

Cross-Party Group on Fair Trade

Minute of the meeting held online on 18 May 2022 at 6pm

Present

MSPs

Colin Smyth MSP
Sarah Boyack MSP
Foyso! Choudhury MSP

Invited guests

Maggie Deane, City of Edinburgh Council

Non-MSP Group Members

Ian Fowell, Linlithgow Fir Trade Partnership
Martin Rhodes, Scottish fair Trade Forum
Kiera Wilkins, Scottish Fair Trade Forum
Tracy Mitchell, JTS, Just Trading Scotland
Jeanette McIvor, Queensferry Fair Trade Group
Andy Ashcroft, KoolSkools
Arthur West, North Ayrshire Fair Trade Group
Barbara Holligan
Carol Morton, Hadeel/Palcrafts
Craig Sullivan
Sion Pickering, University of Edinburgh
Russell Salton, Edinburgh Fair Trade Steering Group
Pam Maxwell, North Ayrshire Fair Trade Group

Apologies

Neil Bibby MSP
John Mason MSP
Charles Sim, Scottish Fair Trade Forum

Agenda item 1

Minutes of the meeting of March 2022 were approved.

Agenda item 2

There were no matters arising.

Agenda item 3

Panel discussion – Public procurement and Fair Trade

Tracy Mitchell, Managing Director, JTS – Just Trading Scotland gave a Fair Trade business perspective of public procurement. She highlighted the problem of finding the right person to speak to in a public body to discuss procurement and the difficulty getting on to procurement ICT systems in order to get orders and payments. She described how for a small business that the ‘prize’ of a public procurement contract might be high but the risk in terms of time and resources needed might be too high to pursue possibilities. She also highlighted the cost of logistics for public bodies with a large number of ‘sales points’ for delivery eg care homes or schools.

Kiera Wilkins of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum gave an outline of the campaign/policy work undertaken recently by the Forum about public procurement. She highlighted a report to be published soon that has gathered information on the policies and purchasing of Fair Trade products by public bodies. In particular, she mentioned problems in getting meaningful data on purchasing due to differing definitions of Fair Trade used by public bodies in collating data and the differences in how products are catalogued in different systems. She discussed a recent roundtable event that the Forum had held with its public sector body members on procurement and how one suggestion was that Fair Trade businesses look to get their products listed by bigger companies bidding for contracts.

Maggie Deane of City of Edinburgh Council set out some reflections from the perspective of a public sector procurement official. She stressed the importance of having political and/or organisational leadership support for purchasing policy. She outlined the different processes for public procurement of under or over £50,000 of expenditure. She also stressed the importance of showing the need/desire for Fair Trade products as procurement officials need to be able to see demand for a product in order to add it to procurement systems.

There was then a general discussion that covered many of the subjects raised by the panellist. ‘Meet the buyer’ events were suggested as a useful way of creating dialogue between suppliers and procurers. It was agreed that the CPG would come back to the subject of public procurement over the next few years.

Agenda item 4

It was noted that there would be a joint meeting with the CPGs on Social Enterprise, Credit Unions, Wellbeing Economy and Co-operatives on 22 June and details would

be circulated to members. It was also noted that notice of the AGm would be circulated to members.

The meeting closed at 7.05pm