

Meeting of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Thursday 16 March 2023

10:00 – 12:30

Virtual meeting - Microsoft Teams

Commission attendees

Bill Scott, Chair

Professor Morag Treanor

Lindsay Graham

Linda Bamford

Katie Schmuecker

Apologies

Alex Cobham

Yvonne Blake

Shona Stephen

External Attendees – COSLA (item 1)

Matthew Sweeney

Rebekah Cameron-Berry

Secretariat attendees

Katherine Hudson, Secretariat Manager

Rory Morrison, Analytical Manager

Munwar Hussain, Senior Participation Officer

Michele Barr, Secretariat Administrator

1. Welcome and apologies

Bill Scott welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were given for Alex Cobham, Shona Stephen and Yvonne Blake.

2. COSLA Good Practice Principles for School Meal Debt Management

Officials from COSLA, Matthew Sweeney and Rebekah Cameron-Berry, joined the meeting. The Commission had invited COSLA to talk about their recently published Good Practice Principles for School Meal Debt Management. Commissioners then had the opportunity to have a further discussion and to ask questions on COSLA's future plans in this area. The secretariat will send any further questions on the principles from Commissioners on to COSLA.

Commissioners agreed that they may want to revisit this topic in the future once the guidance has had some time to take effect. Commission agreed that they would like to have a future session with COSLA on council tax and other forms of public debt.

In the meantime COSLA officials said they would be interested in any good practice examples to take back to the policy team and Commissioners agreed to share some that they are aware of.

COSLA officials left the meeting

3. PIC Work Programme

Katherine Hudson introduced the paper on the PIC Work Programme. The Commission needs to review its work programme and to share a revised work programme for 23-24 with Scottish Government.

The Commissioners discussed the future work programme and agreed projects to be included in it. Commissioners indicated a preference to focus a project on inequalities related to race and ethnicity, with an emphasis on how these affect employment and employability support. The secretariat will identify relevant stakeholder groups to engage with and work to specify research that could support this project in advance work a working group being set up. The secretariat will circulate a revised work plan to Commissioners and share with Scottish Government Sponsorship team. Morag Treanor suggested inviting Viana Maya from pRespect to a future Commission meeting as a contributor on inequalities related to race and ethnicity.

4. Information sessions

Bill Scott provided an overview of the Information sessions paper. Commissioners were offered the option of having one or two information sessions a year outwith main Commission meetings to hear about recent research or find out more about a particular issue. Commissioners agreed to aim to have two sessions like this per year. Commissioners suggested inviting the Just Transition Commission to the first session and The Health Foundation to another session to discuss their recent report on health inequalities.

Lindsay Graham suggested the Commission website could have two minute videos from organisations on various topics, the secretariat will explore this idea. The Commission fortnightly newsletter will be reviewed to see if it can be restructured over time to make sure it is of most use to Commissioners.

5. Risk Register, Budget & Work Programme

The Commissioners discussed the budget/risk register and work programme. Commissioners provided comments to be updated on the risk register. Katherine Hudson provided an update to Commissioners on the Commission underspend and that the secretariat hasn't yet received a formal budget letter from Scottish Government but expect the overall budget to be similar to last year.

Once a new First Minister is appointed the secretariat will work with the Scottish Government sponsor team to set up introductions to the Commission with the FM or any potential new Cabinet members.

6. Any other Business

- The next Commission meeting will be on the 13 April.
- Meeting to be set up with the Commission and Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel in either May/June. This would need to be done separately from scheduled Commission meetings.
- The Improvement Service has offered to set up a discussion for the Commission with the Child Poverty Support Network (local authority leads) to inform the Commission's child poverty scrutiny by giving a local perspective on progress with implementing commitments in the Delivery Plan. The meeting has been set up for 11.15-12.15 Wed 29 March. Commissioners interested in attending should contact the secretariat.
- Katherine Hudson provided an update on the business case to Scottish Government procurement which had been declined, Commissioners agreed to escalate.
- Bill Scott is meeting Louise Macdonald who is the new Director General Communities with the Scottish Government.
- DWP Disability Benefits changes were announced in the UK Government Spring Budget, Bill will provide more information for Commissioners by email.