would be hard to include the gender pay gap as part of a bigger inquiry because it is such a big issue.

Therefore, I agree with what Alex Johnstone has said—yes, that might not happen again.

**John Finnie:** I commend that approach, because I think that the gender pay gap is a big issue. I also commend the paper from Wladyslaw Mejka. We have a lot of information that will need to be married together, but I think that Marco Biagi is right that our consideration of the issue can be informed by the Government's response to our women and work report.

**The Convener:** Do you disagree with considering the gender pay gap separately?

**John Finnie:** No. I commend the approach that you suggested. I am just saying that I agree that we should wait for the Government's response to our women and work inquiry, because that will inform our thinking along with these papers.

**The Convener:** Yes, it would not be our intention to do anything before we get the Government's response to our women and work inquiry. However, we discussed looking at the gender pay gap issue in isolation, because it is such a big issue. That is why we have the paper. Do members have any other views?

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** Convener, before I comment, let me just apologise for arriving late.

I am very suspicious of some of the figures in the paper that show that, apparently, Glasgow has a negative gender pay gap. However, I am sure that we can look at those in due course.

**The Convener:** Yes, some of the figures are quite startling.

**John Mason:** I think that arm's-length external organisations are a factor.

**Christian Allard:** I agree that we should wait for the Government's response before we discuss the gender pay gap issue.

**The Convener:** We will wait on the Government's response to our women and work inquiry and then give further consideration to whether we need a short-term inquiry on the gender pay gap so that we can get more evidence. I see members nodding. Are we agreed?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** Excellent. Our next meeting, on Thursday 20 June, will be held in private as it will include consideration of our forward work programme and our approach to forthcoming legislation on marriage and civil partnerships.

09:08

*Meeting continued in private until 10:36.*

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e-format first available  
ISBN 978-1-78351-318-5

Revised e-format available  
ISBN 978-1-78351-337-6