



The Scottish Parliament Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Parliamentary Year 4, No. 77, Session 6

Meeting of the Parliament

Wednesday 5 February 2025

Note: (DT) signifies a decision taken at Decision Time.

The meeting opened at 2.00 pm.

- 1. Portfolio Questions:** Questions on Deputy First Minister Responsibilities, Economy and Gaelic and then Finance and Local Government were answered by the Deputy First Minister and Ministers.
- 2. Ministerial Statement:** The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Neil Gray) made a statement and answered questions on Implementing the Medication Assisted Treatment Standards.
- 3. Addressing Child Poverty Through Education:** The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Jenny Gilruth) moved S6M-16330—That the Parliament notes the critical contribution made by education in eradicating child poverty, which is a national mission and the single greatest priority for the Scottish Government; notes recent analysis by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which highlights that Scotland will see a reduction in child poverty levels in the years ahead due to Scotland-specific policies, such as the Scottish Child Payment; further notes that the Scottish Government has committed to making further progress, and agrees that there is a collective responsibility for every local authority, and educational organisation and body in Scotland, to work together with the Scottish Government to address child poverty; commends Scotland's teachers and schools for their work to close the poverty-related attainment gap, and recognises that progress has been made, and that this programme will require more funding certainty over the longer term; welcomes the further investment in tackling child poverty through education in the draft Scottish Budget for 2025-26, including within schools through the expansion of free school meals, the uprating of the school clothing grant, continued funding for the

Scottish Attainment Challenge and investment in Bright Start Breakfasts, as well as the around £1 billion investment in funded early learning and childcare and the £3.5 million investment in new skills pathways for colleges, and agrees that all MSPs across the Parliament have a responsibility to promote the interests of children and young people and to work together to share ideas and innovation to address child poverty through education.

Miles Briggs moved amendment S6M-16330.4—

As an amendment to motion S6M-16330 in the name of Jenny Gilruth (Addressing Child Poverty Through Education), leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert “acknowledges that more than a quarter of children in Scotland live in poverty; recognises that, while investment in tackling child poverty through education is important, it must be accompanied by a focus on improving educational standards; notes that, while the Scottish Government has spent £1 billion on early years and childcare, there remains a significant disparity in the availability of early years provision across Scotland, which risks deepening inequalities and limiting parental employment opportunities, and has long-term consequences for children's development and educational outcomes; further notes with concern that education in Scotland has gone backwards in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) international rankings; acknowledges that the attainment gap in primary pupils' reading, writing, literacy and numeracy remains similar to pre-COVID-19-pandemic levels and has failed to close; regrets that the pledge to provide universal free school meals for primary pupils has not been fulfilled; expresses concern over the rising level of violence in schools, which negatively impacts both attainment and wellbeing; calls on the Scottish Government to provide greater support for teachers and local authorities to tackle this issue; further calls for a review of policies to improve the identification of and support for care experienced and young carer pupils in schools, ensuring that they receive the necessary assistance to succeed in education, and believes that the Scottish Government's main priority should be ensuring that every child, no matter their background, has the best start in life.”

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to ((DT) by division: For 29, Against 88 (including 4 proxy votes), Abstentions 4).

Pam Duncan-Glancy moved amendment S6M-16330.3—

As an amendment to motion S6M-16330 in the name of Jenny Gilruth (Addressing Child Poverty Through Education), leave out from “, which is” to end and insert “; commends Scotland's teachers and schools for their work; notes that the poverty-related attainment gap has not improved in P1 and is the widest it has ever been at Higher level; further notes that the Scottish Government's failure to plan for the school workforce has meant that teachers are often overworked and children are unsupported; expresses its disappointment at what it sees as the Scottish National Party's broken promise of rolling out free school meals to all P6 and P7 pupils; believes that education should set young people on the path to opportunities for their future and can help lift people out of poverty; understands that 'Scotland's colleges

play a particularly important role in supporting learners from more deprived communities to access learning', as described by Audit Scotland, but that the 'financial health of the sector has deteriorated since 2021-22'; welcomes that 100,000 people in Scotland have already received a pay rise thanks to the UK Labour administration's New Deal for Working People; acknowledges recent analysis by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on the extent of child poverty in Scotland, which observed deficiencies in the key data used to calculate poverty rates and found that 'we will need to go further to reach the 2030-31 targets', and calls on the Scottish Government to work with the UK Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that accurate data is available for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and other organisations to accurately assess the extent of child poverty in Scotland and the impact of policy interventions on it."

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to ((DT) by division: For 19, Against 102 (including 4 proxy votes), Abstentions 0).

The motion was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 73 (including 4 proxy votes), Against 48, Abstentions 0).

4. Urgent Question: An urgent question, to ask the Scottish Government whether it has any data showing the number of children or parents who were aware that results from the Health and Wellbeing Census could be accessed by third-party researchers, was answered by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Jenny Gilruth).

5. Business Programme: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Jamie Hepburn), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-16340—That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 18 February 2025

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Ministerial Statement: Community Wealth Building Progress and Future Ambition

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Employer National Insurance Contributions

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 19 February 2025

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands; Health and Social Care

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Protecting the Powers of the Scottish Parliament

followed by Legislative Consent Motion: Renters' Rights Bill - UK Legislation

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 20 February 2025

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Social Justice

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Income Tax Rate Resolution 2025-26

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Independent Review of Sentencing and Penal Policy

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 25 February 2025

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Budget (Scotland) (No. 4) Bill

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 26 February 2025

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, and Parliamentary Business; Justice and Home Affairs

followed by Scottish Green Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.10 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 27 February 2025

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Education and Skills

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 17 February 2025, in rule 13.7.3, after the word “except” the words “to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or” are inserted.

The motion was agreed to.

6. Stage 1 Timetable: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Jamie Hepburn), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-16341—That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 23 May 2025.

The motion was agreed to.

7. Approval of SSI: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Jamie Hepburn), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-16342—That the Parliament

agrees that the International Organisations (Immunities and Privileges) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2025 [draft] be approved.

The motion was agreed to (DT).

8. Decision Time: The Parliament took decisions on items 3 and 7 as noted above.

9. Save Local Libraries: The Parliament debated S6M-16155 in the name of Mark Ruskell—That the Parliament notes what it sees as the vital role that local libraries play in their communities, acting as central hubs for borrowing, learning, community engagement and sourcing advice and support; believes that the closure of libraries leaves communities without these vital services, and that this is particularly damaging for rural areas where libraries can be heavily relied on; considers that library closures have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations, including children, older residents and people with limited access to digital resources; notes the reported concerns raised by communities around the proposed closure of libraries across Scotland, including the threatened closure of those in the Perth and Kinross Council area; understands that local authorities have a legal obligation to provide public library services; believes that mobile libraries are often not suitable alternatives; considers that library services require adequate public funding to remain viable and have a critical role to play in achieving the Scottish Government's priorities, including eradicating child poverty; believes that a closed library is unlikely to reopen, permanently limiting opportunities for the communities they once served, and notes the calls on the Scottish Government to help protect the future of Scotland's libraries.

10. Motion Without Notice: Mark Ruskell moved without notice that, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.

The motion was agreed to.

The meeting closed at 6.21 pm.

David McGill
Clerk of the Parliament
5 February 2025

Appendix

(Note: this Appendix does not form part of the Minutes)

Other Documents

The following document was laid before the Parliament on 5 February 2025 and is not subject to parliamentary procedure—

Scrutiny report on draft Regulations - The Social Security (Best Start Grants, Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, Scottish Child Payment, Information-sharing, Winter Heating Payment and Pension Age Winter Heating Payment) (Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2025 (SCoSS/2025/01) laid under sections 22 and 97 of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018

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