



The Scottish Parliament Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Parliamentary Year 3, No. 77, Session 6

Meeting of the Parliament

Wednesday 7 February 2024

Note: (DT) signifies a decision taken at Decision Time.

The meeting opened at 2.00 pm.

1. Portfolio Questions: Questions on Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy and then Finance and Parliamentary Business were answered by Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers.

2. Delivering Record Social Security Investment in Scotland to Tackle the Cost of Living Crisis and Inequality: The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice (Shirley-Anne Somerville) moved S6M-12079—That the Parliament believes that social security plays a vital role in tackling poverty and reducing economic and social inequalities, and that the Scottish social security system must have dignity, fairness and respect at its heart; welcomes the Scottish Government's record investment of £6.3 billion in social security expenditure in 2024-25 and that the Scottish Fiscal Commission has forecast that this is an investment of £1.1 billion more than the funding received from the UK Government through the social security block grant; notes that this investment includes the Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, as well as the landmark, and extended, Scottish Child Payment, which is estimated to lift 50,000 children out of relative poverty in 2024; recognises that £614 million of Scotland-only benefits are being delivered in 2024-25, which is support that is unparalleled across the UK; further recognises the substantial difference that Social Security Scotland is making through improved disability and carers benefits; notes that Scottish Government support is being delivered despite continued UK Government block grant cuts and continued UK Government austerity, and calls on the UK Government to drop planned Work Capability Assessment changes, introduce an essentials guarantee and immediately scrap the two-child cap and the associated so-called rape clause.

Jeremy Balfour moved amendment S6M-12079.2—

As an amendment to motion S6M-12079 in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville (Delivering Record Social Security Investment in Scotland to Tackle the Cost of Living Crisis and Inequality), leave out from "; welcomes" to end and insert ", but notes with extreme concern that the Scottish Fiscal Commission reports that, by 2027-28, the Scottish Government will need to find an additional £1.3 billion in spending from within the Scottish Budget for these demand-led payments; understands that the Social Security Scotland agency is set to cost taxpayers in Scotland £322 million in operational costs in 2024-25, which is 130% higher than spending in 2020-21; acknowledges that these benefits were first promised to be fully devolved to Scottish control by 2020, but that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has recently had to agree to extend the agency agreements to continue to assist and support the Scottish Government until 2026 as Social Security Scotland is, to date, unable to handle the full caseload; notes that these devolved benefits have not been significantly changed from the DWP criteria and that the promised review of adult disability payments may not be published until August 2025; acknowledges the disappointment from the third sector that the dedicated Minister for Equalities and Older People post was removed in March 2023, and backs the calls from Age Scotland and 15 partner agencies for this to be reinstated to ensure a targeted focus on tackling inequality, and welcomes the announcement by the UK Government that the third instalment of its Cost of Living Payment will be paid later in February 2024, benefitting more than 680,000 people across Scotland and totalling up to £900 paid to eligible households on means-tested benefits, and directly helping tackle the cost of living crisis and inequality equally across the UK."

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to ((DT) by division: For 30, Against 85, Abstentions 0).

Paul O'Kane moved amendment S6M-12079.1—

As an amendment to motion S6M-12079 in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville (Delivering Record Social Security Investment in Scotland to Tackle the Cost of Living Crisis and Inequality), leave out from "Government's" to end and insert "Child Payment; notes the stubbornly high waiting times for Child Disability Payment, where the median processing time was 106 days, and for Adult Disability Payment, where the median processing time was 83 days, according to the latest statistical releases; is concerned by the Scottish Government's failure to sufficiently and swiftly address these long processing times, which are driving some people to rely on foodbanks, according to reports from third sector organisations; is further concerned by the rise of in-work poverty in Scotland, with over one in 10 workers locked in persistent low pay according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and agrees that a UK Labour administration will implement a New Deal for Working People that will end in-work poverty and implement a fundamental reform of the Universal Credit system to provide a real safety net for those who need it."

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to ((DT) by division: For 18, Against 94, Abstentions 3).

The motion was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 62, Against 51, Abstentions 0).

3. Business Programme: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-12085—That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 20 February 2024

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Ministerial Statement: Working Towards a Tobacco-free Scotland by 2034 and Tackling Youth Vaping

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Building a New Scotland - Social Security in an Independent Scotland

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 21 February 2024

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands; NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care

followed by Scottish Liberal Democrats Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.10 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 22 February 2024

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Social Justice

followed by Ministerial Statement: Grangemouth Refinery

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Regulation of Legal Services (Scotland) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution: Regulation of Legal Services (Scotland) Bill

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Income Tax Rate Resolution
2024-25

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 27 February 2024

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Budget (Scotland) (No. 3) Bill

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 28 February 2024

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Constitution, External Affairs and Culture; Justice and Home Affairs

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 29 February 2024

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Education and Skills

followed by Stage 1 Debate: National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution: National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 19 February 2024, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.

The motion was agreed to.

4. Stage 2 Extension: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-12086—That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be extended to 23 February 2024.

The motion was agreed to.

5. Committee Meeting Times: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-12087—That the Parliament agrees that, under Rule 12.3.3B of Standing Orders, the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee can meet, if necessary, at the same time as a meeting of the Parliament following Decision Time on Wednesday 21 February 2024.

The motion was agreed to (DT).

6. Motion Without Notice: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved without notice that, under Rule 11.2.4, Decision Time be brought forward to 4.58 pm.

The motion was agreed to.

7. Decision Time: The Parliament took decisions on items 2 and 5 as noted above.

8. Definition of Deafblindness: The Parliament debated S6M-11700 in the name of Rona Mackay—That the Parliament notes the process towards formal recognition in Scotland of deafblindness as a distinct disability; commends the work of the Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Deafness, whose members have been working tirelessly towards the definition of deafblindness becoming adopted in Scotland, which, it understands, is already the case elsewhere in the UK and within the

European Parliament; notes the view that this is a crucial step towards identifying, diagnosing and supporting people with dual sensory loss who live in Scotland, including in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency, and enabling the unique challenges that they face to be addressed; further notes what it sees as the valuable recommendations of Deafblind Scotland, having worked with partners in the CPG to develop a Declaration on Deafblindness; notes the calls from the group for the Scottish Parliament to recognise this low-incidence but high-impact disability in Scotland, and the formal adoption of the Nordic definition of deafblindness; understands that the World Health Organization (WHO) is one of several organisations that has already adopted the definition of deafblindness, and applauds Deafblind Scotland, in Lenzie, and its members, staff and volunteers, for working to ensure that lived experience plays an integral part in informing policy, including the formal recognition of the term deafblindness and its definition.

The meeting closed at 5.42 pm.

David McGill
Clerk of the Parliament
7 February 2024

Appendix

(Note: this Appendix does not form part of the Minutes)

Committee Reports

The following report was published on 7 February 2024—

Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee, 11th Report, 2024 (Session 6): Delegated powers in the Judicial Factors (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 (SP Paper 523)

Subordinate Legislation

Affirmative Instruments

The following instrument was laid before the Parliament on 7 February 2024 and is subject to the affirmative procedure—

Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2024 [draft]
laid under paragraph 2(3) of schedule 12 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992

Other Documents

The following documents were laid before the Parliament on 7 February 2024 and are not subject to parliamentary procedure—

The Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2024 - Report by the Scottish Ministers (SG/2024/25) laid under paragraph 2(3) of schedule 12 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992

National Strategy for Economic Transformation: A briefing prepared for the Auditor General for Scotland (AGS/2024/2) laid under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000

Published by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000 or 0800 092 7500

Email: sp.info@parliament.scot

Live chat on parliament.scot

You can write to us in any language or contact us
using the Text Relay service or in British Sign

Language through contactScotland-BSL.

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

The Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website -
www.parliament.scot or by contacting Public Information.