

EDUCATION IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

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PREAMBLE

This paper follows on from the previous bulletin (Redford, 2007), which covered the business of the Parliament's Education Committee between September 2006 and January 2007. The bulletin is presented in two parts: the first covers committee proceedings during the second part of the 2006 – 7 parliamentary year (Session 2, January 2007 to April 2007) and the end of the 2003 – 2007 Parliament; the second the start of the 2007 – 2011 Parliament (Session 3) and the establishment of a new Education Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee.

PART 1: FEBRUARY TO APRIL 2007

The Education Committee had the following members during this period: Iain Smith (Convenor), Lord James Douglas Hamilton (Deputy Convenor), Rosemary Byrne, Fiona Hyslop, Adam Ingram, Marilyn Livingstone, Frank MacAveety, Kenneth Macintosh and Elaine Murray. Full records of the committee meetings, including transcripts of proceedings and all committee papers can be found on the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/education/index.htm

The committee completed their work on the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Bill Stage 2. They considered subordinate legislation covering assisted places, parental involvement in headteacher and deputy appointments and the Teachers' superannuation scheme. They heard evidence on petitions regarding school lockers and revisited earlier petitions on school closures. They worked in private on draft reports on the Teachers' Agreement and a legacy paper. For the first time the annual reports of organisations reporting to the committee were noted and not discussed.

The main areas of the committee business which are addressed in this bulletin relate to the following areas:

- Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Bill
- Annual Reports
- Teachers' Agreement Inquiry
- Legacy Paper

The bulletin identifies key issues that have arisen during the committee discussions, supported by the relevant committee papers. The substantive and interesting debates are highlighted, including the questioning of expert witnesses. References indicate the relevant committee and business papers which provide full details of the work of the committee.

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS (SCOTLAND) BILL

The committee considered Stage 1 of the *Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Bill* in November 2006 and in their report to Parliament recommended that Stage 2 should not begin until stakeholders had commented on drafts of the latest subordinate legislation and guidance. Following the Parliament's approval of the Bill's general principles, the Parliamentary Bureau referred it back to the committee for Stage 2 consideration in February 2007. The committee heard evidence from three groups

of witnesses at their meeting on the 7th February 2007.

Date of Committee	Witnesses
7 February 2007	• Russell Gunson and Kirsteen Gooday, SCVO • Alex Cole-Hamilton, <i>YouthLink Scotland</i>
	• Penny Curtis, COSLA • Lynn Townsend, <i>West Dunbartonshire Council and the Association of Directors of Education</i> • Michelle Miller, <i>Fife Council and the Association of Directors of Social Work</i>
	• Robert Brown, <i>Deputy Minister for Education and Young People</i> • Claire Monaghan and Moira Oliphant, <i>Children and Families Division, Scottish Executive Education Department</i> • Andrew Mott, <i>The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Bill, Scottish Executive Education Department</i> • Liz Sadler, <i>Justice Department, Scottish Executive Education Department</i>

The papers for this meeting included a letter to the Convenor from Hugh Henry, Minister for Education and Young People outlining the pre-consultation discussion paper (ED/S2/07/3/2) which covered the topics of retrospective checking, determination procedures (thresholds for barring) and fees. This paper set the policy context of the proposed legislation and asked stakeholders for comments regarding matters to be covered in secondary legislation. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), the umbrella body for the voluntary sector in Scotland, had submitted a letter stating their particular concerns over retrospective checks and fees (ED/S2/07/3/3). The committee discussions with all three panels focused on the core issues of costs to organisations and the timing of retrospective checking.

Elaine Murray opened the discussion by asking about the three different options for a fee structure proposed in the pre-consultation documents. Russell Gunson replied that the only option that the voluntary sector could cope with, “would be an initial check that cost roughly the same as it costs now,” (Gunson, 07.02.07, Col 4006) and expressed the hope that rechecking would cost less. He went on to make the point that since the introduction of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 (POCSA) the fee for checks had risen from £13.60 to £20 in less than a year, with a proposed rise to a fee of £26 for the initial check. Kenneth Macintosh questioned the need for different structures for salaried and voluntary staff, to which Kirsteen Gooday replied that most services were provided under contract to Local Authorities and the full cost of such services was not always covered in the contract, “so it would be an additional layer of administration and an additional financial burden for us” (Gooday, 07.02.07, Col 4011). Russell Gunson added that the voluntary sector would prefer options 1a and 1b for payment of fees and in answer to a question from Kenneth Macintosh that they would prefer retrospective checks to be made after four years (Gunson, 07.02.07, Col 4012). Elaine Murray then moved the discussion onto the issue of the occasional volunteer:

...and the situation in which a school trip or another activity for young people or protected adults cannot go ahead because there are not enough parents or responsible adults until someone steps in at the last minute (Murray, 07.02.07, Col 4018).

Russell Gunson agreed that the issue had not been addressed in the Bill as key terms, “such as ‘normal duties’, ‘caring’ and ‘supervising’,” were not defined (Gunson, 07.02.07, Col 4018). He then explained the amendments proposed by SCVO to exempt people, such as friends of the family, from the legislation if parents gave consent for them to work with their children. James Douglas- Hamilton moved the discussion back to fees and asked about the extent to which the Executive should cover the cost of fees. Russell Gunson welcomed the fact that the Executive had already agreed to waive fees for volunteers, as it did for POCSA, but reiterated the concern of voluntary organisations about the costs for paid staff.

The second panel also addressed the issues of costs and the timing of retrospective checks. Lynn Townsend felt that Local Authorities would prefer an annual subscription, as it would make budgeting easier. Fiona Hyslop asked if discussions had taken place about additional funding. “If the statutory sector gets additional funding, the voluntary sector should also get extra money, but by what mechanism?” (Hyslop, 07.02.07, Col 4025). Michelle Miller replied that no discussions had taken place, but that in principle if they received money to implement a new scheme, for which part was contracted to other organisations, then that needed to be taken account of in the grant allocation. The need for organisations to work together was restated by Robert Brown, Deputy Minister of Education and Young People in the third panel of discussions. He emphasised the desire of the Executive to work with stakeholders, “particularly the voluntary sector, in a way they are comfortable with” (Brown, 07.02.07, Col 4034). He then went on to outline his view on the issue of retrospective checking, which was that a timescale of four or five years would be reasonable. “We want people to be comfortable with the new system” (Brown, 07.02.07, Col 4036). This was supported by Claire Monaghan who said that the discussion paper was there to ensure that all the options were considered. The Convenor asked about the impact of the Bill on employment legislation to which Claire Monaghan replied that once the retrospective checking began there would be three categories of people:

those who are scheme members; those who will have undergone some sort of disclosure check as part of moving into the system; and those who have never been disclosure checked because they entered the workforce before any of the legislation existed (Monaghan, 07.02.07, Col 4046).

It was likely that issues might arise with the group of people in the third category where there could be some cases in which information was identified that led to individuals being barred. That would be an issue for the employer, who could then consider moving the person concerned to another role. It would sit as an internal disciplinary matter rather than within employment legislation. James Douglas-Hamilton followed this with a question about the parity of this legislation throughout the United Kingdom and Europe. The Deputy Minister replied that there had been close co-operation with Whitehall to ensure that the phraseology in the different Bills was connected. Liz Saddler outlined work that was underway to recognise disqualifications from working with children across the European Union. She pointed out that current legislation enabled employers to ask individuals from any of the European Union countries to provide a criminal record check as part of the recruitment process. Elaine Murray returned again to the question of fees, particularly the concern of SCVO regarding annual fees. The Deputy Minister replied that the matter of fees was open to consultation, however they were building

on the experience of establishing Disclosure Scotland, “we know the costs that we are dealing with” (Brown, 07.02.07, Col 4054). He outlined the preparation that the Executive had done to make the new system work, including paying the charges for volunteers. In conclusion, the Deputy Minister accepted a point from Rosemary Bryne that work was needed to make people aware of the implications of being vetted. After these discussions the committee moved on to consider their approaches to stage 2 of the Bill. The Convenor was concerned that they would be unable to meet the Parliamentary timetable to have stage 3 of the Bill complete by the 8 March 2007. Fiona Hyslop quoted their previous agreement not to commence stage 2 until the stakeholders had commented on drafts of the subordinate legislation, which had not yet been provided. Kenneth Macintosh argued that the committee was already proceeding with stage 2 and that under the circumstances it was better to proceed. The Convenor proposed that they asked for three sessions to deal with amendments at stage 2 and that stage 2 should not be timetabled to be completed by the 23 February. Fiona Hyslop proposed that they ask the Parliamentary bureau not to timetable stage 2. The committee voted on the proposals and it was agreed that the Convenor would write to the bureau asking that the committee was not timetabled to complete stage 2 by the 23 February.

The committee began their deliberations of amendments to stage 2 of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Bill at their next meeting on the 13th of February. The first group of amendments they discussed concerned the combination of children’s and adults’ lists. James Douglas – Hamilton spoke to these amendments on behalf of the Law Society of Scotland. In reply to this Robert Brown, Deputy Minister, argued that the two list system was, “more sensitive and flexible” (Brown, 13.02.07, Col 4066). The Executive had included a technical amendment 23, suggested by the Convention of Local Authorities Association (COSLA) which made it clear that a person could be included in one or both lists. They then moved on to discuss court referrals and automatic listing. Fiona Hyslop asked what would happen to the information that was provided through this route, and if it would be duplicated in Disclosure Scotland. The Deputy Minister replied that information on certain convictions would go directly to the central barring unit, who would make the decision about the relevance of the conviction. He also introduced Amendment 30, which extended the power to make referrals to United Kingdom wide regulatory bodies such as the General Medical Council. This was to ensure that the regulatory bodies for doctors and opticians in Scotland would have the same rights and responsibilities as the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). Further discussions concerned the issue of general risk to children, which it was agreed was covered in other legislation, and the right of the individual to knowledge about the barring system. The Convenor was particularly concerned about the possibility of a tariff-based system within the central barring unit being used, which could disadvantage some people. He also raised concerns about amendments 178 and 198 regarding automatic listing:

If the removal of a person from a list can be considered only after a prescribed period, that period and how it is defined must be indicated somewhere in the Bill (Smith, 13.02.07, Col 4079).

Robert Brown conceded that the issue should be considered again, as the phrasing needed to make clear the system of automatic listing and that it would only end when an individual was no longer suitable to carry out regulated work.

James Douglas- Hamilton then spoke to a series of amendments, placed by himself, Fiona Hyslop and Elaine Murray, which all had the aim of staggering the retrospective checking of existing employees, to reduce the administrative and cost impact. The three sets of amendments had been placed on behalf of voluntary organisations. In response to the concerns of the committee Robert Brown stated,

For the record, I want to make it clear that all aspects of implementation—including whether, when, how, at what rate and in what order the scheme will be implemented—will be the subject of consultation and careful consideration (Brown, 13.02.07, Col 4105).

The next group of amendments were proposed by the Deputy Minister and concerned parity across the United Kingdom to ensure that individuals barred in one country would be automatically barred in all countries. Further groups of amendments concerned fees, fee structures and the role of Local Authorities. Fiona Hyslop summed up the feelings of the committee,

The fact that the minister keeps referring to consultations that will take place in the future does not give the sector or the committee the reassurance that they need. The various amendments reflect concerns about the need to shore up the Bill by adding something to protect the voluntary sector (Hyslop, 13.02.07, Col 4122).

In response to the concerns of the committee, Robert Brown repeated the assurance that the Executive would pay the fees of volunteers and argued that costs for paid staff were already being paid through current systems. The consultation would enable all issues regarding fees to be explored. The amendments were voted on as follows:

Amendments	Action taken by the Committee
3, 100, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 108, 109, 110, 39, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 40, 116, 117, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 118, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 224, 225, 58, 59, 119, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 120, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 237, 73 and 121	Agreed to (without division)
230 (For 4, Against 5, Abstentions 0) 233 (For 4, Against 5, Abstentions 0)	Disagreed by division
49, 162, 163, 175, 178, 180, 189, 213, 215, 226, 228 and 235	Moved and with the agreement of the committee withdrawn
50, 151, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 176, 177, 179, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 188, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 199, 198, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 214, 216, 217, 218, 219, 221, 222, 223, 227, 229, 231, 232, 234 and 236	Not moved
187 and 220	Pre-empted
Sections 1, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 37, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 54, 60, 61, 64, 67, 71 and 72	Agreed as amended
Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 20, 23, 24, 27, 30, schedule 1, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 49, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 62, 63, 65, 66, 68, 69 and 70	Agreed to without amendment ²¹ , 22,

A second set of amendments were considered at the committee meeting on the 20th February. The Convenor spoke to the first set of amendments, which concerned part 3 of the Bill, where it was proposed that information should be shared between organisations. The committee had expressed concerns at stage 1 of the Bill that it might lead to unforeseen circumstances, for example that children would choose not to seek advice because they were worried that information could be passed to other authorities. He welcomed the Executive's acceptance of the committee's recommendation to remove part 3. The following groups of amendments included 77, which related to the *Teaching Council (Scotland) Act 1965*: registration. This was placed at the request of the GTCS to ensure that those training to join the teaching profession were subject to the same scrutiny as qualified teachers. Several proposed amendments concerned the role of the occasional volunteer and the committee welcomed the response from the Deputy Minister that appropriate guidance would be issued on the meaning of 'regulated work' and 'normal duties'. They discussed in detail the possible definitions of 'regulated work' with vulnerable children and vulnerable adults. The amendments proposed by the Deputy Minister arose from concerns expressed by Universities Scotland that references to 'work in' or 'management of' educational institutions would mean that the work of a disproportionate number of staff would come within the definition of 'regulated work with adults'. In fact this would only be the case if their role involved contact with protected adults. The meeting then moved on to discuss the definitions included within the Bill of protected adult, particularly the areas where it could overlap with that of a protected child between the ages of 16 and 17. Robert Brown pointed out that in section 96 a child was defined as, "an individual under the age of 18" (Brown, 20.02.07, Col 4176). He went on to justify his decision to retain 18 as the age of majority for the Bill:

First, changing to 16 would open a gap in child protection in Scotland—that is the central point on which we must keep focused. Secondly, I am convinced that the overlap problem is not a real overlap or a real problem in practical terms for organisations. Thirdly, as I have already said, amendments that we have passed this afternoon address legitimate concerns about the work or the voluntary activities that amount to work of some 16 and 17-year-olds that should not be covered by the scheme (Brown, 20.02.07, Col 4177).

As the committee concluded their consideration of stage 2 the Convenor recorded his thanks to the committee and all those who had given advice and evidence.

We all still feel that the Bill has been a little bit rushed . . . but with the assurances that we have for amendments at stage 3, we will end up with better legislation (Smith, 20.02.07, Col 4185).

The amendments were passed as follows:

Amendments	Action taken by the Committee
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 74, 122, 75, 76, 77, 78, 123, 79, 80, 81, 239, 125, 83, 84, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 85, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 265, 144, 86, 87, 88, 145, 146, 271, 16, 17, 89, 90, 91, 18, 19, 92, 93, 20, 94, 11, 148, 95, 21, 96, 22, 97, 12, 98, 13, 99 and 14	Agreed to (without division)
250 (For 7, Against 0, Abstentions 2)	Agreed to (by division)
152, 240, 241, 251, 260, 10 and 264	Moved and withdrawn with the agreement of the Committee
238, 266, 267, 268, 248, 269, 249, 270, 252, 256, 257, 258, 259, 15, 261, 262 and 263	Not moved
242, 243, 245, 246, 253, 254 and 255	Were pre-empted
Sections 85, 88, schedules 4, 2 and 3, sections 92, 94, 95, 96, schedule 5, section 99 and the long title	Agreed to as amended
Sections 82, 83, 84, 86, 87, 89, 90, 91, 93, 97, 98, 100 and 101	Agreed to without amendment

PETITIONS

The committee considered 3 petitions at their meeting on the 27th of February: PE825, PE853 and PE872. They began with PE 825 which was submitted by Rosshall Academy Students' Council and Higher Modern Studies Section and heard evidence from the following witnesses:

Date of Committee	Witnesses
27 th February 2007	- Jonathan Cunningham, Colin Kerr and Mahreen Iqbal, Students, Rosshall Academy - Lesley McCallum, Teacher of Modern Studies, Rosshall Academy

This petition called on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to ensure that every Scottish secondary school provides lockers for pupils' use (ED/S2/07/6/1). The background to the petition was explained by Jonathon Cunningham,

We decided to present a petition to the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee after we moved into a newly built public-private partnership secondary school and found that it was far too small to fit in the number of pupils who are supposed to be able to fit into it—1,250. We lodged the petition because we have to carry heavy bags around the school all day and feel that locker provision should be a requirement for new schools (Cunningham, 27.02.07, Col 4188)

He went on to describe how the group had gathered evidence from different year

groups and found that pupils were carrying between 6kg and 11kg of books and equipment every day, depending on the subjects that they took, which meant that on average pupils lifted 9,797kg during the school year. In response to questions from James Douglas-Hamilton and Rosemary Bryne, the students outlined the responses they had received from the Director of Education in Glasgow City Council, who had said that Rosshall Academy provided more than the required space for each pupil. The Rosshall students recognised that there was no space in Rosshall Academy for lockers, but wanted the issue raised so that other new schools included lockers. The committee recommended enlisting the help of local councillors and thanked the group for a well-presented case. They agreed to continue the petition and consider it at their next meeting. At that meeting on the 21 March 2007, the convenor opened the discussion by praising the students for the way in which they had used the petition system very effectively adding, that it was:

his understanding is that no other country in the world has legislated to provide school lockers and that attempting to do so would be fraught with difficulties. It is a matter for head teachers and local managers, in consultation with pupils and parents through their parent council, to decide in each school whether to have lockers and how to manage their operation (Smith, 21.03.07 Col 4206).

The committee was unanimous in its concern about the issue and agreed that the Convenor should write to the Minister for Education and Young People drawing his attention to the discussion. They then moved on to consider PE853 from Ken Venters and PE872 from Sandy Longmuir, concerning the closure of special and rural schools, both of which had been considered by the committee previously (Redford, 2007, 2006). The committee had continued these petitions until replies to queries had been received from the Minister for Education and Young People, COSLA and the Accounts Commission. Fiona Hyslop felt that the letter received from the Accounts commission was quite helpful and quoted:

at no time has the Accounts Commission or Audit Scotland said that occupancy levels alone should determine what councils do or that an occupancy level of below 60% should automatically trigger a school's closure (Hyslop 27.02.07 Col 4195).

The committee discussed in detail the response from COSLA and their concerns about rural and special schools and agreed to make practical recommendations in their legacy paper. This was followed by considerable debate about the continuation of the petitions, as to do so would set an agenda for the new committee in session 3 of the Parliament. Fiona Hyslop argued strongly to keep the petitions open and continue the correspondence and background material. The Convenor accepted the feeling of the committee to keep the petitions open and refer them to the Public Petitions Committee in the new session.

SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION

During their final meeting on 21 March the Committee considered the following negative instruments (ED/s2/07/7/1):

- The Education (Assisted Places) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2007, (SSI 2007/114)
- The St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2007, (SSI 2007/115)
- The Parental Involvement in Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher Appointments (Scotland) Regulations 2007, (SSI 2007/132)

- The Education Authorities Bursaries (Scotland) Regulations 2007, (SSI 2007/149)
- The Teachers' Superannuation (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2007, (SSI 2007/189)

The Committee considered an additional paper from the subordinate legislation committee on *The Parental Involvement in Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher Appointments (Scotland) Regulations 2007*, (SSI 2007/132) and the Executive's response. They were particularly concerned about the guidance involving parental involvement and agreed to ask for draft guidance to be issued to the committee.

ANNUAL REPORTS

The committee noted the annual reports of executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies that report to the committee at their meeting on 21 March (ED/S2/07/7/2). These included the annual reports of:

- General Teaching Council (Scotland)
- HM Inspectorate of Education
- Learning and Teaching Scotland
- Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
- Scottish Qualifications Authority
- Social Work Inspection Agency
- Social Work Services Council

The Committee agreed their own annual report for the Parliamentary year 7 May 2006 to 2 April 2007 at their meeting on the 21 March. This report summarised work of the committee during the year: their work on two major Bills, *The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill* and the *Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Bill*, the conclusion of the Early Years Inquiry and reports on the Implementation of the Teachers' Agreement, the draft national plan for Gaelic and the 2007 – 2008 budget. They considered 13 items of subordinate legislation and 5 petitions. The committee met 25 times from 7 May to 2 April 2007, took 83 items of business, 17 in private of which 14 were draft papers.

TEACHERS AGREEMENT

The committee discussed the draft of this report on the implementation of the Teachers Agreement, in private, at their meeting on 27th February and agreed the report, in private, at their meeting on 21 March.

LEGACY PAPER

The committee discussed a draft version of this paper, in private, at their meeting on 27 February and agreed the paper, in private, subject to certain changes at their meeting on 21 March.

PART 2: JUNE TO AUGUST 2007

The third session of the Scottish Parliament opened in June 2007 with the creation of a new committee covering *Education Lifelong Learning and Culture*:

The remit of the committee is to consider and report on (a) further and higher education, lifelong learning, schools, pre-school care, skills and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and

Lifelong Learning; and (b) matters relating to culture and the arts falling within the responsibility of the Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (ED/S3/07/1/M).

The members of the committee are Aileen Campbell, Rob Gibson, Kenneth Macintosh, Christina McKelvie, Pauline McNeill, Jeremy Purvis, Elizabeth Smith and Karen Whitefield. The first meeting was held on 20 June 2007 with Rob Gibson, the oldest committee member, in the chair. The meeting began with members declaring any interests relevant to the work of the committee. Karen Whitefield was elected Convenor, following the agreement of the parliament that only members of the Scottish Labour Party could be considered (Gibson, 20.06.07 Col 3). Rob Gibson was then elected Deputy Convenor following the agreement of the parliament that only members of the Scottish National party were eligible for that role (Whitefield, 20.06.07 Col 3). The Convenor opened proceedings by asking the committee to raise issues relevant to the committee.

The committee had for consideration two legacy papers, from the previous Education Committee and from the previous Enterprise and Culture Committee (ED/S3/07/1/3). The legacy paper from the Education Committee included suggestions for the successor committee to consider in developing its own work programme (EDS/S3/1/9). This included possible legislation related to *Getting it Right for Every Child* (EDS/S3/07/1.3), the *21st Century Social Work Review*, *Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill* and *Youth Work Strategy*. The committee also suggested that post-legislative scrutiny could be an important area for the committee, recommending that a successor committee conduct an inquiry into the implementation of the Educational (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill, particularly parental choice and placements. They also identified possible inquiries into *Looked After Children*, *Risk to Children* and *Curriculum for Excellence* (EDS/S3/07/1.3). The paper then listed 10 other topics which the committee might like to consider for short inquiries. The Legacy Paper (Volume 1) outlined in detail:

the chronology of the work undertaken, the lessons learned and some thoughts for the future that might help our successor committee(s) (ED/S3/07/1/3.18).

The first meeting of the committee ended with the agreement to invite Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, and Linda Fabiani, Minister for Europe External Affairs and Culture, to the next meeting.

The second meeting of the committee was held on 27th of June. This opened with a brief statement from Linda Fabiani MSP, Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture. She was supported in her discussion with the committee by Greig Chalmers, Culture and Gaelic Division, Scottish Executive. Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, was supported by Liz Lewis, Director, Schools Directorate, Colin MacLean, Director, Children and Young People Directorate, and Mark Batho, Director, Lifelong Learning Directorate, Scottish Executive.

In her opening statement to the committee Fiona Hyslop reiterated the remarks that she had made in her first speech to the new Parliament:

I intend the Executive's focus on education and lifelong learning to centre on five key policy themes: early intervention; supporting vulnerable children and families; improving the learning experience in school; developing skills and lifelong learning; and promoting excellence and innovation (Hyslop, 27.06.07, Col 28).

She went on to outline the key policy changes she intended to implement:

- The increase of legal nursery education entitlement for all three and four-year-olds to 475 hours a year, from the Autumn
- Trialling free school meals for all primary 1 to primary 3 children in selected schools.
- Commitment to the Changing Lives Agenda
- Funding 300 additional teachers from August 2007 in order to:
 - Reduce class sizes in primaries 1 – 3
 - Provide access to a teacher in pre-school

In the same statement she announced an increase to the number of places in postgraduate teacher training next session, “of at least 250 places” along with an increase to the number of places for B.Ed. degrees (Hyslop, 27.06.07, Col 30). An extra £40 million of capital had been released to enable councils to bring forward spending and create the space necessary for changes to accommodation to meet reduction in class size. The Cabinet Secretary stated her intention to produce:

A lifelong skills strategy for Scotland, covering early years provision, schools, further and higher education, work-related learning and informal learning opportunities (Hyslop, 27.06.06, Col 31).

The only primary legislation, indicated by the Cabinet Secretary, was the intention of the new Executive to abolish the graduate endowment fee, legislation which she hoped would be in place by the 1 April 2008.

The committee followed this opening statement with specific questions about the extension of Early Years provision, free school meals, the cost to Local Authorities in adapting their buildings to meet reduced class sizes, new-build schools, the current lack of permanent posts for teachers who have completed their probation, funding for Higher Education and Curriculum for Excellence. In her answers the Cabinet Secretary stressed the need to be flexible in timescales and targets, and indicated that policy announcements would be made in the legislative statement to the Parliament in the Autumn.

REFERENCES

- Redford, M. (2007) Education in the Scottish Parliament, *Scottish Educational Review*, 39 (1), 92 - 104
- Redford, M. (2006) Education in the Scottish Parliament, *Scottish Educational Review*, 38 (2), 224 – 232