

## **Meeting of the Poverty and Inequality Commission**

**Thursday 22 December**

**10:00 – 12:30**

**Virtual meeting - Microsoft Teams**

### **Commission attendees**

Alex Cobham

Bill Scott, Chair

Lindsay Graham

Linda Bamford

Katie Schmuecker

Yvonne Blake

Shona Stephen

### **Secretariat attendees**

Katherine Hudson, Secretariat Manager

Rory Morrison, Analytical Manager

Munwar Hussain, Senior Participation Officer

Michele Barr, Secretariat/Administrator

### **Apologies**

Professor Morag Treanor

## **1. Welcome and apologies**

Bill Scott welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were given for Morag Treanor.

## **2. Tackling Child Poverty Programme Board**

Bill Scott introduced the Scottish Government Tackling Child Poverty Programme Board paper and a discussion about the role of the Commission and the Board. Commissioners discussed the potential for overlap and duplication between the Programme Board and the Commission. Commissioners agreed that the secretariat should continue to circulate the Tackling Child Poverty Programme Board papers to the Commission for information, and Commissioners could request that the Programme Board papers be discussed at a Commission meeting if they felt that would be useful. The Commission will share its reports, and any concerns it may have, with the Programme Board and the Scottish Government's Director General for Communities.

## **3. Scottish Government Budget 2023-24**

Commissioners discussed the Scottish Government Budget 2023-24 which was announced by the Deputy First Minister John Swinney on 15 December 2022. Commissioners shared their reflections on the budget and areas of concern. Council

tax rises will be a concern and may be unaffordable for some, and the implications of cuts to the parental transition funding and the affordable housing supply programme were discussed. Commissioners also spoke about issues with the Motability Scheme, and Bill Scott and Linda Bamford will meet to discuss Motability further in January. The Commission discussed the difficulty in identifying exactly what the budget means for funding for child poverty commitments and how it compares to the plans set out in *Best Start, Bright Futures*. The secretariat will request a budget spreadsheet from Scottish Government giving a breakdown of budgets and spend as part of its child poverty scrutiny.

The issue of public debt was raised and that there appeared to be nothing in the budget that would support any kind of debt amnesty. The secretariat met recently with COSLA officials who are working on guidance on free school meal debt; COSLA officials have been invited to provide an update on this work at the Commission's meeting in March.

#### **4. Child Poverty Scrutiny proposal**

Katherine Hudson spoke about the Child Poverty Scrutiny proposal paper that had been circulated to Commissioners. Commissioners and Experts by Experience Panel members will meet prior to meetings being set up with the relevant Scottish Government policy officials to discuss their approach. The Commissioners discussed the proposal and chose five areas to focus on:

- Pathfinders
- Flourishing Lives Model (Social Innovation Partnership)
- Employability & Parental Transition Fund
- Early Learning and Childcare & School Age Childcare
- Affordable Housing Supply Programme

Commissioners who would like to attend meetings with policy officials are Bill Scott, Katie Schmuecker, Shona Stephen, Lindsay Graham, Yvonne Blake and Linda Bamford. The Child Poverty Scrutiny report will be circulated early May, the final report will be provided to Scottish Government the middle of May 2023.

#### **5. Infant Food Insecurity update**

Lindsay Graham provided an update on infant food insecurity to the Commission. Lindsay will work with the Children and Young People's Commissioner who will be hosting a small roundtable on infant food insecurity, currently scheduled for 23 February at the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen.

#### **6. Experts by Experience Panel update and potential mentoring programme**

The Commission Experts by Experience Panel membership has been extended to the end of June 2023. Commissioners discussed a potential mentoring programme for Panel members and agreed to offer this to Panel members who wanted to apply for public appointments. The secretariat will contact Commissioners early January to ask if they would like to be part of the mentoring scheme.

## **7. Cost of Living Visits**

Lindsay Graham and Shona Stephen provided an update on the recent Cost of Living visits they had attended at the Libertie Project and Shotts Health Living Centre. They shared some of the feedback they are hearing from people who use their services; food and fuel are the biggest issues for service users. Michele Barr provided an update on upcoming visits and is in the process of setting up a meeting with Money Advice Scotland. Katie Schmuecker had recently met in her JRF role with the CEO to hear about systems they have in place and their work to understand the impact the cost of living crisis is having.

## **8. Risk Register, Budget & Work Programme**

The Commissioners discussed the budget, risk register and work programme. Commissioners provided updates. Katherine Hudson provided an update on the Scottish Government procurement procedure. The secretariat is in discussion with Scottish Government sponsorship team to ask if the current SC procurement model can be revised.

## **9. AOB**

- The next Commission meeting will be on 19 January.