

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

2nd Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Tuesday, 7 September 2021

Note by the clerk

Summary of Decisions taken at Business Planning Day

Work Programme – General

Members agreed the following:

- To give priority in the first instance to scrutiny of Petition PE1817 which calls for a ban on the provision or promotion of LGBTI conversion therapy in Scotland.
- This will be followed by undertaking pre-budget scrutiny with two sessions scheduled for the end of September and the beginning of October with a view to publishing the pre-budget scrutiny letter/report at the end of October.
- To hold periodic evidence sessions with oversight bodies such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC), Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Audit Scotland and the Auditor General for Scotland when time in the work programme allows.
- On receipt of the Scottish Government's response to the Session 5 Committee's covid report, to consider at a future meeting whether it wishes to hear from the Minister or undertake any further work in relation to the Covid recovery.

- To monitor progress on the Public Sector Equalities Duty (PSED) and seek an update from the Minister for Equalities and Older People if time allows. Clerks are to keep Members updated with any developments.
- The Committee agreed to consider a future evidence session with the Minister for Equalities and Older People in relation to the Scottish Government's plans to support and fund local authorities to resettle Afghan refugees following the crisis in Afghanistan. Ahead of making a formal decision, clerks will provide any relevant briefings to members to inform the decision. Members also noted that the Social Justice and Social Security Committee is looking at carrying out work in this area. Clerks will liaise with the clerk of the committee and feedback to members.
- If time allows, to return to other matters or to carry on scrutiny via correspondence including, for example, the implementation of the Scottish Government and COSLA's action plan to ensure it impacts on the lives of Gypsy Travellers in Scotland.

Petition PE1817 End Conversion Therapy

Members agreed the following:

- To hold a committee meeting on 7 September with the lead petitioner Tristan Gray who will be accompanied by Blair Anderson of End Conversion Therapy Scotland.
- To hold further evidence sessions on 14 September and on 21 September to include hearing from groups representing the LGBTI community, survivors of conversion therapy, faith groups, mental health practitioners, and other witnesses to be identified from the submissions received in response to the Committee's call for views.
- To undertake engagement work or an informal session with clerks and PACT to provide further options for this in due course.
- To undertake further sessions as required following conclusion of the committee's pre-budget scrutiny at the end of October. Members will review a more detailed approach over the next few weeks.

Pre-Budget Scrutiny

Members agreed the following:

- That this year's pre-budget scrutiny would consider the budget from a human rights perspective. Specifically, Members agreed to consider the questions asked by Dr Alison Hosie from Scottish Human Rights Commission on

resource generation, resource allocation and whether the budget processes are transparent, participative and accountable.

- To issue a call for views on 31 August which will run until 24 September 2021.
- To invite four panels to give evidence over two sessions on 28 September and 5 October.
- As witness suggestions are still to be finalised, members agreed to delegate the details of scheduling the exact timing of witnesses and witness panels to the clerks and Convener during August and September, with details to be circulated for approval to members over the coming weeks.
- To include as possible witnesses a panel of economists and budgeting experts, a panel of representatives from equality and human rights groups, a panel of those delivering human rights looking at the budget implications for public bodies, for example health boards and local authorities and a final evidence session with the Minister for Equalities and Older People.
- That as a longer-term investment, SPICe would investigate engaging an academic fellow to assist with future pre-budget scrutiny. Clerks and SPICe will bring back details at a future meeting.
- To write to the Conveners of each of subject committees advising of the committee's approach and to emphasise the importance of equalities analysis when undertaking their own pre-budget scrutiny.

Petition PE1787 Makaton Sign Language

Members agreed the following:

- To hold a one-off information gathering session with the petitioner of Petition PE1787 which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that all parts of the legal system use Makaton sign language.
- Members agreed that clerks should delegate the details of scheduling the exact timing of witnesses and witness panels to the clerks and Convener during August and September, with a view to scheduling the evidence session after the October recess.

Any other business

- Members discussed the Scottish Government consultation on the draft aims and principles of an independent public inquiry into the handling of the

coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Health to seek clarification on his proposal that the inquiry will take a 'person-centred, human rights-based approach'.

- Members agreed that it would be useful to have an exploratory/introductory session with key civil justice stakeholders to discuss their priorities. Clerks will work with SPICe to produce an issues paper to be brought for discussion to a future committee meeting.

Clerks to the Committee
September 2021