



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Equal Opportunities Committee

Christina McKelvie MSP

Convener

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13 September 2016

Dear Clare,

Proposal to extend the remit of mandatory committees

Further to my letter of 16 June concerning the name of the Committee following the remit change, the Committee has given further consideration to the proposal to extend the remit of the Equal Opportunities Committee to include human rights.

During our business planning event we received presentations from the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Scottish Commission for Human Rights. We found this extremely helpful in gaining a better understanding of the breadth of the subject matter, particularly given human rights has previously featured across a number of committee remits and ministerial portfolios.

We welcome a more centralised focus on human rights and acknowledge the potential synergies between the equal opportunities and the human rights aspect of the Committee's proposed remit. We will endeavour to explore the new remit and will report back on any lessons learned from our experience.

In terms of defining the remit, we are keen the definition of "human rights" captures all of the matters in relation to which the Committee may have an interest, including matters above and beyond Convention rights, which are the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). To give an example, the Committee might wish to consider the Scottish Government's record of compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or some other similar

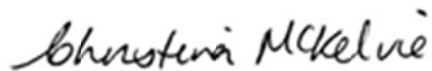
instrument. A remit that defined human rights by reference only to Convention rights would prevent the Committee from doing that.

A remit that reflects wider, more policy-oriented view of human rights is also desirable to enable the Committee to consider broader issues such as proposals for changing the legislative framework which governs human rights in Scotland, for example, the UK Government's proposed 'British Bill of Rights' or how human rights are given effect in law or made real for people.

The Committee considers these are important principles to establish at the outset and that any definition of "human rights" should not be drawn too tightly so as to fetter the Committee's ability to undertake this kind of work.

For the sake of completeness I can confirm the Committee is content with the definition of "equal opportunities" as set out in Standing Orders.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christina McKelvie". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Christina McKelvie
Convener
Equal Opportunities Committee