



Meeting of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Thursday 8 June 2023

10:00 – 12:00 pm

Virtual meeting - Microsoft Teams

Commission attendees

Bill Scott, Chair

Lindsay Graham

Professor Morag Treanor

Linda Bamford

Yvonne Blake

Shona Stephen

Apologies

Katie Schmuecker

Alex Cobham

Secretariat attendees

Katherine Hudson, Secretariat Manager

Rory Morrison, Analytical Manager

Munwar Hussain, Senior Participation Officer

Michele Barr, Secretariat Administrator

1. Welcome and apologies

Bill welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were given for Katie Schmuecker and Alex Cobham.

2. PIC Annual Report 2022-23

Michele Barr introduced the paper on the Commission's Annual Report 2022-23. Commissioners agreed it reflected activities of the Commission over the year and provided some amendments. The annual report will be signed off by Bill Scott, submitted to Scottish Government, and shared with Ministers prior to publication by the end of June 2023.

Linda Bamford declared an interest in item 3, as the owner of a second home, which is currently long term let through a letting agency, and left the meeting

3. Council Tax for second and empty homes, and non-domestic rates thresholds: consultation

Rory Morrison introduced the paper on the Council Tax for second and empty homes, and non-domestic rates thresholds. The Scottish Government and COSLA are currently consulting on proposals on council tax on second and empty homes.

Bill Scott led the Commission on a discussion through the paper which summarised the main issues raised by the joint SG/COSLA consultation and provided some potential areas for the Commission response to cover based on the Commission's previous views on these topics.

Commissioners provided comments on the issues raised. Commissioners gave their views on the desirability of allowing local authorities flexibility to set a higher council tax premium for second and empty homes, along with a minimum floor value for such a premium. Commissioners also discussed potential unintended consequences of potential changes, how they could be mitigated, and what this should mean for related proposals on non-domestic rates.

Commissioners agreed the Commission should submit a response to the consultation and will agree a final draft of the response by correspondence before the consultation closes on 11 July 2023.

Linda Bamford re-joined the meeting for items 4-6

4. Proposal for change to Commission meeting frequency

Bill Scott introduced the paper on the Commission meeting frequency. The secretariat proposed a change to the schedule of Commission meetings so that the Commission would meet every six weeks. The aim is to free up time between meetings for the Commission and secretariat to progress action on the Commission's work priorities, and to have a greater degree engagement with external stakeholders. Future Experts by Experience Panel meetings would also move to every six weeks. The Commission agreed to this proposal and the new six weekly meeting schedule will start from August.

5. Scottish Government Deputy Directors Meeting feedback

Bill Scott and Lindsay Graham provided feedback on the meeting they had attended with Scottish Government Deputy Directors and reflected on the discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice at the Commission's May meeting. It was agreed that to support future discussions the Commission would provide more detailed suggested topics to Ministers in advance of meetings. Commissioners also discussed the benefits of engaging with other groups of senior officials in the future. Linda Bamford agreed to share the Mobility and Access Committee Scotland's briefing template with the Commission.

6. Any other Business

- The next Commission meeting will be on 6 July 2023.
- The Commission's Child Poverty Scrutiny Report 2022-23 will be published on 13 June at the same time as the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan progress update.