Education, Culture and Sport Committee

11th Meeting, 2001

Tuesday 3 April 2001

The Committee will meet at 2.30 pm in Committee Room 2

1. **Items in Private:** The Committee will consider whether to take items 5, 6 and 7 in private.

2. **Budget 2002-03:** The Committee will consider the appointment of a reporter.

3. **Children’s Commissioner:** The Committee will be updated on its inquiry into the need for a Children’s Commissioner.

4. **Deputy Convener’s Report on European Visit:** The Deputy Convener will report back on the recent visit of the Convener’s Liaison Group to the European Parliament

5. **Timetabling of Committee Meetings:** The Committee will consider a paper on timetabling of committee meetings.

6. **Children’s Commissioner:** The Committee will consider possible advisers for its inquiry.

7. **National Stadium Inquiry:** The Committee will consider whether to take further evidence.

The following papers are attached for this meeting—

Clerk’s note on appointment of reporter (Agenda item 2) ED/01/11/1

Clerk’s note on Children’s Commissioner Inquiry (Agenda item 3) ED/01/11/2

Clerk’s note on timetabling of committee meetings (Agenda item 5 - Private Paper) ED/01/11/3(P)

Clerk’s note on appointment of adviser (Agenda item 6 - Private Paper) ED/01/11/4(P)

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### Education, Culture and Sport Committee

**Meeting – Tuesday 3rd April 2001**

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EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

3 April 2001

Budget Process 2002/2003 – Appointment of a Reporter

1. The purpose of this paper is to invite the committee to appoint a reporter to assist it during the process of consideration of Stage 1 of the 2002/2003 budget.

2. The Executive’s Departmental Expenditure Report was due to be published on 30 March 2001. The committee is due to consider this report at its meeting on 24 April 2001 and is due to consider its draft report to the Finance Committee at its meeting of 22 May 2001.

3. A pro-forma report is attached, which shows the questions which the Finance Committee invites subject committees to address in their reports.

4. In order to assist the committee in this process, it is suggested that the committee may wish to appoint a reporter. The remit of the reporter would be to report to the committee on the information contained in the Departmental Expenditure Report at its meeting of 24 April 2001 and to report to the committee on a proposed response to the questions contained in the pro-forma report at its meeting of 22 May 2001.

Martin Verity
Clerk to the Committee
2002/03 BUDGET: STAGE 1

As the first stage of the annual budget process, the terms of which have been approved by the Parliament, the [ ] Committee is asked to consider and report on the future spending priorities of the Scottish Executive. [ ], the annual expenditure report sets out the provisional expenditure plans for 2002/03.

The report should be completed and returned to the Clerk of the Finance Committee no later than 31 May 2001.

In considering the relevant chapter(s) of the annual expenditure report for 2001/02, the [ ] Committee is asked to respond to the following questions.

A. General

1) How does the annual expenditure report compare with last year’s budget documentation, Investing in You and Making a Difference for Scotland, in terms of—
   a) Readability and cohesiveness
   b) Robustness of expenditure figures (for year on year comparisons)
   c) Adequacy of explanations for substantial changes in funding allocations and exceptional changes in departmental performance

2) What consultation has the Department undertaken in compiling its chapter of the annual expenditure report? Have the results of any consultation been made available to the Committee?

3) Is the Committee satisfied that there is clarity on the effect of departmental policies for men and women? What progress has the Department made in equality-proofing its policies?

B. Departmental Performance

4) Is the Committee content with the strategic direction of the Department as a whole (and its component divisions/ agencies)? Is the Committee satisfied that the Department’s key aims for policy outcomes are set out in the Annual Expenditure Report?

5) Does the Committee concur with these aims?

6) Are there (timed) objectives and targets to underpin these aims? Where a timeframe has been expressed which goes beyond 2001/02, has an interim target been stated?

7) In light of the extra funding resulting from the Comprehensive Spending Review last year, what evidence is there that this has resulted in the Department’s objectives being raised?
8) Does the Committee consider that the achievement of objectives and targets listed in the annual expenditure report will result in the intended policy outcome being achieved? Is the Committee satisfied it understands why and how departmental targets were arrived at? What modifications, if any, does the Committee wish to recommend in terms of the objectives and targets?

9) Is the Committee content that adequate mechanisms are in place to monitor whether the objectives and targets are being met?

10) How did the Department perform in relation to the targets that were included in Investing in You? Where targets have not been met, is the Committee satisfied why this is the case? What measures has the Department put in place to address the situation?

C. Funding Allocations

11) If the Committee is content with the aims and objectives of the Department but is not confident that the funding allocation is adequate for the aims and objectives to be met, what changes in funding allocation for 2002/03 does the Committee recommend?

12) Similarly, if the Committee recommends that the Department should alter its aims and objectives, how should resources be allocated in 2002/03 to meet these proposed revisions? The Committee should make it clear whether it considers it is possible to revise the funding arrangements and keep to the proposed total departmental figure.

13) The Committee should state which areas of the Department would benefit most from any additional expenditure that may become available, either during 2001/02 or for 2002/03.
1. A general invitation to submit written evidence to the above inquiry was posted on the Education, Culture and Sport Committee webpage on 28 February. Specific approaches to submit written evidence have been made to the organisations on the attached list. The deadline for replies is Friday 6 April.

2. The Bureau at its meeting of Tuesday 27 March approved the committee’s request to appoint an adviser to assist it in its inquiry.

3. Arrangements are being made for the convener to meet the Chair of the Health and Social Services Committee and the Minister for Health and Social Services of the National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff on 10 April. Discussions are in hand to arrange a similar meeting with the Chairperson of the Health, Social Services and Public Safety Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

4. At its meeting of 6 February the committee agreed that a one day event should be held as part of its inquiry, which would enable young persons and relevant organisations to come together with committee members. A draft proposal for such an event is attached and members views are invited on the proposal.

Martin Verity
Clerk to the Committee
Invitations to submit written evidence to Children’s Commissioner Inquiry

1. ADES
2. ADSW
3. BAAF (British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering)
4. Centre for the Study of the Child & Society, Glasgow University
5. Children’s Reporter Administration
6. Community Learning Scotland
7. Children’s Rights Team
8. CoSLA
9. Disability Rights Commission
10. EIS
11. Equal Opportunities Commission
12. Local Government Ombudsman
13. National Foster Care Association
14. Scotland for Children (Barnardos, Save the Children, Children in Scotland, NCH and Children 1st)
15. Scottish Council for Research in Education
16. Scottish Human Rights Centre
17. Scottish Pre-School Play Association
18. Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum
19. WhoCares?Scotland
1. **PROPOSAL**

This paper proposes that an effective way to gather evidence for the Committee’s inquiry on the children’s commissioner would be to produce a short film on the opinions of children and young people which would be shown at a day event on June 4th. The day event would consist of:

- Showing the film and presenting the arguments for and against a commissioner
- Workshops in committee rooms followed by a
- Plenary session in the Chamber.

2. It is envisaged that there would be around fifty participants drawn from:

- Campaign groups
- Service providers
- Young people from groups such as the Youth Parliament
- Organisations whose current remit might overlap with that of a children’s commissioner. E.g. Local government ombudsman.

While the suggested proposal is using some techniques from methods of consultation, it must be stressed that it is not a full consultation exercise. It is using alternative methods to gain oral and written evidence for the Committee’s Inquiry.

3. **BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on Tuesday 6 February 2001, the Education, Culture and Sport committee agreed to the idea of holding an event in the Chamber as part of its inquiry into the appointment of a Children’s Commissioner. The Committee thought it particularly important that oral evidence be taken from young people. Instead of holding formal hearings on this issue, it was suggested that we could host an event that would enable organisations to come together, give their views and debate the matters. Such a slightly different approach might allow ideas to spark off each other, and produce results which might not be reached in the more formal committee setting.

At this meeting it was also noted that the Convener’s Liaison Group paper “Increasing the Effectiveness of Committees” encouraged committee’s to obtain relevant information by methods which encourage civic participation. The “Business in the Chamber” event hosted by the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee is a good example of how this type of event can be successful.

4. **WHY USE FILM?**

- The views of children and young people from a wider geographical area could be taken into account.
- The filming would take place before the exam diet which runs from 14th May to 12th June, thus avoiding the problem of a probable low turn out of young people to an event which takes place during the exam diet.
- The kind of young person most likely to benefit from the creation of the post of Children’s Commissioner is not necessarily the kind of person most willing or
most able to contribute directly to an event in the chamber, less so a more formal committee meeting. It is important that the views of the children who would benefit most from a commissioner would be heard and it is vital that the manner in which children are involved would not be seen as tokenistic.

- It is more interesting and less threatening for young people to work with film and it would enable them to reflect and record their views in their own way at their own pace. Children are also more ‘in control’ in a familiar setting with familiar people. It is intended that the interviews will utilise the skills of specialist/project workers from the child’s own environment. Issues of consent and understanding of the nature of the project are clearly vital when working with children and young people.
- The film will help to balance input from representatives of ‘youth’ or ‘children’s’ organisations. The film will therefore provide an important context for the day event.

4.1 Research Backing for a Different Approach
Recent research undertaken for the Education Committee on the Effective Consultation with Children suggests that meeting young people on their own terms rather than expecting them to come to the Parliament would get a better response. Opinions on one off events were mixed, with greater enthusiasm among older groups. Opinion among children in particular circumstances such as those with special needs, those who had experienced homelessness and very young children (3 and 4 year olds) was not favourable to one-off events. The guidelines produced from this research will inform the approach to making the film.

Research published recently by the Scottish Executive Central Research Unit on ‘Assessment of Innovative Approaches to Testing Community Opinion’ highlight the use of video diaries as a powerful means for raising issues for discussion. The use of a combination of techniques was also supported: A combined approach may help to secure the input of those people, or groups of people, who are often excluded by conventional consultation techniques.

The Broadcasting Unit at the Parliament are interested in being involved in such a project which would involve two or three days filming over successive Fridays in May. The aim would be to produce a 10-15 minute short film presenting the views of children and young people, from all sorts of backgrounds, about what difference a Children’s Commissioner might make to their lives.

Peter Reid is experienced in making and editing short films.

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1 Scottish Executive, (2000) Central Research Unit, Assessment of Innovative Approaches to Testing Community Opinion, p.30
5. PROPOSED OUTLINE OF THE DAY EVENT – MONDAY JUNE 4TH

Purpose
The event will provide a supplement to written and oral evidence of the inquiry by enabling a larger number of organisations and representatives from children and young people’s groups to discuss the issues than would be possible through standard oral evidence in the time available for the inquiry. It is not however a full consultation.

Outline of day
The day will consist of a morning plenary to set the context and main arguments followed by workshops looking at particular key themes in the remit and role of a commissioner. The lunchtime will also be used as a networking opportunity and the workshop notes will be displayed for comments. The afternoon session will give participants an opportunity to comment on areas not covered in their workshops and discuss the big question of whether there should be a commissioner.

Morning Workshops – Possible discussion themes in the remit and role of a commissioner
1. power to scrutinise legislation and policy in public agencies and government?
2. collect statistics and research on children to inform policy?
3. awareness raising role?
4. deal with individual cases?
5. how could it be child friendly?
6. which groups of children, and why?
7. age range?
8. how would it fit with existing structures?

Afternoon Plenary
1. Remit and role: chair or adviser highlights issues from the morning workshops. Followed by discussion from the floor.
2. Should there be a commissioner? chair / adviser re-iterates arguments for and against. Discussion from floor on all the issues.

Participants
Around 50 participants would be expected. Those invited to the day event will include:

- Voluntary organisations campaigning on children’s issues
- Service providers – public and voluntary sector
- Young people from groups such as youth parliament, Who Cares? Scotland.
- Organisations who already have a ‘commissioner’ type role – local govt ombudsman, children’s rights teams etc.

Camilla Kidner
Richard Hough
Peter Reid