

Meeting of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Thursday 9 November 2023

10:00 – 12:30 pm

Virtual meeting - Microsoft Teams

Commission attendees

Bill Scott, Chair

Yvonne Blake

Katie Schmuecker

Alex Cobham

Secretariat attendees

Katherine Hudson, Secretariat Manager

Rory Morrison, Analytical Manager

Órlaith McAree, Senior Participation Officer

Michele Barr, Secretariat Administrator

In attendance

Professor Stephen Sinclair

Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick

Tressa Burke

Apologies

Lindsay Graham

Linda Bamford

Shona Stephen

1. Welcome and apologies

Bill welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Professor Stephen Sinclair, Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick and Tressa Burke who have been approved by Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Parliament for appointment as short-term Chair and Commissioners. Apologies were given for Lindsay Graham, Linda Bamford and Shona Stephen.

2. Reflective discussion with future Short Term Chair and Commissioners

At the last Commission meeting it was agreed that time should be set aside at this meeting in order for the current Commissioners and future short-term Commissioners to get to know each other and discuss learning from the work of the Commission so far and what has still to be done.

Bill Scott looked back at what the Commission had achieved over the last 4 years and the current Commissioners provided their reflections on the Commission's work so far. Katherine Hudson provided some information about the current status of the Commission's work programme. Both current and future Commissioners considered it would be helpful to take forward the review of progress against previous Commission recommendations and it was noted that the Child Poverty Scrutiny will need to go ahead to meet statutory requirements, with planning to begin December 2023 in order to report to Scottish Government in May 2024. Yvonne Blake suggested adding Employment and Apprenticeships for asylum seekers into the work programme and it was noted that there would be an opportunity to review the work programme and agree priorities up until June 2024 at the next Commission meeting in December.

Órlaith McAree provided an update on the next phase of the Experts by Experience Panel. Stephen Sinclair and Tressa Burke said that they would be happy to be involved in the developing the next phase of the Panel. Órlaith will set up a meeting with Stephen and Tressa. The Commission will be asked to agree approach to recruitment by correspondence, with a fuller discussion about how the Panel would operate at a future date.

Tressa Burke left the meeting

Stephen Sinclair and Suzanne Fitzpatrick remained in the meeting in order to observe

3. Framework document

Bill Scott introduced the paper on the Commission's Framework Document which is now due to be updated. Since the previous Framework Document was agreed, the Scottish Government has developed a new template for framework documents for advisory NDPBs. The Scottish Government sponsor team, in consultation with Commission secretariat, has prepared a revised version of the Framework Document based on that template. It retains aspects specific to the Commission from the previous Framework Document.

Commissioners discussed the Framework Document and agreed to approve the document. The Scottish Government will send it to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice for approval and the new Framework Document will be published on the Commission website by the end of November.

As part of the discussion the issue was raised about what was meant by lived experience of poverty and whether the terms 'living experience' or 'direct experience' better reflected what was meant. In relation to public appointments to the Commission there was discussion about the different experiences brought by those who had experienced poverty some time ago, compared to those with current, or very recent, experience of poverty. The secretariat agreed to share the points raised with the Scottish Government sponsor team.

4. Biodiversity report

It was agreed to move the Biodiversity duty item forward on the agenda as Katie Schmuecker would need to leave before the end of the meeting at which point the Commission would not be quorate for decision-making. Katherine Hudson presented the Biodiversity report paper. All public bodies in Scotland have to report every three years, on the actions which they have taken to meet their statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities.

The Commissioners reviewed and agreed the Biodiversity report which will be published by 31 December 2023.

Katie Schmuecker and Suzanne Fitzpatrick left the meeting

5. Learning Report – Experts by Experience Panel

Órlaith McAree introduced the Learning Report – Experts by Experience Panel paper. The paper outlines key learning points from the Commission’s first Experts by Experience Panel. The Commissioners provided further comments and reflections including expressing interest in more opportunities for direct work with Panel members. In light of some of the points of learning raised in the paper, Commissioners felt that it was important to have Commissioners at panel meetings regularly. The future short-term Chair, Stephen Sinclair, noted that he would be happy to attend every meeting of the new panel going forward.

This report is a summary of key points on learning contained in a wider report, which will provide greater detail. Commissioners were happy to provide comment on the full report by correspondence before the next Commission meeting in December, with the final publication to be signed off by the Chair before publication.

6. Any other Business

- The secretariat agreed to look to rearrange the date for the next Commission meeting. This has now been re-arranged to the 18 December.
- Rory Morrison will follow up with Scottish Government officials on when the Commission can expect to get the formal response to its tax report.
- The revised Intersectionality Strategy has been circulated to the Commissioners for agreement by correspondence.