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Scottish Parliament

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[The Deputy Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 13:15]

Phone Boxes

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): Good afternoon, everyone. The first item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-05217, in the name of Kenneth Gibson, on BT to remove one in five phone boxes in Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament is concerned by the reported decision by BT to close 947 payphones across Scotland within the next three years, including 24 phone boxes in North Ayrshire; understands that this move will leave just 3,840 working phone boxes in Scotland and only 35 in North Ayrshire; considers that these phone boxes represent a lifeline for many people in Scotland, especially for those in rural communities with poor mobile phone coverage; understands that, while payphone usage has inevitably dropped in recent years due to the prevalence of smart phones, the closure of these phone boxes could potentially pose serious problems in the case of an emergency; encourages the continued promotion of BT's Adopt a Kiosk scheme, which offers councils and charities the opportunity to adopt their local phone box for just £1 and transform it into an asset for the community as an alternative to removal, and notes the calls for BT to continue consulting with the people of Scotland to prevent the unnecessary withdrawal of payphones in the communities that need them most.

13:15

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I begin by thanking those colleagues who supported my motion on the removal of phone boxes across Scotland. I thank Brian Whittle and Jamie Greene for being present in the chamber today to discuss an issue that affects a great number of people in a variety of tangible ways. I also thank Mark Dames and Mark Johnson of BT for taking the time to discuss the issue a fortnight ago, before the debate had even been scheduled.

When I was first informed of BT's decision to remove 947 payphone boxes across Scotland, including 24 boxes in North Ayrshire, I was immediately concerned about the impact that it would have on my constituents. Although significant efforts have been made to improve mobile infrastructure across the United Kingdom, many areas in Scotland still receive only a partial mobile phone signal that is both unreliable and inconsistent. Not only are those so-called "hot spots" frustrating for someone who is trying to

send a text or make a call; they can prove dangerous in an emergency.

That concern is particularly relevant to those who live on Scotland's islands, such as Arran and Cumbrae in my constituency, where mobile coverage can be extremely poor. That increases isolation for island residents, as well as affecting the many tourists who visit our islands each year and who are consistently surprised by just how sporadic signal provision can be. As a result of those concerns, I considered it a priority to meet BT to discuss the reasoning behind the decision and to understand fully the impact that it would have on the people of Scotland. I am grateful to BT for engaging with MSPs on the issue, and I would like to share some of what we discussed today.

First, it is undeniable that our telephone usage and our relationship with technology have been dramatically transformed in recent times. Ninety-three per cent of all adults now own a mobile phone and, as a result, payphone usage across the UK has declined by 90 per cent over the past decade. In fact, not one call was made from more than 700 BT kiosks over the past year, which demonstrates just how little used they are in some locations. I am not surprised that, when we have access to devices that allow us to make calls, send texts, check emails, browse the internet and even play games, call boxes are no longer used in the way they once were.

In the light of that, our focus now should perhaps be on increasing mobile coverage and reliability, in particular in remote and rural areas that currently do not enjoy the same connectivity as the rest of Scotland. I hope to see more initiatives such as the pilot scheme that was launched in 2016 by the then Minister for Transport and Islands, Derek Mackay, which offered non-domestic rates relief on new mobile masts in two locations on Arran and one in the Cairngorm national park to encourage the provision of mobile services and further investment in those areas. Such projects would mean that phone boxes would no longer be a necessity, and those living in Scotland's rural areas would be able to enjoy the full range of mobile services.

It is worth noting that, prior to the decision, BT entered into consultation with local authorities across Scotland, with 1,500 payphones originally earmarked for removal by 2020. Following the consultation, which allowed communities to voice their concerns over the removal of essential payphones, BT agreed to drop the number to 947. That means that we will see the removal of some 433 boxes across Scotland, with a further 111 being taken over by the adopt a kiosk initiative, rather than the loss of a third of all current

payphones as was initially proposed. That demonstrates BT's willingness to engage with those who rely on payphone services most and to protect services where they are deemed vital.

I am pleased to highlight that, after reviewing the consultation responses, the decision was made not to remove any payphones on any Scottish island. That will guarantee the safety of island residents and visitors, as those phone boxes can act as a lifeline in an emergency.

Payphones have also been protected where the consultation identified a social need for the box, such as accident black spots, suicide hot spots and coastal sites, where connectivity might prove to be life saving.

Other boxes were protected when meeting all the following criteria: being the only payphone within 800m; being used to make at least 12 calls within a 12-month period; and being located where the local population is not fewer than 500 households within 1km of the payphone.

I want to draw attention to BT's adopt a kiosk scheme, which was introduced in 2008 and offers local authorities, charities and local communities the opportunity to adopt a local phone box for just £1 and transform it into an asset for the community as an alternative to removal.

Following the consultation, 111 phone boxes are currently being considered for adoption. There is an exciting and eclectic mix of transformed kiosks already in use across Scotland, and there are some 3,000 such kiosks across the UK. Some boxes are fitted with life-saving defibrillators, tiny libraries or miniature art galleries that have been maintained by local communities in Scotland and, in England, even mini coffee shops and meditation spaces have been created. There is a wealth of opportunity and inspiration for transforming poorly maintained and unused phone boxes into a unique and creative community solution.

That is exactly the kind of community empowerment—albeit on a modest scale—that I would like to see more of in my constituency of Cunninghame North, and I encourage everyone watching this debate to consider whether a phone box in their locale could become something eye catching, essential or just a bit of good fun. What is interesting is that, of those 111 boxes, 28 are in Angus, 18 are in Fife but none are in 18 local authorities, including North Ayrshire Council, in my constituency. That is something that I will pursue personally.

When we are fighting to retain call boxes, we should remember that BT currently loses £20 million a year by maintaining them. Further, although it is important that they be retained in rural areas, some urban areas—I emphasise that it is only some—are not so keen to retain them,

because of the concerns that those call boxes cause in some communities, and BT is very much aware of that.

In closing, I call on everyone present today to remember that connectivity is not just a matter of economic necessity but a vital part of guaranteeing the safety of our constituents. By retaining phone boxes where they are essential, as well as looking for creative and effective solutions to signal coverage issues in rural and remote areas, we can ensure that everyone has access to telephone services wherever and whenever they need them most.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Jamie Greene to be followed by Brian Whittle—or Brian Whittle to be followed by Jamie Greene, however you would like it.

13:22

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): We could toss a coin.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): You are on your feet now, Jamie.

Jamie Greene: I thank Kenny Gibson for bringing this issue to this less than packed chamber. I have no doubt that many people will be watching the debate from afar and paying close interest to BT's plans.

Like Kenny Gibson, I have engaged with BT to get some background about its plans and to get a better understanding of why it is doing what it is doing.

It is important that any changes to payphone provision are not to the detriment of community needs, such as access to emergency services, particularly in areas where there is no other means of contacting people, such as those where there is poor mobile coverage.

Kenny Gibson's motion states a fair point, which is that, although people still use payphones, the adoption of smartphones has dramatically increased in recent years. In the past decade, payphone use has dropped by more than 90 per cent, which is no small figure. In fact, some call boxes are used by fewer than a dozen people a year and, anecdotally, some phone boxes are used by no one at all. However, as is often the case, we do not miss something until it is gone. I have no doubt that usage therefore has an important part to play in the decision-making process.

BT says that, after the removal of 24 payphones in North Ayrshire, there will be 84 remaining in the area, which is slightly more than the figure of 35 that is stated in the motion. Nevertheless, there will still be a loss of payphones in that part of the

world. I should declare that I live in North Ayrshire and, on occasion, have been known to use a phone box when my mobile is out of battery or has no coverage. Unfortunately, that still happens too often.

BT has said that it will not remove payphones that have been identified as social need payphones, and it has set some clear criteria for that. Mr Gibson outlined the criteria to do with location and usage. If those criteria are met, a kiosk cannot be removed. I think that that is right. It is also worth pointing out that BT consults local authorities on proposed removals, and if a local authority is against a proposed removal, that will be taken into account. That second level of scrutiny is important as well.

With the adopt a kiosk scheme, I note that what we are really talking about is finding alternative uses for things that have been made redundant. There are not many red phone boxes left, but those that we have are certainly worth preserving. I did a quick internet search to find out some of the uses for adopted kiosks, and I was quite bemused by the images. I encourage members to have a look at what people have done and the sheer ingenuity and creativity that they have shown in adapting old phone boxes, which have been put to an amazing array of uses. In addition to the purposes that have been mentioned, I saw coffee shops, automated coffee vending machines, salad bars, bookshops and people selling a wide range of cottage industry products and services from phone boxes. It is hard to believe how much can be fitted into a phone box.

In essence, I support the motion. We should be careful not to take away vital access to telecommunications points, especially from people in rural communities, but we should also think about the fact that not everyone owns a mobile phone. Mobile phones can be prohibitively expensive for people. We will probably hear about the ambitious plans that the Scottish Government has to ensure that we have full connectivity in Scotland, but even if coverage is available, a mobile phone, like internet access, is still unaffordable to many. The simple phone box is a cheap alternative solution that allows people to make calls, and many people still use and rely on phone boxes for calling people.

Any removals that are done should follow the strict processes that BT has put in place, and any phone boxes that are removed should be ones that have been identified as simply not being used by the public. I encourage people to engage in consultations on the matter. The old adage "use it or lose it" is important, and I encourage people who have a phone box to make use of it; otherwise, it may be too late. I also urge people in Ayrshire to think about the adopt a kiosk scheme

and the creative things that they could do with any phone boxes that are decommissioned. I look forward to seeing the results of that.

13:27

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I thank Kenny Gibson for bringing this debate to the chamber.

The technology that we use to communicate continues to evolve at an incredible speed. Hard though it may be to believe, the first mobile phone call was made in 1973. Admittedly, for some of us in the chamber, that may feel like last week, but it highlights just how many people today have grown up in a world where a physical connection to a phone line is not needed to make a call.

Although some of us can recall the days of police call boxes, they are increasingly known to people only as Doctor Who's preferred mode of transport or as a local landmark where they can pick up a coffee on their way to work.

More recently, we have seen the trend of phone boxes and public payphones being removed due to lack of use. Today, Superman would not be changing in a phone box. He would be using an app to book a short stay in a nearby room for let. That may be an advance in technology, but I am not convinced that it has quite the same drama.

I recognise and agree with many of the points that Kenny Gibson highlights in his motion. The payphone may be a less popular mode of communication today, but that does not inherently make it unnecessary. We can quite reasonably argue that people who continue to use phone boxes are the ones who have no suitable alternative, and the very people on whom the removal of the boxes could have the biggest impact.

BT seems to be making significant efforts to minimise the impact that the closures will have. As has been mentioned, it is consulting widely on the removal of each phone box and it changes its plans when it receives an objection from the local authority. That being said, I note that one of its criteria for keeping a box in place, even if it is not used regularly, is a lack of any mobile phone signal. An emergency call can be placed from any mobile phone anywhere with a signal, even if that signal is not from the mobile's network provider, but I am concerned that that is of no benefit in an emergency when a person's mobile phone has no charge. I wonder whether BT has given any consideration to providing an emergency charging facility in some of the more isolated phone boxes, perhaps by using solar power.

I have recently been involved in discussions between the Royal Bank of Scotland, Age

Scotland and others about the impact of branch closures in South Scotland. The issue at the core of that discussion is not very different from what we are discussing today. Technology is changing the way that many of us perform tasks, whether that is banking or making a phone call, but there is a concern that those who are not in a position to change will be left isolated and disadvantaged.

While companies such as the Royal Bank of Scotland and BT will always have commercial considerations to take into account when making decisions about closing branches or removing phone boxes, it is important that they also take account of the wider impact on the communities for whom those services can be a lifeline. That seems to have improved in recent years, and it is clear from the efforts that BT has made in its consultation that it wishes to minimise the impact of those removals.

I have reservations about the removal of phone boxes in rural areas, which are broadly the same as the concerns that I have about the loss of other services. Put simply, do the areas that are losing traditional service provision have the infrastructure to support the modern alternative? Be it broadband speed or mobile phone signal, rural areas in particular still experience very real issues with coverage and reliability of digital communications.

I note that a Which? survey published earlier this week highlighted that three out of the five slowest areas for broadband in the United Kingdom are in Scotland. Indeed, Scotland has a particularly high number of regions classified as having low speeds, there are average speeds in parts of the central belt and only Dundee and North Lanarkshire have high speeds.

Changing technology means that change to how we live and work is inevitable, but we have a responsibility to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by that change. That is why, although I am disappointed by the decision to reduce the number of payphones, rather than fighting against that change I encourage members to focus their attention on ensuring that the pace of those changes is reasonable and that Scotland's digital infrastructure is up to the standard required.

13:32

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): I thank Kenneth Gibson for bringing this unusual topic for debate. As usual, he regaled us with a series of somewhat arcane statistics about which, perhaps, many of us knew very little, but it was an interesting contribution. I am also grateful to the other two contributors.

Telecoms are an area reserved to Westminster. The provision of public call boxes falls within BT's universal service obligations, in which the Scottish Government has no locus to intervene. However, Ofcom has informed me that, as members have said, there has been a very substantial decline in the use of telephone boxes—a 90 per cent decline over the past decade. Indeed, many of the proposed removals have not been used to make a single call in the past 12 months.

Understandably, perhaps, BT has taken action, and it has published criteria that are designed to ensure that boxes are retained where they are actively used, which is good, and where there is a social need for them, which is also good. The overriding social need criteria cover sites where there is no mobile coverage from any provider, suicide hot spots, accident black spots, and coastal locations and islands. BT has confirmed that no removals will be proposed in such areas. I welcome that approach, which one can appreciate may prove to be very advantageous in extremis, in urgent situations.

Where removals are proposed, BT will consult with the relevant local authority, which in turn can consult locally—for example, with community councils—and I encourage them so to do. Ultimately, the local authority can veto BT's proposed removal if it can demonstrate appropriate grounds. Mr Gibson highlighted the preservation of phone boxes in the islands in his constituency—I think he mentioned Arran. He is a doughty fighter for the preservation of island telephone boxes, among a great many other things.

Not being possessed of an extraordinarily active imagination, I was not aware of all the things that can be done in phone boxes. It was not until the revelatory content of Mr Greene's contribution that I became aware that they could be used as a coffee shop, salad bar or bookcase—I presume not all three at once. I had thought, naively, that there was not much that one can do in a phone box, but I will not go there. The imagination struggles to come up with what other activities could be carried out in a telephone box, and I hesitate to make any contributions regarding potential activities that are flitting through the cranial area just at the moment.

The telephone box is a very attractive piece of heritage. It is a nice thing to see around the place. It is a part of history. It would be very sad if they all disappeared. I can imagine, if the television programme "Antiques Roadshow" is still being screened in 100 years' time, as well it might, that there might be a quiz featuring a telephone box—"What was this used for?", people would ask in astonishment.

If I may, I will digress a little bit to reflect on the late Ewen Bain, whose works as a cartoonist you will have known and enjoyed, Presiding Officer. His famous character was the Hebridean Angus Og, who was the sort of person who found himself in difficult situations of his own making almost every day. At that time my mother was, if I may say so, a quite well-known defence lawyer for the criminal fraternity. In one cartoon, Angus Og found himself in a telephone box in possession of a very, very large salmon. He was on the phone, saying, "Hello, Mrs Ewing. I'm in a spot of bother." That goes to prove that there are uses to which the telephone box can be put.

Before I digress even further from the topic, let me say that I accept that telephone boxes remain important in some locations, and their removal will not be appropriate. I am more than happy to raise members' concerns with any local authority should they wish me to do so.

I am very pleased to have this opportunity, albeit an unexpected one, to stand up for the phone box in Holyrood.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, everyone. We were thinking, when you started to wax lyrical, Mr Ewing, that we might not need to suspend business until 2 o'clock. However, I do suspend the meeting.

13:37

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Communities, Social Security and Equalities

Automatic Fire Suppression Systems

1. **David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether the ministerial working group on fire safety will review building standards regulations regarding the provision of automatic fire suppression systems. (S5O-01165)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I understand that the cabinet secretary wishes to update the Parliament following the Grenfell fire disaster.

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The ministerial working group on building and fire safety was convened to oversee a review of building and fire safety regulatory frameworks and any other relevant matters in order to help to ensure that people are safe in Scotland's buildings, and to make any recommendations for improvement as required. We met for the first time last week and will meet again this afternoon, immediately following parliamentary questions. The role that automatic fire suppression systems can play in supporting an overall package of fire safety measures for various building types will be discussed at the group. However, David Stewart will understand that our initial priority has been to focus on providing assurance to the public about the safety of our domestic high-rise properties and other public buildings, following the tragedy at Grenfell tower.

Building standards regulations for high-rise domestic properties mean that aluminium composite material—the type of product that was used at Grenfell tower—cannot be used in cladding systems on high-rise domestic properties in Scotland. We wanted to double check that that is the case and have, therefore, sought and received assurances from all 32 of our local authorities, which have reported that ACM has not been used on any housing association or council-owned high-rise domestic properties.

For privately owned high-rise domestic properties, 28 councils have reported that they have no aluminium composite material in the cladding systems. The other four councils are working intensively to complete the picture across Scotland. I extend the Scottish Government's

thanks to the chief executives and staff in all local authorities for their assistance and diligent work in this process.

David Stewart: The cabinet secretary will be well aware from the Scottish Government's own 2015 report that almost a third of accidental dwelling fires and deaths occur in the 15 per cent most-deprived areas, yet there have been no multiple fire deaths in Scotland where a working sprinkler system has been installed. Will the cabinet secretary agree to meet me after the recess to discuss targeted installation of sprinkler systems, aimed at those who are most at risk—single men living in disadvantaged areas who have alcohol or drug problems?

Angela Constance: I would be delighted to meet Mr Stewart—even during recess, if that suits him. I am aware that Mr Stewart is a member of the cross-party working group on accident prevention, which is chaired by Clare Adamson. I know that he has been a long-term campaigner for and supporter of wider use of sprinklers.

As I said in my original answer, the ministerial working group will review all relevant matters, including the role of automatic fire suppression systems. Although we know that our regulatory standards in Scotland are good, there is no room for complacency, so we are casting a critical eye over all our systems.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will know that the Local Government and Communities Committee, which I chair, will be taking evidence on building standards and fire regulations following the Grenfell tower tragedy.

Mr Stewart's question was about sprinkler systems. Might the cabinet secretary consider ensuring that—as Glasgow Housing Association has in all communal areas, including bin shelters—there are sprinkler systems in all escape routes, communal areas and bin shelters in high-rise flats in order to reduce the risk of fire spreading? Might that be a sensible way forward that the ministerial working group would look at?

Angela Constance: The Scottish Government very much welcomes parliamentary scrutiny and further inquiries by the relevant committee. We have an open door to discussions on the issues that are being raised.

It is important to remember that all new high-rise domestic buildings in Scotland are fitted with non-combustible cladding or with cladding systems that meet stringent fire tests, and that they have, since 2005, been fitted with sprinklers. The provision of sprinklers in existing high-rise domestic buildings is not currently compulsory under building regulations, but I know that a number of councils install them when undertaking major refurbishment

work. We want to look at a range of fire safety methods, including those that are more automatic in nature, such as sprinklers.

We will also look at some of the issues that Mr Doris and Mr Stewart, in the first question, have raised in respect of how we take an evidence-led approach, and we will also look at categories, areas, building types and individuals who might be at higher risk. We know that the matters that Mr Stewart raised in relation to deprivation are pertinent.

In conclusion, I say that some of the issues will go further afield than building standards. Consideration of groups who are particularly vulnerable to the risk of fire is not necessarily addressed by building standards—although it might be—so we have to remember that when we build homes, we do not always know who will occupy them, therefore some of our consideration has to go further afield than building standards.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for her earlier update. She is entirely right to focus on high-rise properties, but we have had quite an extensive programme of cladding in Scotland that does not include only such properties: for example, terraced properties have also been done. With such properties, there could be a fear that, if there were to be a fire, it could spread outwards and not just upwards. Will the working group look at terraced properties as well as at high-rise properties?

Angela Constance: It is important to stress to Mr Simpson and others that when we talk about ACM, which should not be in cladding systems in high-rise buildings, we should understand that it is a generic material, and not a specific product; ACM is a catch-all phrase for a group of specific products. ACM can be used appropriately in some buildings, if it is installed correctly and with adherence to the correct procedures.

As I have already said to Parliament, after our absolute focus on high-rise domestic buildings, we will widen our inquiries to schools and NHS buildings. I am quite sure that when the ministerial working group meets today to devise our longer-term work programme, which we will share with Parliament, it will give due consideration to which other types of buildings we need to examine. We will keep Graham Simpson and Parliament duly informed.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): The cabinet secretary said that, at some point, the scope of inquiries will be widened out from health and safety in high-rise properties, so will she also consider the health and safety regulations as they relate to smoke detectors? A recent press report states:

“The regulations say: ‘There is no requirement to determine if existing smoke detectors are in working order (e.g. whether battery-powered detectors contain discharged or no batteries) because the minimum Scottish Housing Quality Standard’s requirement is the presence of a smoke detector(s) not the presence of a working smoke detector.’”

Will the cabinet secretary interrogate the matter a bit further from today, and advise Parliament whether that is something that needs to be looked at in the wider review?

Angela Constance: We will look at some of the specifics around the issue that Ms McNeill raises.

Although minimum standards apply across the board, it is fair to say that there are different standards for different sectors; historically, we have recognised that some of the biggest risk is in the private rented sector. This year, we are due to issue a consultation on developing more uniform and standardised procedures. An issue that we discussed last week at the first meeting of the ministerial working group was how we could expedite that work.

Devolution of Powers to Communities

2. **Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made with the devolution of powers to communities, and whether it plans to allow communities to have a greater say regarding the impact of major infrastructure projects. (S5O-01166)

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 devolved real power to communities, which is a theme that runs through all our major reforms. Later in this session of Parliament, we will introduce a local democracy bill that will have the potential to be the biggest transformation of democracy since devolution. Our review of the planning system contains proposals that strengthen the role of communities in the planning of their areas.

Richard Lochhead: I welcome the minister’s comments. He will be aware of the growing appetite throughout Scotland for people to have more of a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

On the impact of major infrastructure projects, last week I dealt with a case about the green light having been given to an overhead line relating to Dorenell wind farm. I am aware that energy issues fall under a different ministerial portfolio, but perhaps part of that line should have been considered for undergrounding, as was requested by my constituents in Dufftown and elsewhere. Will the Minister for Local Government and Housing, who is responsible for planning, through the community empowerment agenda, liaise with

the energy minister to ensure that greater weight is given to local views?

Because we have the Blackhillock substation in Moray, there is the potential to build many more pylons in future years, like a web across Moray. People want to have more of a say over the shape of the pylons and the infrastructure projects. I hope that the minister will be willing to liaise with other ministers about how he can give communities a greater say over such projects.

Kevin Stewart: I am always willing to speak to colleagues about matters. I will avoid talking about a particular scheme, because I do not know whether the application that Richard Lochhead cites is live. As the minister with responsibility for planning, I am pursuing measures to strengthen communities’ roles and to increase people’s opportunities to influence the future planning of their areas.

Community consultation on major electricity and wind farm projects is of great importance. When the Scottish Government receives planning applications for such infrastructure, we expect developers to demonstrate active community engagement and to explain what concerns they have addressed. We also require that the applications are advertised and that the public are able to scrutinise and comment on the detail of the proposals.

The views of local communities are important to us and must always be taken into account.

Young Carers (Welfare Support)

3. **Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to raise awareness among young carers of welfare support that they may be entitled to. (S5O-01167)

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): An estimated 7,000 carers aged between 16 and 24 provide 35 or more hours of care each week, yet fewer than 4,000 of them receive carers allowance.

Working with Young Scot and carers organisations to advise young carers about their rights and their entitlement to apply for carers allowance, our young carers benefit take-up campaign, which was targeted at 16 to 24-year-olds, ran during carers week from 12 June.

Materials that are promoted on the Young Scot website and via social media continue to encourage young carers to claim the support to which they are entitled. Further focused activity will take place in August alongside the young carers festival.

Jenny Gilruth: We know that the United Kingdom’s benefits system continues to fail in

making sure that all those who are entitled to support know what support is available and how to get it. Does the minister agree that the UK Government should simplify the process of applying for benefits? Should it run a benefit take-up campaign to ensure that people get the financial support to which they are entitled?

Jeane Freeman: For the Scottish Government, social security plays a vital role in tackling poverty and improving lives. Making sure that everyone receives the financial support to which they are entitled and can do so easily is one of the first steps towards putting dignity and respect at the heart of that service. Unfortunately, the UK Government has taken no recent action to improve take-up and provide that much-needed support.

The fairer Scotland budget is providing £3.6 million of funding in 2016-17 for projects that are designed to maximise incomes and to help people to access benefits. In addition, over the parliamentary session, we are delivering a programme of activity to increase the uptake of benefits, working in partnership with local organisations including local authorities and national health service and third sector organisations. I am pleased to say that, following Mr Rowley's raising of the issue in the chamber some time ago and my meeting with him yesterday, we will convene a round-table meeting to work constructively with all those agencies—and, I hope, parties across the Parliament—to progress that work.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers (United Kingdom Government Policy)

4. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the impact on Scotland of the UK Government's policy on refugees and asylum seekers. (S5O-01168)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): I met the then Minister of State for Immigration, Robert Goodwill MP, on 11 October 2016 and discussed a number of issues that affect refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland. Officials also have regular meetings that cover a wide range of issues.

I wrote to the new immigration minister, Brandon Lewis MP, on 16 June 2017 about the same issues. I highlighted the new Scots refugee integration strategy and made clear my view that destitution should never be an outcome of the asylum system.

Fulton MacGregor: Given that vulnerable people—children, in particular—are being badly let down by the UK Government's broken asylum

system and are having their human rights ignored, with local authorities, charities and the third sector being left to pay for the services that they need, how does the Scottish Government's approach to refugees and asylum seekers, which is evident in the new Scots strategy, contrast with that of the UK Government?

Angela Constance: The Scottish Government takes a very different approach to refugees and asylum seekers. We want to make Scotland a welcoming place for people who seek protection from persecution and human rights abuses. We believe that immigration begins on day 1 of their arrival, not just when refugee status has been granted. The very fact that we have the new Scots refugee integration strategy means that our approach stands in stark contrast to that of the UK Government, which still does not have a strategy. Integration from day 1 is the key principle of our new Scots strategy. We believe that it is vital to build strong communities by enabling people to settle in, make social connections and build new lives.

I am deeply concerned by the UK Government's attempts to create a two-tier approach to refugees and asylum seekers that distinguishes between those people who have arrived for resettlement and those people who have arrived through the asylum system. As I said, I recently wrote to the new UK immigration minister on a variety of matters in this area. The Scottish Government firmly believes in having one system for all asylum seekers and refugees that treats people fairly, humanely and with respect regardless of how they arrived in Scotland; otherwise, we risk increasing inequalities and creating barriers to the integration that we all seek.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): Does the cabinet secretary agree that tackling the root causes of migration is every bit as essential as being a place of sanctuary? Those root causes include, but are not limited to, conflict, disease and instability.

In that context, does the cabinet secretary welcome, as I do, the recent announcement that the UK Government has committed to a new £75 million fund in this area that is targeted at reducing the number of people who risk the perilous central Mediterranean route to Europe?

Angela Constance: It is a pity that the UK Government did not take the opportunity in the Queen's speech or with the formation of the new central Government to think again about the Dubs amendment. Amber Rudd has deliberately closed down a safe and legal route for some of the most vulnerable children in the world. According to Interpol, 10,000 unaccompanied children have gone missing across Europe in the past two years. Nobody knows where they are.

Aspects of what the UK Government has announced will be about supporting people outwith our shores by tackling inequality and ill health, and any investment in international development or addressing the causes of conflict should, of course, be welcomed. However, there is a long way to go before we can say that the UK Government takes a humane approach to immigration, asylum and migration, and it is very sad that the UK Government is not meeting all its obligations—in particular, its obligations to our most vulnerable global citizens: children.

Women (Promotion to Senior Positions)

5. Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to help promote women to more senior positions in the public and private sectors. (S5O-01169)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): The Scottish Government is committed to improving the representation of women in senior positions in the public and private sectors, and indeed here in the Scottish Parliament. That is the right thing—and actually the smart thing—to do. On 15 June, we introduced the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill, which sets an objective for public boards to have 50 per cent of non-executive members who are women. As for the private sector, we will continue to encourage companies to work towards gender balance through our 50:50 by 2020 campaign and to adopt fair and progressive business practices more broadly through the Scottish business pledge.

Brian Whittle: The Scottish National Party Government has cut 152,000 college places, with Audit Scotland finding that those cuts have disproportionately affected women. Does the cabinet secretary believe that that will help tackle gender inequality in the workplace?

Angela Constance: If Mr Whittle looked at the facts, he would find that the majority of college students are actually women. They are far from underrepresented in colleges. It was not so long ago that youth unemployment stood at 113,000, and at that time it was quite right for our college sector, along with partners, to focus on young people who were leaving school. We have seen demonstrable progress in that area, with youth unemployment now among the lowest in Europe and school leaver destinations at a record high.

Of course, Audit Scotland's report on colleges will give education ministers much food for thought, particularly given our manifesto commitments and the work that Mr Hepburn has been progressing on returner programmes for women and the work that he has been leading on

maternity and pregnancy discrimination. With regard to the actions that we as a Government have taken to promote fair work, whether for women or for young people, we have a record to be proud of.

Social Housing (Rural Communities)

6. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to increase the availability of social housing in rural communities. (S5O-01170)

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): The Scottish Government understands the importance of good-quality housing to the future prosperity of Scotland and to the strength and diversity of our communities. That is why over the lifetime of this session of Parliament we are investing over £3 billion to deliver our bold and ambitious target of at least 50,000 affordable homes in both rural and urban communities across Scotland. Thirty-five thousand of those homes will be for social rent; that represents an increase of 75 per cent on our previous social rented target, which, of course, we exceeded.

Through the affordable housing supply programme, we have various housing initiatives that are designed to increase the number of affordable homes for rent or purchase and which will benefit rural Scotland. For social rented homes in particular, our enhanced grant subsidy benchmarks for rural areas were increased in 2016 by up to £14,000 per unit. In addition, the flexible grant and loan housing infrastructure fund was introduced last year to unblock strategically important housing sites.

We also recently committed to long-term resource planning assumptions amounting to £1.754 billion to March 2021, which will provide councils across Scotland with the certainty needed to ramp up plans to deliver our ambitious 50,000 target. Moreover, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 ended the right to buy for all social housing tenants in Scotland on 1 August last year, protecting the existing stock of social rented homes and preventing the sale of up to 15,500 houses over the next decade.

Dean Lockhart: Organisations such as the Rural Stirling Housing Association in my region play an important role in ensuring a diverse range of housing for rural communities. The minister mentioned additional investment; although any additional resources for social housing are, of course, welcome, we would go further by building more than 100,000 houses for all sectors over the course of this session of Parliament.

However, additional resources will be only part of the solution; we also need a more efficient

planning system in Scotland. Currently, the timescale for planning approvals is longer than it is elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Does the minister agree that social housing in rural Scotland would benefit from a more efficient planning process?

Kevin Stewart: Last year, I had the great pleasure of visiting the Rural Stirling Housing Association's development in Strathblane. That was the first new social housing in that village for between 40 and 50 years—the villagers could not quite decide on the period—and it was very welcome. The development also provided a much-needed wheelchair-accessible home in the area. I am determined to ensure that housing associations such as the Rural Stirling Housing Association can continue the job of building in places that have not had social housing for a very long time.

On the planning situation, Mr Lockhart will be well aware of the steps that the Government has taken since the independent planning review crossed my desk at the very beginning of this parliamentary session. We have had huge amounts of stakeholder consultation, which will result in the introduction of a new planning bill into the Parliament by the end of the year. I expect that that planning bill will lead to much easier planning systems for all, and I hope that that will lead to swifter decisions in many places. However, a lot of that is down to elected members in local authorities, and that is why we are providing training to ensure that they get planning absolutely right.

The Presiding Officer: We are not making a lot of progress. There should be shorter questions and shorter answers.

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The minister mentioned 35,000 social rented houses. Exactly how much housing will be built in each local authority area, what funding has been allocated per year to each local authority area, and what are the local authorities expected to contribute to make that housing happen? On planning, what land is available, what planning permission has been sought, and what planning permission has been granted? There seems to be a lack of detailed information on where and how the 35,000 houses will be built.

Kevin Stewart: Presiding Officer, you asked for short answers. I am afraid that giving a short answer would be absolutely impossible in this circumstance.

As Mr Rowley is well aware, the local authorities have provided the Government with their strategic housing investment plans, which outline schemes that they are bringing forward. As I said in response to Mr Lockhart's question, we gave the

resource planning assumptions to all local authorities just the other week—I referred to £1.754 billion. Each local authority knows what its resource planning assumption is for each of the next three years—that was asked of the Government—and that gives them certainty in planning.

On land, Mr Rowley will be well aware that I have written to the local authorities to get them to look even more at the use of compulsory purchase orders. In its manifesto, the Government said that we would introduce legislation on compulsory sale orders during this session to try to free up land.

I have probably missed some of Mr Rowley's questions. As always, I am more than willing to meet him and others to go into more depth on how we will achieve our ambitious target.

Affordable Housing (2021 Target)

7. Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that local authorities and the house-building sector can be confident that the goal of 50,000 new affordable homes by 2021 is reached. (S5O-01171)

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): We are taking action to ensure that communities across Scotland have homes that are high quality, efficient and affordable to reach our goal of 50,000 affordable homes by 2021. For the first time, details have been confirmed of each local authority's full funding allocation for affordable housing over the next three years. As a result, more than £1.754 billion is being allocated to councils. For the Stirling Council area, which is Mr Crawford's council area, that means an allocation of £26.59 million. That is a major Scottish Government commitment to deliver more affordable housing and an important signal to the house building sector in Scotland. It demonstrates our commitment to the industry and to the estimated 14,000 jobs that our affordable housing supply programme supports each year.

Bruce Crawford: I am delighted that so much money will be delivered for my constituency of Stirling. I know that Dean Lockhart will want to put out a press release very shortly to the *Stirling Observer* to welcome the news.

What is the Government going to do to ensure that smaller construction companies get their fair share of the market and help to build the affordable homes that we need in Scotland?

Kevin Stewart: I am quite happy for all members in the chamber to put out press releases to welcome the Government's commitment over the next three years.

Mr Crawford makes a very important point. Local authorities and housing associations tender for individual projects in an open and transparent way that ensures value for money, and which could—and should—enable small and medium-sized enterprises to bid for work. Some local authorities, such as Angus, break down the scale of their procurement in a way that enables SMEs to bid for the work and to build their capacity. I hope that all local authorities give careful consideration and thought to their procurement policies.

We are working with councils and housing associations to encourage the use of lots within larger contracts and to encourage them always to consider the impact on SMEs when developing frameworks. Support for SMEs is available free of charge from the Scottish Government-funded supplier development programme, which offers expert training and information to help SMEs to win work and grow their businesses.

For me, the most important thing has been going around the country and seeing the number of apprentices who are working for SMEs. They are the future of our construction industry, and long may that continue. Any support that local authorities and housing associations can give to SMEs is welcome as far as I am concerned.

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): In a Scottish Government press release dated 13 June 2017, the minister announced that the Scottish Government has a

“goal of 50,000 new affordable homes by 2021.”

Can the minister confirm that the 50,000 affordable homes will all be newly built properties—that is to say, additional to the physical stock that existed at the beginning of the current session of Parliament?

Kevin Stewart: As Mr Wightman is well aware, I would allow some flexibility from councils where they want to buy back stock and bring it back into the social housing sector. It is very important that that flexibility is there. Our plan is to deliver 50,000 affordable homes during the current session of Parliament, including 35,000 for social rent.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): There are around 34,000 empty homes across Scotland. Does the Scottish Government share the Scottish Conservatives’ ambition to use new initiatives and stronger regulation to bring such properties back into use and provide more affordable housing?

Kevin Stewart: As Mr Stewart may be aware, the number of empty homes in Scotland is shrinking. We have a number of initiatives, including the Scottish empty homes partnership, which continues in this financial year.

It is important to note the work of the dedicated empty homes officers that some local authorities have put in place, and I encourage other authorities to do likewise. Empty homes officers in some areas are working in partnership with Shelter Scotland, and their help in that regard is welcome.

I am more than willing to meet Alexander Stewart to hear about the Scottish Conservatives’ proposals. I am not known for being unwilling to nick good ideas if they are good, so if Mr Stewart wants to meet me to discuss his proposals further, I am happy to do so.

Social Security System (Payments)

8. Mairi Evans (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I remind the chamber that I am the parliamentary liaison officer to the cabinet secretary.

To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure the safe and timely delivery of the first payments to be made under Scotland’s new social security system. (S5O-01172)

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): The safe and secure transfer of the 11 benefits for the 1.4 million people who rely on them is our main priority. Last week, we introduced to Parliament the Social Security (Scotland) Bill, which represents the next significant milestone, putting in place the necessary legislative framework to allow the delivery of payments under the new Scottish social security system.

We have learned lessons from other programmes of change, not least the United Kingdom Government’s flawed and yet to be completed introduction of universal credit, and we know that a phased approach—transferring the benefits incrementally—is the best way to ensure the safe and timely delivery of payments.

We are committed to ensuring that individuals with lived experience of the benefits system help to shape our approach and, on 30 May, the cabinet secretary set out to Parliament our plans for the first wave of benefits: the carers allowance supplement from summer 2018; and the best start grant and funeral expense assistance by summer 2019.

Mairi Evans: Can the minister provide an update on the work currently being undertaken to establish a social security agency for Scotland, and say whether the announcement on its location is still expected in the autumn?

Jeane Freeman: The work is progressing through an agency project board that we have set up with local partners and trade unions not only to identify and begin to specify the agency’s content

in terms of jobs, but to identify co-location opportunities and specify working conditions for those who will be employed in the agency.

In the autumn, I will make an announcement on the location of the agency's centralised function and will provide an update on our progress in delivering a central and, I believe, extremely important feature of our Scottish approach, which is locally based social security agency staff.

Equalities and Social Security (United Kingdom Government Proposals)

9. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the impact on Scotland of the equalities and social security aspects of proposals in the Queen's speech. (S5O-01173)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): The Queen's speech was yet another wasted opportunity from the United Kingdom Government to make society more equal and fair for millions of people across the UK.

It is deeply disappointing, but in no way surprising, that the Queen's speech did not signal any reduction in the Tories' continued austerity plans or any reversal of their deeply damaging social security cuts, such as the £29 cut to employment and support allowance for unemployed disabled people, the cap on child tax credit, the repugnant "rape clause" or, indeed, the benefit cap that, last week, the High Court in England called illegal and discriminatory against single parents and children and which the judge damned as involving

"real misery being caused to no good purpose".

Colin Beattie: What we learned from last week's Queen's speech is that, to quote Theresa May, "nothing has changed". Does the cabinet secretary think that it is right that the Tories' obsession with austerity and cuts will continue despite the volume of evidence against that approach and their failed general election gamble?

Angela Constance: No, I do not think that it is right. However, the UK Government is not interested in doing what is right, even if the evidence shows that that is the right course of action, or in helping those who are just about managing.

Disabled people, women and minority ethnic people have been particularly adversely affected by the austerity agenda. In stark contrast, we have just published our Social Security (Scotland) Bill, which is based on the principles of dignity, fairness and respect.

The Presiding Officer: Question 10 has not been lodged.

North Lanarkshire Council (Meetings)

11. Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities last met North Lanarkshire Council and what was discussed. (S5O-01175)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): Ministers and officials regularly meet representatives of all Scottish local authorities, including North Lanarkshire Council, to discuss a wide range of issues as part of our commitment to working in partnership with local government to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland. Kevin Stewart, the Minister for Local Government and Housing, most recently met the chief executive of the council on 13 June.

Richard Lyle: The cabinet secretary might be aware of the recent Holytown link road proposal in my constituency. That work is a result of the city deal. Many residents have raised concerns about the proposed link road. However, despite that, North Lanarkshire Council has announced that the city deal cabinet has approved the project. Does the cabinet secretary believe that, in its efforts to deliver for our communities, the city deal cabinet should listen to the voices of local people and politicians, especially because nobody wants this road?

Angela Constance: I think that the best thing for me to do is to speak to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work and the Minister for Transport and the Islands, who will be more apprised of the details about the road that Mr Lyle refers to. Of course, we always encourage local authorities to listen acutely to their local communities and, as far as possible, to represent the views of the community, but I am conscious that the local authority also has the interests of the wider North Lanarkshire community to represent. However, I will get the cabinet secretary and/or the minister to respond to Mr Lyle.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions. Apologies to the number of members who did not get a chance to ask their questions today.

Education Governance

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-06376, in the name of John Swinney, on education governance: next steps.

14:41

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Two weeks ago, I set out the Government's vision for education and our proposals for reform. Our ambition is to create a world-class education system in which every child has the opportunity to succeed and the gap between our least and most disadvantaged children has closed. However, we cannot realise that ambition alone. The detail of our reforms needs to be developed in close collaboration with our partners in local government, with our teachers and professional associations and with parents, children and young people. The Scottish Government is fully committed to doing that as we take the work forward.

As one element of that approach, we will address the concerns that the Education and Skills Committee has expressed about a lack of clarity around the process of making policy in education and its implementation. Our review confirms that the formulation of education policy will be the responsibility of the Scottish Government, but I want to establish clearer structures within which that policy will be implemented. I intend to replace a number of groups and committees with a Scottish educational council that brings together representatives of the Scottish Government, local government, agencies, professional associations and other relevant bodies to create a cohesive approach to developing Scottish education.

We recognise that we do not command a parliamentary majority, and I am keen to engage constructively with members across the political spectrum to reach consensus on the way forward for education. This debate marks an important starting point in those discussions.

There are many strengths in Scottish education, and it is important that they are recognised as we consider further reforms. Many children and young people fulfil their potential. Exam results are very good and are improving, and the overwhelming majority of young people leave school to go into a job or training or to continue their studies. We have excellent teachers who are hard working and committed to raising attainment for all. However, we still face significant challenges in our education system. There is still too much bureaucracy, which generates unnecessary workload for our

teachers—something that we are actively tackling, to ensure that teachers are literally free to teach.

Our programme for international student assessment and Scottish survey of literacy and numeracy results highlight that performance has declined on a number of measures. No matter what data we use or which aspect of attainment we look at, there is a clear gap between children from more and less deprived backgrounds, and, as Education Scotland noted earlier this year,

“the quality of education children and young people experience within and across sectors is still too variable.”

We must address those challenges, and we believe that ambitious, system-wide reforms that are underpinned by a strong educational rationale are needed to do that.

At the heart of our reforms is the simple, powerful premise that the best decisions about children's education are taken by the people who know them best—their teachers, headteachers and parents as well as the young people themselves. We want to put the power to change lives into the hands of those who have the expertise and insight to target interventions at the greatest need, and those who deliver education in our schools are best placed to deliver that approach.

To do that, we will empower schools and give them control over what happens in their classrooms. Schools will have a range of new powers, which will be guaranteed in a statutory charter for headteachers. Headteachers will be able to choose their school staff and how those staff are managed. Schools will have control over curriculum content and approaches to learning and teaching, within a broad national framework, because they know what will work best for the children in their care. Schools will also have greater control over their finances, and we have launched a consultation on our proposals for fair funding across the education system. The consultation will run until 13 October, and I encourage everyone to respond to that with their views.

International evidence shows that involving parents, families and communities fully in schools improves attainment, so that is at the heart of the Government's policy agenda. We will enhance parent councils and modernise and strengthen the legislation on parental involvement to enable all parents to play a role in their local school and in their child's learning. Significantly, the National Parent Forum of Scotland is contributing to that process by reviewing the existing statute, and that work will substantially inform the agenda that the Government takes forward.

To ensure that schools interact more effectively with families who find it difficult to engage, we will

take steps to give every school access to a home-to-school link worker who will make and maintain such links, which are proven to make a strong contribution to closing the attainment gap by effectively engaging young people and their families in their education. Children and young people are at the heart of our education system, and we will strengthen their voice through more effective and consistent pupil participation.

If schools are to lead and to be put centrally into the position of leadership, they must be supported by other players in the education system. All other parts of the system must share a collective responsibility for supporting school improvement, and we must work together to provide that in an effective way.

The Government's reform agenda envisages a new support structure that will be made up of three key pillars: enhanced career development opportunities for teachers, improvement services delivered by new regional collaboratives, and support services provided by local authorities.

The first pillar is crucial to ensuring that our teachers are strongly supported throughout their careers. Teachers should have opportunities to develop their careers in different ways, whether in the classroom, in specific curriculum areas or in leadership roles. Those opportunities have narrowed far too much in recent years. Professional learning and development are key, and we will strengthen that area. We will streamline and enhance professional learning so that a coherent learning offer is available to all teachers.

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): When I speak to teachers in my constituency, they talk about the cuts that are taking place, workloads that have them completely run off their feet, class sizes that are far too large, the need for teaching assistants and not having the basic materials to be able to provide teaching and learning of the quality that we need. How are the cabinet secretary's reforms going to address those issues, which seem to be the result of a chronic shortage of funding for education?

John Swinney: Mr Rowley will have noticed the data that was released yesterday, which indicated that there has been an increase in local authority expenditure on education. That is putting more money into the schools that he talks about.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Will the member give way?

John Swinney: If Mr Gray will forgive me, I will answer Mr Rowley's question first.

Mr Rowley will also be aware of the contribution of pupil equity funding, which is going into many schools in the area that he represents. That

funding assists schools in determining which interventions they can support to tackle issues of attainment.

Finally, members will be familiar with the efforts that I am making to address workload within the teaching profession. I do not consider that to be completed business, as work still has to be done within the education system not just by me but by other parties, including local authorities. I encourage local authorities to take those steps.

I will give way to Mr Gray now, if he wishes.

Iain Gray: Mr Swinney referred to the figures that came out yesterday. Does he accept that the cash increase that the figures demonstrated becomes a real-terms decrease in funding once the deflator is applied?

John Swinney: Mr Gray will be familiar with the wider public finance position with which the Scottish Government wrestles. I remind him of the Audit Scotland report that indicated that the support for local government in Scotland has been essentially on a par with the funds available to the Scottish Government as a consequence of the restrictions in public expenditure.

On the core agenda of ensuring that enhanced career development opportunities are available for teachers, we will work with the profession to design new career pathways to develop leadership skills, pedagogic expertise and curriculum area specialities.

We will also consider issues connected with initial teacher education. New teachers must emerge from initial teacher education with consistently well-developed skills to teach in key areas including the core curricular areas of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, as specified in curriculum for excellence.

The second pillar of support will ensure that capacity in our schools is built and strengthened throughout Scotland. Regional improvement collaboratives will provide dedicated educational improvement through experienced and talented educators, involving but not limited to schools, teachers, local authorities and Education Scotland. Pooling and strengthening Scotland's education improvement resources in that way will reduce inconsistencies and will address the significant lack of capacity that exists in some parts of the country at present.

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): Will Mr Swinney give way?

John Swinney: If Mr Balfour will forgive me, I will give way in a moment.

The educational rationale for the measures is strong, with teams of professionals with specialist

skills in different curricular areas working together around the needs of schools.

Improving the lack of curriculum area support has rightly been welcomed by many in the teaching profession, including the Educational Institute of Scotland. Specialists can give tailored advice on how their curriculum area can contribute to closing the attainment gap in literacy and numeracy. They can work with teachers to give advice on how to apply educational strategies and make improvements to the content of their curriculum area. The void that exists between guidance and materials being issued from a national or local level and the implementation of policy in the classroom will now be filled by that approach.

That is central to our mission to strengthen the middle in Scottish education and to deliver in full on one of the key recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's review. We will work with partners to ensure that the experience of current and emerging partnership working informs the detailed establishment of regional improvement collaboratives and we will empower schools and communities to shape the regional offer to meet their improvement needs.

The amendment in the name of Tavish Scott opposes

"top-down regional collaboration and the shifting of further control towards Scottish ministers".

I agree with those sentiments. The agenda of regional collaboratives will be set by the schools within the respective areas. Schools will set out their needs for improvement and the collaborative will work together to deliver those priorities, fundamentally shifting how support is provided in the system.

I am keen to build on the collaboration that has already emerged between local authorities in the northern alliance, which is enhancing educational practice. That is the fundamental driver of our reforms; therefore, I reassure Parliament that there will be no top-down approach and no shift of control to Scottish ministers.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): The cabinet secretary mentions that he would like to see more collaboration. In the consultation document, the Government acknowledges the response from teachers: they would like to see more collaboration, but the barrier to that is funding cuts. Would the Government like to respond to the point that it is funding cuts that are the barrier to further collaboration, not educational structures?

John Swinney: At the heart of the OECD review was a concern about the lack of

collaboration in our education system. I am putting in place the mechanisms to enable that collaboration to happen at an educational level, so that practice is enhanced. By that measure, we will take steps to strengthen the delivery of education services.

The third and final pillar of support will be provided exclusively by local authorities. The services that local government provides to schools are, and will continue to be, invaluable. Councils continue to play a crucial role, maintaining responsibility for a wide range of education services, retaining local accountability and ensuring that their schools have the support framework and services that they need to thrive.

We must also improve the consistency and quality of the improvement and educational support that is offered to schools across the country. That will mean some change to local authorities' current responsibilities, but that change will be made through collaboration with other local authorities. We believe that this is an opportunity for councils to work with partners in schools and across the country to deliver a consistently improving education support service for our schools. They will also have a crucial role to play in the regional collaboratives that are established.

Taken together, those three pillars of support, alongside a system that is led by teachers, parents and communities, will provide the necessary focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap and transforming the lives of children and young people. That agenda sits alongside the other reforms that the Government has already set out, particularly in relation to pupil equity funding, which significantly enable schools to address the circumstances and challenges that young people face in their localities, with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Reform will require collective effort across the system, and I am determined on the Government's behalf to work with others to put in place a strong system. We must undertake the necessary reforms to make Scottish education world class and to deliver the fulfilment that every young person and every child in Scotland has a right to and deserves.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the publication of Education Governance: Next Steps, which sets out proposals for the reform of school education; further notes the emphasis that these proposals place on empowering schools and teachers; acknowledges the need to support schools and teachers through the provision of enhanced career and development opportunities, and strengthened improvement support, including access to expert, peer-led, professional help, backed by resources; recognises the importance of not burdening schools and teachers with unnecessary bureaucracy or workload as part of these reforms, and calls

on the Scottish Government to engage with all parties and stakeholders, including parents and young people, in continuing to develop these plans.

14:55

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): My party will be supporting the motion in the name of John Swinney, for the simple reason that it adopts the line of argument that the Scottish Conservatives have long held about why the status quo in school governance is no longer a credible option. However, I make it clear that we do not believe that the proposed reforms go far enough to make good what is wrong in Scottish schools, which is why I have lodged an amendment to the motion.

Despite the reluctance within some ranks of the educational establishment, John Swinney knows only too well that change is now essential. That is because the evidence is incontrovertible. The persistent and long-term literacy and numeracy problems for far too many of our young people, the fundamental weaknesses in the delivery of the curriculum for excellence, and too few teachers to serve the best interests of our young people—felt most acutely in some subject areas and by those who have additional support needs—are the three main areas of concern. Two of those are systemic, which is why no one can possibly argue that all is well with Scottish education.

Before we get told that this is the fault of negative media coverage, let us examine the facts and go back to the cabinet secretary's point about the OECD's comprehensive review of Scottish schools. The OECD liked many of the attitudes in and the general ethos of Scottish schools, but it also said that we were far removed from being able to deliver on our potential. We know all about the PISA scores and the literacy and numeracy problems, and we know that Scotland's poorer children are two to three years behind children from more affluent backgrounds. We also know that there are too few teachers and about the difficulties of encouraging people to come into teacher training, and we know about the delivery problem with the curriculum for excellence.

That is precisely why the review of governance is so important. It offers the opportunity to change where real power lies when it comes to decision making. For far too long, there have been too many obstacles in the way of teachers who want to get on with the job that they are trained to do and of heads who want more autonomy as a means to deliver much better results for their schools. On too many occasions, they have felt trapped by myriad directives—some from national Government, some from local government and some from the education agencies—not always with the same message. Those have prevented

headteachers from having freedom to take decisions in their own school; they have constrained choice and diversity; and they have led to a culture of conformity—all of which, I believe, are a large part of what has gone wrong. The principle of equity, to which we all aspire, is not the same—and should not be interpreted as being the same—as uniformity of provision.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Does Liz Smith accept that some schools, especially in deprived areas, benefit greatly from the support that they get from the centre—for example, from Glasgow City Council education department?

Liz Smith: Absolutely, but I will deal with that specifically when I mention pupil equity funding, because there are real issues about where the power to make the initial decision actually lies.

As the cabinet secretary said, the international evidence is interesting. What he said about the buy-in of parents and communities is true, and that is very important. However, the international evidence also shows that when there is wholesale autonomy for schools, there is generally a good set of results. What matters for us is what works for delivering higher standards, not being bound by a one-size-fits-all approach that allows no room for headteachers to demonstrate imagination and creativity or to pursue different approaches according to the specific educational interests of their pupils. Scotland's schools cannot thrive on the lowest common denominator. We need a system that delivers excellence because it inspires teachers, parents and young people.

Let me give an example of where such a governance structure could be helpful. Schools now have the benefit of being able to access the pupil equity fund, which is an important reform that we fully support. However, the key test is who has the final say on how the fund is spent. As things stand at present, it looks as though schools will have to work within both national and local government guidelines—that, Mr Mason, is a little bit different from the support mechanism that might go with it. As I understand it, schools will have more freedom to make suggestions about how to spend the money, but they will not necessarily be in full command of the final decision. The Scottish Conservatives believe that they should be, otherwise the push for greater autonomy will mean nothing. If local and national government still call some of the shots, headteachers will still face the constraints that have caused some in the present system to have difficulties.

John Swinney: Obviously, I am very interested in the line of argument that Liz Smith is pursuing with regard to pupil equity funding, as there is guidance available on how to deploy that funding.

The whole purpose of pupil equity funding is to enable schools to take those decisions for themselves. If Liz Smith has experienced practice that is contrary to that, I would be grateful if she would draw it to my attention, as that is not the policy intention of pupil equity funding.

Liz Smith: I am pleased that the cabinet secretary has raised that point, because I would like to think that that is true. However, according to the paper that Frank Lennon wrote about the guidelines that were issued in March this year, local authorities and national Government might take a slightly different interpretation. That is one of the arguments that we are strong on when it comes to full autonomy.

John Swinney: I would like to pursue that further. That is interesting but it does not address the issue that I raised. There is guidance available to help and to inform decision making, which is welcomed by headteachers, and the policy intention is to enable headteachers to take decisions in consultation with the school community and in relation to the children in their school. I invite Liz Smith to draw any evidence to the contrary to my attention, as my policy intention is clear.

Liz Smith: The policy intention is clear, cabinet secretary, but I am not sure about the delivery. If we look at what the educational establishment has said about some of the Government reforms, we see that it seems very uncertain about delivery of the policies in practice.

When it comes to the cabinet secretary's decision to rule out a greater diversity of schools, he faces a major issue. After almost two years of keeping them waiting, he has told the parents of pupils at St Joseph's school, the Al-Qalam school, the Glasgow Steiner school, Mirren Park school and the Aberdeen Green school near Maryculter, as well as various philanthropists, that he is interested in their ideas, but he will not move on the radical agenda.

The irony is that he is turning a blind eye to the evidence about what works. Take Newlands junior college, for example, which is a radical departure from the status quo and an institution that delivers top-class results and inspires others to follow suit. Why can that principle not be extended elsewhere? Many times in this Parliament, the Scottish Conservatives have been accused of being ideologically driven when it comes to education, but at every turn what has driven us is what works. I suggest that the very negative reaction to some of the proposed Scottish Government reforms in sections of the educational establishment is more ideologically driven than anything that we have ever proposed. We completely reject the assertion that weaker educational performance in Scottish schools is to

do with money and resources; they have an impact, but that is not the whole story.

There are other inconsistencies in the Scottish Government's proposals, particularly with regard to regional collaboration, which my colleagues will come back to later. As I understand it, the regional boards are supposed to be bodies for professional advice and support. I accept that, but I do not accept that they should have an element of bureaucratic input, which is how it has been presented—that is certainly how it has been interpreted. It should be the job of Education Scotland, if it were properly organised, to provide that support. We have spent many months in the Education and Skills Committee looking at the roles of Scotland's agencies, and Education Scotland has been found to be wanting in its provision of professional support.

I turn to the Liberal Democrat amendment on Education Scotland. Given the evidence that we took in committee, I was astonished to read that the cabinet secretary intends to allow the inspectorate to remain part of the same body that undertakes curriculum development. His reason for doing that is that inspection is part and parcel of evaluation and improvement. It is, but surely that must be done on an independent basis.

There has been no doubt in the minds of Scottish Conservatives that Scotland's schools are being held back, not by teachers, parents or pupils, but by a system the evidence for which does not make happy reading and which is too rigid and too doctrinaire on the principle of one size fits all. As the cabinet secretary has said, it is time to change it, but in a much more radical way than is proposed by the Scottish National Party.

I move amendment S5M-06376.1, to insert at end:

“, but, in doing so, deeply regrets the missed opportunity to give full autonomy to headteachers and to further extend choice and diversity within the school system in a way that responds positively to changing parental demand and the philanthropic vision of new types of schools.”

The Presiding Officer: Members are being very generous about taking interventions, but I am conscious that we are pressed for time, so I am making members aware of that.

15:05

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Before I tempt the cabinet secretary into his usual tired and tedious tirade about us never supporting anything he does—and I will—let me establish some common ground.

Mr Swinney has made it plain that, in our schools, the status quo is not an option and change must come. He is right, because with 4,000 fewer teachers, 1,000 fewer support staff,

700 unfilled vacancies, attainment in literacy, numeracy and science declining, fewer school leavers going on to a positive destination and teachers about to ballot for industrial action, something has to change.

However, it is not the case that any change will do. The imperative is not reform for reform's sake, but the right reforms for our future's sake. Some of the reforms in the document "Education Governance: Next Steps" are welcome. We have always supported the pupil equity fund—after all, it is indistinguishable from the fair start funding that we proposed in our manifesto last year. Managed and delivered properly, it has the potential to be transformational.

In our manifesto, a year ago, we also proposed a new, improved chartered teacher scheme. New career progression for classroom teachers is a good thing too. The idea of home link workers is a good one, although I hope that the way in which it is formulated—the reference is to "access to"—does not mean that there will not be enough of them to go round to make the difference that they could make.

The main thrust of the Government's reforms is a structural reorganisation of how schools are run. That has been characterised by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities as a power grab, by TES as the "Great Governance Guddle", and by Keir Bloomer as

"authoritarian, unwanted, bureaucratic and hierarchical"

with dysfunction built in.

The cabinet secretary has not taken all that lying down. He has rushed to his plan's defence, scatter-bombing op eds across Saturday's papers with Stakhanovite diligence. My favourite passage is this one:

"we need to work with everyone involved in Scottish education and we will continue to listen to what they have to say at every step along the way."

Presiding Officer, I choked on my cornflakes. Was that ironic or was it just taking the mickey? Everyone who is involved in education has told the cabinet secretary that he is barking up the wrong tree.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): I chaired the conference last week where Keir Bloomer made the comments that the member mentioned. However, he also said that he supports the direction that the Scottish Government is moving in and thinks that "Education Governance: Next Steps" is a good proposal.

Iain Gray: The quotations that I gave were of what he said at the conference, but it is true that Keir Bloomer is a friend of much of the direction that the cabinet secretary is taking. That tells us

that something must be seriously wrong with the elements of the proposals that he was talking about.

We do not need to stick with Keir Bloomer, because we have the consultation response. In 20 years in politics, I have never seen a consultation response that was so clear, consistent and damning of a proposal. It mentions widespread support for the current governance, apprehensions about further change in the system, how there is no need to fix something that is not broken, and how there is strong opposition to the establishment of educational regions. The key point is that respondents specifically raised budget cuts and staffing issues as being the two key barriers to improvement.

Liz Smith: Will the member take an intervention?

Iain Gray: No, I am sorry, but I will not.

That was in the Government's own summary of the consultation. Parents, teachers, headteachers, councils and educationists are all united in saying that the change that they need is more resource, more teachers and less bureaucracy. They all say that structural change is not the solution.

What we are getting, however, is structural change, a new level of bureaucracy—regional directors, system leaders, cluster leaders—and increased workload and responsibility for headteachers; and not a penny more.

Recruiting headteachers is already a problem.

John Swinney: Two weeks ago, when I set out the proposals, Mr Gray welcomed the purpose of regional collaboratives, which is to provide increased educational development resources. Has he changed his position?

Iain Gray: No. Let me come on to that point, because it is important.

Recruiting headteachers and teachers is already a problem. Our teachers already have lower salaries, more class time and bigger classes than teachers in the rest of Europe—they are planning strike action already, even before facing the new responsibilities.

The changes are uncostered and unfunded. Worse still, the new regional bureaucracy threatens to suck resources towards the centre. I have said that cross-council collaboration that moves towards something like the old regional advisory services could support teachers to teach, and I have heard what the cabinet secretary has said. However, I have read his document and the more closely that I look at the structures, the less they look like autonomy and pedagogical support and the more they look like control and centralised command.

We are to have an overarching education council chaired by the cabinet secretary; regional directors, appointed by the cabinet secretary; and they will be responsible for preparing and delivering regional plans and be answerable to the chief executive of Education Scotland, who is, of course, accountable to the cabinet secretary. All that is backed by a Sophie's choice of two funding models, both of which would strip out local democratic control of school budgets. That will be driven by a beefed up Education Scotland, which, as Liz Smith said, is the one bit of the system that the consultation said absolutely should be reformed.

That does not look like a system designed by someone who trusts teachers to teach; rather, it looks like a system designed by an education secretary who seeks to run our schools from his office in St Andrew's house. This is not

"listening to parents and teachers";

rather it is defying them. It is not "strengthening the middle" as suggested by the OECD, but is strengthening central control, increasing the pressure and burden on schools and headteachers and gutting the middle—the local authorities that should support them.

The document quotes Dylan Wiliam, saying:

"The only thing that really matters is the quality of the teacher."

However, there is nothing here about the real change needed: an end to cuts and enough teachers with enough time and enough support to be the best teachers in the world. That will not be delivered by an education council in Edinburgh, by regional enforcers of Government policy or by the proposed next steps.

The cabinet secretary should take a lesson from the First Minister yesterday. It is time for another policy reset. It is time to really listen to parents, teachers and educationists and not just to say that he is listening. He must try again and do better.

I move amendment S5M-06376.4, to leave out from "publication" to end and insert:

"Scottish Government document, *Education Governance, Empowering Teachers Parents and Communities to achieve Excellence and Equity in Education; An analysis of consultation responses*, which states that 'There was widespread support for the current governance system and an apprehension towards further change within the system', that 'On the whole, respondents did not see current governance arrangements as a barrier for improvement and that changing them was not expected to address the deep-seated issues that get in the way of achieving excellence and equity for all' and that 'Specifically respondents thought that budget cuts and staffing issues were the two key barriers for improvement'; does not believe that the Scottish Government document, *Education Governance: Next Steps* in any way addresses these concerns of parents, teachers, headteachers and educationalists, and calls on the Scottish Government to

halt these reforms and to return urgently to the Parliament with a programme of measures that does address these concerns, including action towards restoring cuts to budgets, teacher numbers and support staff."

15:13

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): If the Scottish Government is serious about closing the multiple attainment gaps, ending inequality and raising standards in education, it needs to listen—to teachers, pupils, parents and others with the knowledge and experience of what works and what does not. So far, the education governance review has been an exercise in collecting the thoughts, observations and ideas of all those with a stake in Scottish education, before roundly ignoring them in pursuit of a significant change that was not asked for, is quite clearly opposed and for which there is no evidence that the quality of education will actually improve as a result.

The motion even calls on the Government

"to engage with all parties and stakeholders, including parents and young people, in continuing to develop these plans."

However, those who responded to the first consultation will be left wondering why they should bother. We should not forget that some people reported that they felt unable to respond to the consultation in the format in which it was presented.

The next steps report on education reform charges ahead with Scottish Government proposals for widespread governance reform against the express wishes of teachers, parents and educationists.

The Government's summary of responses clearly acknowledges that there is

"widespread support for the current governance system and an apprehension towards further change within the system"

and that

"the case for significant changes in governance had not been made".

On specific proposals such as the regional governance structure, the response was even more damning and very clear. The summary states:

"There was strong opposition against the uniform establishment of educational regions, particularly from local authorities, but also from schools, agencies, parent councils and individuals".

A lot of key players involved in education strongly oppose these proposals. It is therefore alarming to see the Government move ahead with them despite such a negative response. Those people will be wondering why they should bother responding to the next round of consultations on

funding models. I hope that the Scottish Government can offer them some reassurance and evidence that it is listening.

Given the lack of support for the proposals among those involved in education, we must ask who beyond the Scottish National Party and Conservative members in the Parliament supports them. The Government quotes in its report Dylan William, a University College London emeritus professor, which gives the impression that it is building on his recommendations. However, his quote was taken somewhat out of context. He said that a number of ways to improve education have been attempted, including changes to the governance of schools—precisely what the Government is proposing—but that

“the net impact at a system level has been close to zero, if not actually zero.”

The OECD report, which the Government commissioned, does not back up the reform agenda either. It states:

“There is no one right system of governance. In principle, nearly all governance structures can be successful in education under the right conditions.”

Why is the Government so obsessed with governance reform? Why does it not address the real issues of budget cuts and staff reductions, which were raised so clearly in the responses to its consultation?

The proposals are not just unwanted or unnecessary; they bring risk. One of the strengths of our education system is its local democratic accountability, which means that decisions are taken at the closest level possible to the people they affect, while allowing for adequate accountability structures.

John Swinney: Mr Greer has just made a point that I have made, which is that decisions about education are taken most effectively as close as possible to where that education is taking place. Will Mr Greer marshal for us his objections to empowering schools to be able to take decisions where they are entrusted with the responsibility of educating our young people?

Ross Greer: I do not need to marshal the arguments, because they are made in the Government’s consultation document by the teachers themselves. Teachers were exceptionally clear about their opposition to what the Government proposes. The proposals to devolve further powers down to headteachers and to move other responsibilities up to the so-far relatively abstract regional body undermine local democratic accountability. For those of us who believe passionately in local democracy, that is a worrying sign of how little a role the Scottish Government seems to envision for our councils.

The reforms risk energy and money being wasted on an unnecessary and unwanted reorganisation that could easily overburden headteachers. After all, they are being given significantly more administrative responsibilities, but the financial issues still exist. Unless the Scottish Government is willing to reverse a decade’s worth of cut budgets, it will still be forcing schools to do more with less. I ask again, why is the Government so obsessed with governance reforms that teachers do not want?

The absence of support from those who are involved in education has been well highlighted. The only real support seems to be coming from the Conservative Party.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): Is the Green position that there should be no reforms to education ever and that the status quo is completely acceptable?

Ross Greer: It is quite clear that no one is suggesting that, but the Government’s proposals have been met with clear, overwhelming opposition from teachers, parents and educationists. That is not to say that no reform is necessary, but the issues that the consultation document clearly highlighted are issues of resource and workload, which the Government has not addressed.

Bob Doris: Given that we are having a debate, will the member say what reforms he would like to see?

Ross Greer: I will do so quite happily. What Scottish education needs is a reversal of a decade’s worth of cuts. It needs the 4,000 teachers that have been cut back in the classroom and it needs the 500 additional support needs teachers back. We know that already—we know that cuts have damaged Scottish education. Those barriers have been raised repeatedly by teaching and support staff and by parents and pupils, and they are highlighted in the responses to the Government’s consultation. Budget and staffing issues are the problem. It is disappointing to see very little in the Government’s proposals that addresses those issues.

Education has faced years of austerity. As I mentioned, there are 4,000 fewer teachers and support staff have been cut. There are also staff at local authority level who support them. Key areas such as ASN have seen a reduction in both teaching and support staff, who are essential. The remaining teachers and support staff are now overstretched. Pupils are being left behind through no fault of those overburdened and underresourced staff. The Government’s response to those concerns seems to be to devolve decision making to headteachers. However, without enough investment, those headteachers will face

exactly the same problems that local authorities face right now.

It is good to see that some money has been made available. The pupil equity fund is a positive step, although we have issues with its bypassing local government. The £160 million that Green members of the Scottish Parliament saved for local government in last year's budget helps to address the issues. However, those are all only small steps in the right direction, while great strides are being taken in the wrong direction.

We therefore ask the Government to acknowledge that governance reform is not what Scottish education needs. It is misguided and does not address the real problems. We can work together to improve our education system, give schools and local authorities the resources that they need, enhance, rather than undermine, democratic accountability and do something in this session of Parliament that we can all be proud of—but it is not that.

The Scottish Greens will oppose the governance reforms and will continue arguing for the support that Scottish education actually needs.

I move amendment S5M-06376.3, to insert at end:

“; notes evidence, including that submitted in response to the consultation and in the OECD report on Scottish education, which points to structural governance reforms having no positive impact on closing the attainment gap; notes that local democratic accountability is a key strength of education governance in Scotland; expresses concern regarding the implications for accountability in the Scottish Government's proposals to move powers away from local authorities and to create new regional collaborations; believes the Scottish Government's proposed reforms to be fundamentally misguided and in contradiction to the issues raised and solutions proposed in responses to the consultation, and calls on the Scottish Government to reconsider the overarching direction of its proposed reforms and invest substantially in education to reverse cuts to teaching and support staff.”

15:21

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): Does changing the structure of Scottish education tackle attainment? Will it improve literacy and numeracy? Will the proposals encourage more people to teach? If the change is taken in isolation, the answer can only be no. Therefore the Government's proposals for who does what must be assessed against everything being done on education.

I would rather that the debate was on the effectiveness of the national improvement plan that was announced a year ago. That would be about teacher numbers, teachers' workloads and what the plan has achieved for Scotland's young people. It would allow Parliament to debate three factors that we must get right if we are to give

Scotland's young people better opportunities in life.

The first of those factors is the social and economic circumstances of childhood: how kids grow up. All the evidence, here and internationally, is that those years—before school—dictate what will happen to every girl and boy. The Government proposes a law that will hold local councils responsible for supporting teachers in raising attainment. However, it knows that attainment is also about social deprivation, poverty, employment and a whole lot more. Are councils to have a duty there, too? Children from affluent families are 15 months ahead of their deprived peers in literacy and numeracy as they start primary 1, so we should encourage and invest in cutting class sizes to under 15 pupils for schools that serve socially deprived areas. We should start with primaries 1 to 3 and assess what difference that can make. Youth and community work should also be part of that approach; their role in schools is essential in tackling such socioeconomic factors, and should be recognised and enhanced.

The Minister for Childcare and Early Years (Mark McDonald): On the vocabulary gap, Tavish Scott will be aware that that issue is part of the focus of my work on the early years agenda—for example, expanding the amount of early years education that is available, and expanding health visitor pathways and family support. The approach is about getting early intervention in place. Therefore, work is on-going, as he and I have discussed and debated in the chamber on many occasions.

Tavish Scott: That is all good, but it would help if the current Government had also held to its commitment on reducing class sizes in the early years, which many of us still believe is the right approach in tackling the socioeconomic factors that blight too many lives.

The second factor is that teachers, and what they achieve in schools, matter far more than structural change. What do the Government's proposals do to make space for teachers to teach? Do they create more non-contact time? Do they encourage more people to consider a career in teaching? How will schools be able to recruit to the many vacancies that exist? The enhanced role of headteachers does not recognise the fact that, in many Scottish schools, headteachers also teach. In Shetland, 15 out of 29 heads spend time in the classroom as part of their working week. How are they meant to do more under the proposals? If the Government's Islands (Scotland) Bill is to mean anything, the proposals need to be island proofed: island councils expect no less.

The third factor is how the proposals address fundamental concerns over the implementation of the CFE—in other words, over the central role of

the Government's main education quango, which is Education Scotland. The Government wants to enhance the role of Education Scotland, but there are many strong reasons for doing the precise opposite and splitting the organisation in two.

On the accountability of the new structure, it cannot make sense to make Education Scotland the boss of a top-down system, with Education Scotland directors in charge of the regional bodies that have been outlined today. Does anyone seriously believe that a headteacher would disagree with the guidance that flows from that structure? How can the head take a different view when she knows that her school will be inspected by the same organisation? That is what is wrong with making Education Scotland the judge and the jury of Scottish schools.

Education Scotland is responsible to the cabinet secretary; regional directors are responsible not to Parliament or to local government, but to Education Scotland. Accountability is not from the schools up, but from the cabinet secretary down. It will be a brave headteacher who takes on that structure. How will curriculum development happen? Who will question the performance of the Scottish Qualifications Authority? Improvement should be driven by subject teachers across school clusters working out what works and what needs to change. It should not be driven by the region down to schools.

Before the cabinet secretary says that that will not—

John Swinney: I am glad that I can get to my feet quickly enough to catch up with Mr Scott. The point in my opening remarks was designed to address exactly that question. The regional collaborative is there to support schools in enhancing their educational practice at the behest of schools. Making the support available at the behest of the school utterly turns the education system on its head.

Tavish Scott: That is a strong argument, and it needs to be supported by what happens in evidence. My concern about what has happened in the past is that when we had the debate about the number of subjects that our young people should take at higher level, it was the Education Scotland guidance, which was imposed on schools, that narrowed the choice—most education authorities and schools narrowed what was on offer and made less available to our young people. My concern is that the evidence is that Education Scotland's performance over the past number of years is contrary to that laid out by Mr Swinney.

John Swinney: The decision on the range of subjects that is offered in a school is exactly the type of decision that has been taken at school

level, and not based on Education Scotland guidance. I have had that issue out with Liz Smith at many question time appearances. Schools have had the flexibility to decide how many qualifications are appropriate in their timetable. That is not specified by Education Scotland in any respect.

Tavish Scott: But when the inspection regime is one and the same body, there is no ability in the system to test different approaches. I hope that the cabinet secretary will reflect on that for the future, because the example of workload and bureaucracy is telling in this area.

In the 52 pages of the Government's document there are but three paragraphs on reducing bureaucracy. Not one of those pages reflects the role of Education Scotland and there is no mention of the 20,000 pages of the curriculum for excellence guidance that flowed from Education Scotland into every school. There is a lot to be done to make the case for Mr Swinney's decision to reverse the whole system when the record of Education Scotland is so clear. Furthermore, who assesses its role? Who is Education Scotland accountable to? We understand that in the ministerial sense, but who is accountable for the quality of its work and the value that it adds to Scottish education?

That is the case for splitting Education Scotland's functions. It is not about creating a tartan Office for Standards in Education—few, if any, would argue for that—but about having a body that examines what is going on in schools. I accept that independent inspection will always be difficult for teachers, but an independent inspectorate would also inspect Education Scotland. Therefore, if a headteacher wanted to try a new approach but had had conflicting guidance from Education Scotland, an independent inspector could test both. Cluster schools, quality improvement officers and experience from elsewhere would be part of that. An independent inspectorate could do that, but if the inspector is part of Education Scotland, there would be little push back, check or straight no to Education Scotland or to the regional director. That is a decent case for reform.

In *The Herald* today, Education Scotland's interim boss has written that he does not want a turf war over responsibilities, but what does the Government expect? Does it expect local government to roll over and have powers such as the statutory responsibility for educational improvement removed?

As I think that the cabinet secretary has accepted in today's debate, many councils have those responsibilities, and I have not heard anyone make the case that they do not do that well. The Government's proposals, far from

delivering consensus, ignore the vast weight of the consultation response, which others have mentioned, that argues that the structure should be left alone. We do not need a turf war, and many across education, including teachers and parents, consider that that would be a waste of valuable time and effort.

It is on that basis and that case for reform that I move my amendment S5M-06376.2, to insert at end:

“; opposes compulsory top-down regional collaboration and the shifting of further control towards Scottish ministers; recalls the evidence presented to the Education and Skills Committee in favour of separating the policy and inspection functions of Education Scotland and believes that this is necessary, and notes the essential role of support services for schools, notably youth workers.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I am afraid that we have no time in hand, so speeches should be of five minutes. I emphasise that—five minutes.

15:30

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): I remind members that I am the parliamentary liaison officer to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

I know that this is controversial in education, but I was always a fan of homework. As a modern studies teacher, one of my biggest challenges was getting my pupils to engage with the work that we do in here: politics. At the start of term, I would ask every class to bring in a piece of news. It could be from the telly, from the internet or from a local paper. The only two caveats—or success criteria—that I gave them was that it could not be about sport and it could not be about celebrities, which usually helped to narrow the field. Most important, the discussions that followed helped me to do my homework—to get to know my pupils.

When I was elected last May, I made a pledge to my constituents that I would do my homework. I promised to visit every school and to speak to every headteacher about what they thought the challenges in Scottish education were, and despite the regular occurrence of purdah over the past year, I have visited 23 schools in my constituency so far; I have seven still to visit. I would like to place on record my thanks to every headteacher I have spoken to for providing me with an honest assessment of where we are.

Members might be aware that we used to have subject specialist principal teachers in our secondary schools. However, under curriculum for excellence, there has been a drift towards having faculty heads who are directly accountable on a number of subject areas. For example, as a former principal teacher curriculum in Fife Council, I had

responsibility for five subjects, three of which were from outwith my subject specialism.

To make the jump from being a class teacher to a faculty head, lots of additional experience was expected, but there was no prescribed leadership route. That is why the first pillar of support on offer to our schools—enhanced career and development opportunities—is so important.

I would have been 12 in 1996 when the regional organisation structures changed, but—ever the class swot—I did my homework by speaking to a recently retired experienced principal teacher. She told me that, when she was first appointed, she was faced with four higher classes, but she had little experience of teaching paper 2—for the non-modern-studies literate among members, that was formerly the decision-making exercise. Her regional adviser asked her what she was most worried about, then spent an entire day marking her paper 2 assessments, after which he came back to talk to her pupils and to provide feedback on where they went wrong and how to improve. She said:

“That was an amazing experience for me and why subsequent classes did so well. You can tell ... he was my hero.”

That education adviser—Ken Muir—is now the chief executive of the General Teaching Council for Scotland. What a powerful description of the impact that it is possible to have if, as the OECD argues should happen, the middle is strengthened. That is not the top-down process that Tavish Scott suggested, but one that takes place from the bottom up.

Sharing good practice was a standing agenda item at my departmental meetings. If we expect the people who stand in front of pupils to talk about what is working well and to share it with their colleagues, it is only fair that those who are further up the tree do likewise.

Iain Gray: Will the member take an intervention?

Jenny Gilruth: I cannot—I have limited time.

The collaboratives can and should be used to support staff, as Ken Muir did, by providing professional support and guidance to improve attainment.

Our councils will retain control over payroll, human resources and democratic accountability for the number of schools in an area, catchments and the appointment of headteachers, but our headteachers are the lead learners in schools, and if they are to lead learning, they should be entrusted with that task as professionals. Just this week, I visited a primary school whose headteacher told me that she had just found out that two probationer teachers are to join her

school in August. She is worried about the impact that that will have on her pupils and her staff; it is a small, quite rural school. She requested input into that process, but she was ignored. That disempowers headteachers and, frankly, it is not good enough.

Our councils run HR machines that, in my view, are not always kiltered to the needs of our education system. For example, as a PTC, my geography teacher changed three times in the space of nine months. I, as a line manager, my line manager, the deputy head, and her line manager, the headteacher, had no say whatever in that process. Rather, employment decisions in Fife were taken by someone behind a desk in Fife house who was looking to squeeze capacity out of the teaching workforce and who had no cognisance of how moving staff could impact on the pupils entrusted to their care.

Bob Doris: Will the Jenny Gilruth give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in her final minute.

Jenny Gilruth: Teachers are not square pegs to be used to fill round holes, as one headteacher put it to me this week. A headteacher needs to get the right fit for their school and their pupils. As the OECD evidence stated,

“school leaders can make a difference in school and student performance if they are granted autonomy to make important decisions”.

We all know that the status quo is not working in Scottish education. If it was, the attainment gap would not exist. We can look at the findings of the OECD, PISA and the SSLN but, fundamentally, if members want to know what is going on in Scottish education at the moment, I implore them to go out into their constituencies and to speak to their headteachers.

Today is the second-last day of the summer term, so I will close by wishing every headteacher in Mid Fife and Glenrothes a restful and peaceful summer holiday when it comes.

15:34

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): Like my colleague Liz Smith, I welcome in part the way in which the Scottish Government is going forward with these proposals. However, I feel that this will be a slightly missed opportunity and that, after passing these reforms over the next couple of years, we will at some point realise that we have not gone far enough, and we will have to go back and make another change. The clear message from the headteachers and teachers to whom I have spoken over the past 12 months is, “Can you get this right, and then can we be left alone to get on and do what we’re paid to do—teach children?”

What we need to establish over the next two to three years is a system that will last a generation instead of something that different parties and different politicians will come back to and tinker with over and over again.

I want to make a couple of points about the areas into which I think the Government is moving, the first of which brings us back to the regional models. It seems clear to me that the regional group will report to the education minister, which must mean that it has some kind of top-heavy structure. It will not report down to local authorities or councillors—it is reporting upwards—and the parameters will be set by the Scottish Government. How can we suggest that there should be localism in, say, East Lothian compared even with West Lothian in my region and still think that one model will fit all? There is a danger of our ending up with some more power going to headteachers, which is welcome, but with a bigger structure that sits further away from parents and children than what we have at the moment.

For example, will these regional hubs be responsible for school buildings? Will they decide where a new school building will be built? If not, where will that decision be taken? I come back to the question that I asked the Deputy First Minister after his statement last week. This afternoon, he listed a whole number of people who would be part of the regional hubs and suggested that others would be involved, but will those others include elected councillors? For 10 years, I attended parent council meetings here in Edinburgh as a councillor, and I was able to listen to what was said and feed any concerns back to the City of Edinburgh Council’s education department. Where would I go now? Under this new structure, what would be the role of a councillor with regard to parent councils? That seems unclear to me, and I think that there is a danger that we will end up with a less localised model.

I want to finish with two very quick and genuine points. First, where does early learning fit into this system, and who will deliver it—the council or the new regional body? Secondly, it seems unclear to me where children with additional support needs, who are perhaps the most vulnerable in our society, fit in, and there is a danger that, as far as parental access is concerned, this big regional body will become even more unwieldy.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Jeremy Balfour: I do not think that I have the time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in his last minute.

Jeremy Balfour: This is a step, but it does not go far enough. We need to keep moving forward. There is a danger that the system that we are looking at will simply fall through and will not provide what local parents, children or teachers want.

15:39

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): I will begin by speaking in my capacity as convener of the Education and Skills Committee.

I welcome the cabinet secretary's opening remarks and look forward to seeing the details of the proposals. The committee will, of course, pay close attention to the Government's proposed reforms.

The Parliament will by now be aware of the Education and Skills Committee's commitment to hearing from a breadth of voices to inform its work and enhance scrutiny and debate. If I say so myself, that has been very effective. I was pleased to read the cabinet secretary's letter of 15 June to the committee, in which he said that he had taken account of the committee's work and the evidence that it had received. The committee has rigorously examined the performance of the principal national agencies in school education and their role in the delivery of the curriculum for excellence, and it has highlighted the need for clear lines of accountability in delivering the curriculum for excellence. "Education Governance: Next Steps" indicates that the proposed Scottish education council will help

"to ensure that there is coherence, pace and challenge at a national level".

The committee will be interested to find out what the council's responsibilities will be with regard to the delivery of the curriculum for excellence.

The broader reforms that the Government has proposed represent big changes to the structure of Scottish education. It will therefore be vital that the Education and Skills Committee continues to scrutinise the Scottish Government and its agencies effectively. That includes pre-legislative scrutiny before the bill comes to Parliament in 2018.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I never thought that I would have to say this to you, Mr Dornan, but will you move your microphone closer to you? I can usually hear you loud and clear.

James Dornan: Can we make sure that the official report gets that, as that is the first time you have ever asked me to speak up?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Be careful.

Daniel Johnson: I am reflecting on James Dornan's comments. Does he agree that it is surprising, given our deliberations on the roles of the SQA and Education Scotland, that there is no critique or analysis of Education Scotland's proposed reform and barely any mention of the SQA in the proposals?

James Dornan: There are lots of good things in the document, and I will be very interested to hear the cabinet secretary talking about the details of exactly what will be in the proposals when he comes to the committee after the summer.

I am sure that all members of the committee have noted the recommendation in paragraph 4.4.4 of the "Education Governance: Next Steps", which emphasises the importance of the SQA

"listening, and being open to, the voices of learners, teachers and parents."

I am delighted that the committee will continue with the inclusive approach that we have taken in the past year and that Scotland's parents, teachers and young people will have their voices heard as part of the committee's work.

I will end this part of my contribution with my usual shout out to those with something to say on Scottish education. Please do not wait to be asked the right question in a consultation. We want to hear from those people and be led by the issues that they raise. Full details of how to get in touch are on our web page.

I will now speak in a personal capacity and move on to the reforms themselves. There are a number of extremely ambitious goals in the document that can be achieved only by changing not only the processes but the culture of many of the players in Scottish education. I am not the only one who says that; at the conference on "Education Governance: Next Steps", which I mentioned earlier, there was general support for a change in culture. That was highlighted by the aforementioned Keir Bloomer and others. All parts of the system have to work together, of course. If we want education to change, all parts of the system must work closely and in a way that is different from how they have worked so far. I wish the cabinet secretary well with that.

Mark Priestley from the University of Stirling said in a blog recently:

"Finally, we need a culture, in our new governance structures, that is focused on future improvement, rather than one that is wedded to maintaining the sacred cows presented by past structures, methods and guidance."

It is clear that there is a fair amount of work to be done on that.

I am honestly hugely enthused by the possibilities that stem from "Education Governance: Next Steps"—from creating the

school and teacher-led system to enhancing career and development opportunities for teachers through to the regional improvement collaboratives. All those suggestions seem to me to be eminently sensible. Of course, as in all things, the devil is in the detail, and I look forward to the cabinet secretary using the summer months to come back with those details for my committee and the chamber to scrutinise as we think appropriate.

Given the importance that my committee has put on the involvement of all those who are connected to education—not just practitioners—I am delighted to see the emphasis that the cabinet secretary has put on strengthening the voice of parents. I would have talked about that, but I see that I am in my last minute.

We all agree that education is crucial to the life chances of our children, so nothing that the Parliament or the Government does can have greater importance. I hope that the positive next steps are allowed to move forward. If all sectors can work together in partnership, I look forward to the necessary changes to education being made for the benefit of all our children and, of course, I look forward to seeing the cabinet secretary in front of my committee to answer questions on the details of the proposals.

I support the motion.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much for keeping to time, Mr Dornan.

15:44

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): It is a well-rehearsed and well-established view, shaped by the evidence of parents, teachers, support staff, unions, academics and international surveys, that there are serious problems in Scottish education. In taking that view, there is always a danger of being characterised as a curmudgeon by John Swinney—who wilfully refuses to accept criticism of what he deems to be good news—or as someone who is driven only by a desire to talk Scottish education down. However, the debate today is so serious that I am prepared to take that risk. As ever, I urge Mr Swinney not to shoot the messenger.

Mr Swinney's proposals do not rise to the challenge that education faces—indeed, there is a danger that they will make things worse. Action in Government and plans for education must be more than lines to take. Any proposals must show an understanding of what the problems are; should be evidence based, with more than assertion to back them up; and should be radical in their impact and challenge rather than defend the status quo. They should be capable of building consensus in the Parliament, in education and

among families, and of building confidence that those changes will create greater opportunity for all our young people to thrive and achieve their potential, regardless of their circumstances.

Sadly, Mr Swinney's proposals fail all those tests. It is as if, having conceded that there is a problem, he is reluctant to recognise what the problem is. He produces solutions that do not relate to the real problems at all. There is no evidence that his plan increases resources where they are so desperately needed; improves the recruitment and retention of teachers; addresses the major problems around supply teachers, support staff, administrative support and the lack of specialist teachers; addresses the reduction in subject choices in too many schools; or provides real support for young people with additional support needs, too many of whom are on part timetables rather than accessing the full education that they need.

James Dornan is correct to say that a lot of evidence was given to the Education and Skills Committee. In all that evidence, however, I did not hear anyone make a plea for more bureaucracy, for regional collaboratives or for Education Scotland to have even more power. In all the evidence to the committee, not only were those proposals not suggested; they would have been roundly denounced. Not only is there no evidence for Mr Swinney's proposals; his own consultation rejected most of them. Faced with systemic problems, and plagued by too much change that has been poorly introduced, the cabinet secretary is introducing further upheaval, with more bureaucracy and more power for Education Scotland. You could not make it up.

Mr Swinney has moved to a view—most explicitly argued by Liz Smith and the Tories—that, basically, educational problems emerge from individual schools and can be solved there. That is simply not true. The attainment gap, the experience of young people with additional support needs, the challenge of recruitment in our rural areas, the experience of working-class boys who fail in the first and second years of secondary school, and the impact of poverty and what a child brings with them to school are about far more than an individual school and its capacity to support individual pupils.

The cabinet secretary talks about autonomy for teachers and headteachers. I agree that it is good practice to liberate the understanding and capacity of teachers, but we have to understand the impact of that. We have been told that a headteacher might be able to use the resources that are given to them to bring in speech and language therapy support, but surely any child, regardless of the school that they attend, is entitled to that support if they need it. We may say that headteachers are to

be liberated in the curriculum, but what if a headteacher decides that the school should run only three highers and that they will not bother with advanced highers because they do not believe that those are necessary? We in politics know that a postcode lottery is bad enough, but if we create a lottery based on individual schools, we have a major problem.

We all know—although the Tories may take a slightly different view—that all educational provision, and where power lies, must be balanced. We must have standards, collaboration and innovation, and we must give individual schools the capacity to support flexibility, but none of that is of any import if it is not backed up with resources and the capacity to deliver.

Liz Smith: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in her last 30 seconds.

Johann Lamont: On the importance of collaboration, John Swinney has had difficulty collaborating with local authorities. I urge him not to create a new structure that is answerable to him but rather to insist that people, working through our local authorities with democratic accountability, enhance and bring together the talent and ability across the educational world and in our families. I believe seriously and sincerely that his proposals will block that, and create a bureaucracy that does not work and denies the real problem, which is about the need to put resource and energy into the education system to support our young people.

15:49

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): In the Government's "Education Governance: Next Steps" document, this phrase sticks out for me:

"the responsibility of this Government is to work with our partners in local government to create the culture and capacity for teachers and practitioners to improve the learning outcomes in their classrooms."

Create the culture, give the capacity—that is what governance should do. The teaching and learning should be the domain of teachers and their headteachers as leaders in individual schools. They know what works and they need Government to give them the space and the right support and structures to allow them to do it. How will the governance reforms achieve that? For one thing, they will address individual schools' needs by entrusting key decisions to the headteacher, who best knows that school and its pupils, their families and their needs. A headteacher will be able to deploy their pupil equity fund in a way that works for their school. The headteachers who I have spoken to are already making plans for how they might use that additional funding. For

example, they might choose to spend it on an outdoor learning programme because they have seen the benefits that that provides for the children's learning—I am a big fan of outdoor learning programmes. They might wish to employ additional support specialists if they have a proportion of children in their care with those needs. They might want to purchase additional learning and teaching aids that the teachers have requested in order to help them improve the classroom experience. What to spend the fund money on will be for the headteacher to decide.

I have the great fortune to be from Aberdeenshire. I like to talk about how we are always ahead of the curve, and I am going to do that again now. I was astounded to learn that not all headteachers across Scotland are involved in choosing their own staff; in Aberdeenshire, they have always been involved in the recruitment and selection of their teachers, so that was news to me.

Daniel Johnson: Will the member take an intervention?

Gillian Martin: I am sorry; I do not have time.

The governance review calls for local authorities to get together in regional partnerships for children and family services.

Jeremy Balfour: Will the member take an intervention?

Gillian Martin: I do not have time; I have only five minutes.

Along with the other northern local authorities, Aberdeenshire led the way in setting up one such partnership, the northern alliance. It is working well and provides a model for those local authorities that have yet to form similar partnerships. The Green amendment talks about power being taken away from local authorities, but such partnerships do not do that; they are a way of sharing good practice across local authorities. The northern alliance comprises Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Highland Council, Moray Council, Orkney Islands Council, Shetland Islands Council and the Western Isles Council. Working together helps those councils to share specialist resources, to improve outcomes for children by sharing good practice and to work together and not compete against one another on staff recruitment.

One particular strong point of the alliance is the collaboration that it allows between headteachers, who have been coming together to reflect on their teaching and learning with one another and to discuss the impact that access to data is having on improvement. They have also done work on finding new ways of working in order to tackle workload, on keeping the family and child at the

heart of learning and on ensuring an effective evaluation of impact. That work is directly linked to closing the poverty and attainment gap, and those clusters are a model of a self-improving system.

The alliance also has teacher development days, which assist greatly in knowledge and resource sharing and in teachers' continuing professional development in primary stages and in secondary subject areas. Education directors and heads of services also collaborate at their level, agreeing vision and direction and giving support to teaching staff to allow them to make improvements in teaching practice. The early years and childcare teams are working together with the Scottish Futures Trust to focus on shared resource, planning and quality improvement work ahead of the increase in childcare resource for families in this session of Parliament.

Alliances work, and the governance review's recommendations are a step in the right direction, which is that of collaborative teamworking with teachers at its heart.

In an intervention, Alex Rowley expressed concerns about education budgets. I have seen at first hand how the local authority administration can impact on that. As members will know, until the last local authority election, the SNP was in alliance with Labour in Aberdeenshire. We pledged to keep the education budget as it was and pledged that there would be no cuts. Now, the new administration is cutting services, most recently the visiting specialist teachers service. That impacts on attainment and teachers' workloads. I am sorry to say that it will particularly affect the small rural schools in my area, which often have teaching heads and a limited number of classroom teachers, who rely on the extra experience of those visiting teachers.

We must ensure that, at a council level, no administration makes cuts to education services, and we must call out council administrations that do that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Tom Mason, to be followed by Colin Beattie. This is Mr Mason's first speech to the Parliament.

15:54

Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con): Thank you, Presiding Officer. First, I must declare an interest. I am currently still a councillor on Aberdeen City Council. However, for the avoidance of doubt, I will be donating my local government salary to two charities in Aberdeen.

Before I move on to the substantive subject of the debate, I would like to spend a little time on more personal matters. I congratulate my predecessor, Ross Thomson, on becoming a

member of Parliament. Ross, who was once also an Aberdeen councillor, will now take on the role of championing Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland down at Westminster. I also pay tribute to the late Alex Johnstone, a past stalwart of this Parliament, whose passing was a devastating loss not only to our party but to Scottish politics as a whole. [*Applause.*]

Those events and the magnificent success in getting so many Scottish Conservative candidates in the north-east elected as MPs, including two from our list, have allowed me to sit in the chamber today. It was most unexpected, but I am immensely pleased and honoured to be here. My welcome here has been profound, and I thank the chief executive and his staff for making my entry into the community of Holyrood such a pleasant experience, albeit that it has been bewildering at times. I also thank my colleagues and other MSPs across all the parties for their welcome.

Presiding Officer, you will notice that I am not in the first flush of youth, but over my 74 years I have learned many things. I have learned that my wife, Kate, is the most tolerant woman I know, having put up with me for 40-plus years. I have learned that my two dogs, Fingal and Bran, give me unconditional love, which I do not deserve. In addition, I have learned that the youth of today exhibit an energy and an enthusiasm for life, change and enterprise that is to be encouraged—and that includes my three children, who never cease to amaze me.

I have also learned that most people are honest and well meaning and that, at the end of the day, they just want to get on with their lives and to be well governed. Perhaps more important, however, I have learned that, for some people, life is just not very fair. It is up to us, in the chamber and elsewhere, to support those people as best we can.

The north-east of Scotland, and more specifically Aberdeen, has been my home for 45 years. The north-east is also home to whisky, oil, fish, agriculture and abundant tourism, and as such it is one of the beating hearts of the Scottish economy, so I ask the Scottish Government to look after us.

That brings me to the substantive issue of the debate. School governance is a matter that concerns everybody and one in which I have a particular interest as I have been involved in the education environment for some 25 years. As my colleagues Liz Smith and Jeremy Balfour have pointed out, maintaining the status quo in school governance is no longer an option for us. I am therefore very glad that John Swinney has finally begun to listen to what the Scottish Conservatives have been arguing on the issue for many years.

I am clear in my mind that we need to listen to what teachers and parents want for the education of children in their schools. However, I also believe that the reforms that were proposed in the recent governance review do not go far enough. The Government's proposals on regional collaboration do not allow for greater diversity in governance structures.

Presiding Officer, I thank you. [*Applause.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. There is nothing wrong with being a septuagenarian, by the way. [*Laughter.*]

15:58

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): Recent reports on Scotland's education system have displayed mixed results. The PISA study highlighted the declining performance in science and reading compared with 2012, and a deterioration in those subjects since 2006. Numeracy has seen a decline over 2011 to 2015, and similarly over 2012 to 2016. It is also clear from the PISA study that, despite the Scottish Government's efforts over the past decade, there is still an attainment gap between children from more and less deprived areas.

However, there are also high points to note. The number of higher passes has risen by almost 30 per cent since 2007, and passes at advanced level have risen by more than 42 per cent in the same period. More young people than ever are leaving school for positive destinations. In my constituency of Midlothian North and Musselburgh, it was reported last week that almost 93 per cent of Midlothian pupils went on to positive destinations in 2016, and the percentage in East Lothian is roughly the same. It seems clear from that that we are getting some things right, while other aspects need to be improved.

Last month, in order to better understand the issues, the Education and Skills Committee took evidence from 16 individuals who work in teaching in some capacity. The responses were highly informative. In all careers, employees have to be motivated through a maximum level of support and minimum levels of stress in order to be at their best, and teachers are no different. The individuals to whom the committee spoke made it clear that many issues can affect a teacher's morale. The lack of progression, development and promotion opportunities was highlighted. Headteachers spoke of burn-out in running a school, and of how colleagues who saw their headteacher under such pressure were deterred from seeking promotion. There were references to excessive paperwork, in particular as part of SQA inspections, and suggestions that there was a lack of trust in and

respect for teachers on the part of the SQA and Education Scotland.

The evidence from those interviews displayed that our teachers could be better supported, with the subsequent benefit of a higher-quality teaching environment for pupils across Scotland. When that is combined with information from the PISA study and elsewhere, the steps outlined in the Scottish Government's education governance review are, I believe, the right ones to strengthen our education system and to continue the positive work that has been done to date.

The bottom line of the review is that education will be centred on children and young people, and the system will be led by well-supported schools and teachers. Giving young people a voice in their learning is key to ensuring that teaching reflects the needs of those being taught. Therefore, the Government is taking steps to promote that voice by supporting all schools to encourage pupil participation. It intends to consult on requiring every school to pursue the key principles of such participation. In that way, children can take an active role in the running of their school, both from an educational perspective and in relation to engagement with the local community.

The National Parent Forum set out a range of recommendations for how to improve the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006, and those have helped to inform the next steps. There is an intention to strengthen the duties on schools to engage fully with parent councils, to expand the provisions in the 2006 act to involve parents from the early years setting onwards, and to make proposals on extending links between parent councils and pupils.

One point that has been strongly made throughout the governance review process relates to the importance of parental involvement with their child's education outwith school. Evidence from the PISA studies shows that, when parents are interested in a pupil's school activities, that child is more likely to want top grades and less likely to report dissatisfaction with their life choices.

I welcome the proposal to give every school access to a home-to-school link worker to ensure that families who need help with increasing the level of pupil engagement have that support. It will also allow more parents to become involved at a school development level, as well as supporting them at home. The Scottish Government is also reflecting on the National Parent Forum's non-legislative recommendations to see what other steps can be taken. I look forward to hearing proposals in that regard in the near future.

One of the fundamental principles guiding the governance review is that the people who are best

placed to make decisions about our children's learning are those professionals who are qualified to do so, including teachers, headteachers and local authority stakeholders. That follows the conclusion that the OECD reached after its examination of the evidence gathered by the PISA studies. The OECD stated:

"At the country level, the greater the number of schools that have the responsibility to define and elaborate their curricula and assessments, the better the performance of the entire school system".

I believe that the steps that are set out in the review of education governance are the right ones to bring Scotland's education back to where it rightly belongs—at the top of the global charts—and I look forward to seeing progress being made over the coming years.

16:04

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):

The issues and challenges that we face in education in Scotland have been well rehearsed and well aired today. We face challenges over literacy and numeracy, our international standing, resources and the pressure on teachers. In that context, of course we need reform; we need to look at what is going wrong and how we can put it right.

Where Labour agrees with the Government we will support its proposed changes. We agree with the proposals on career paths, targeted funding through the pupil equity fund, support for teaching and parental involvement in schools.

However, there are questions about the reforms. Johann Lamont put it very well when she said that there are questions around the assessment of the issues that we face, what they are and why they have come about. How the proposals will actually make an impact on or improve the situation is also far from clear—that has not been demonstrated so far.

I will focus my comments on the regional collaboratives—the central organisations and structures through which the Government will seek to drive its changes. To the extent that the collaboratives are about supporting teachers, their aims are laudable. We have lost some of the structures that we once had in our system. We have a range of local authorities in terms of size and scale, and some of them struggle to provide the same level of support that others provide. There has also been a loss of resource from teaching support.

The consultation showed that there is a lack of support for those regional structures. There are questions that we need to raise about the structure of what is being proposed. The cabinet secretary has stressed that the focus is on teacher-led

measures and on supporting teachers. However, we need to look at two things: the proposed structures, with regional directors who will be appointed by ministers and who will report to the chief inspector, who in turn is described as the chief education adviser to the cabinet secretary; and the form that the collaboration will take—it will be mandated by statute and it will be illegal for local authorities not to collaborate. When we do that, it is hard for us to conclude that the structures are anything other than top down and that, when we join the dots, it is not collaboration but centralisation.

There are further problems. The OECD pointed out the need to strengthen the middle and to support teachers. If we are going to expand the role of headteachers, they will indeed need that support, but no new resource is being proposed. We will simply be spreading existing resource yet more thinly.

The points that were raised by Ross Greer and Jeremy Balfour about local accountability were well made. What we see through the proposed structure is a loss of local accountability. We will have regions backed by central Government. In the face of that, it is difficult to see how schools and headteachers will be able to question and challenge input and discuss recommendations and advice that come with direct backing from the cabinet secretary and central Government.

Perhaps the most worrying and questionable proposition concerns the role of Education Scotland. That is where the bulk of the staff will come from—it will be Education Scotland staff who will manage the regional collaboratives. That will mean a hugely increased scope for Education Scotland, which will look after not only inspection and education policy but the practical guidance for and implementation of the policy. If it was questionable for Education Scotland to have an inspection and policy role, surely there are issues of huge concern about the blurred role between inspection and practical advice. What capacity will headteachers have to say no to a regional director who that headteacher knows is employed by Education Scotland—the self-same organisation that might well knock on the door the very next day to conduct an inspection?

As members have pointed out, the evidence provided to the Education and Skills Committee questions the effectiveness of Education Scotland itself. Indeed, John Swinney's very first act on taking up his role was to slash the guidance—guidance for which Education Scotland was responsible.

On the issues with literacy and numeracy, there are key questions for the central institutions of education policy regarding the implementation and design of curriculum for excellence. However,

Education Scotland has not had its role analysed; instead, it has been rewarded and its role has been enhanced.

Furthermore, there has been no analysis of the role of the SQA, the curriculum for excellence management board or any of the other bodies. Such analysis has been sorely lacking, despite the cabinet secretary's assertions over the year that the governance review would address the shortcomings and issues that have been identified.

Unfortunately, although there is indeed a need for change, the problem with the reforms is that they do not assess what the issues are. They do not consider the ways in which we can address attainment issues or assess the impact of curriculum for excellence. Most important, they make no analysis of the impact of falling resource levels through funding cuts. Without that analysis, they cannot be supported, because simply reorganising will not fix any of the issues.

16:09

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): I congratulate Tom Mason on his first speech. Regardless of his advancing years, we will no doubt be hearing from him for years to come.

Some members will be aware that I was on the Education and Culture Committee in the previous session. I have not spoken in an education debate for some time. Some of my colleagues might say that that is an improvement, but I would like to think that there are some people out there who think that I still have something to contribute.

I am aware that a lot of great work is happening in education across Scotland, but we have to move on, look to the future and see how we can do better. There is much in the Scottish Government's document, "Education Governance: Next Steps", that I find quite familiar from my time on the committee. The most significant point is that education should be centred round teachers, parents and, most importantly, our children and young people. The document also notes the importance of decisions being made as locally as possible. The new statutory powers will produce a headteachers charter, which will cover choosing school staff, deciding curriculum content within the broad national framework, and directly controlling more school funding.

During my time on the Education and Culture Committee, an argument that came up constantly was that, for any system to be successful, there needs to be parental buy-in. Parents need to take an active role in the school community, and we need to encourage that. Not all parents take an active role in school life, but time and again we see the difference that that type of involvement can make to a young person's educational

attainment. However, it is important that pupils are empowered as well. That is why I welcome the Scottish Government's plan for strengthening and enhancing parent councils, and for every school to have a teacher or professional responsible for promoting parental, family and community engagement.

Joanna Murphy, chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland, said:

"We are extremely pleased that Mr Swinney has announced an intention to consult on amendments to the Parental Involvement Act as part of the forthcoming Education Bill; we would welcome the introduction of a bill that modernises, extends and strengthens the legislative framework on parental engagement."

That is a very important point. I believe that we have talked about school communities, or about schools being part of our community, for far too long, but—as with a lot of other things—schools have not been quite as proactive in our communities as we would have liked. Schools need to be the centre of our communities. I believe that, by ensuring that decisions are made in the local school community and by teachers locally, we can help to promote that engagement and empower parents, teachers and young people.

As a former councillor on Renfrewshire Council and member of the council's education committee, I know the importance of local democratic accountability. I see that the proposals still offer that accountability through our local authorities, but the regional improvement collaboratives give people the opportunity to work together, which local authorities have not been great at. We have talked about the issue for a long time, but they have not been good at sharing best practice and ensuring that we get information out there.

We need to strengthen support for teachers and share best practice, and I have supported the idea of a body that would do that for some time. During my time on the Scottish Parliament's Education and Culture Committee, and during my time on Renfrewshire Council, there was much talk of the sharing of best practice, but there have been few examples of that happening. I believe that that is where the proposal can become something exciting and transformational. By building up networks in local authorities and opening up communication between educationists, people can find out quickly who is doing what and where, and what the results have been, and they can share that best practice. Nothing in life stays still and I believe that such a structure can be a catalyst for new ideas and further strategic thinking. The fact that teachers will be supported by attainment experts and that there will be a pool of talent available for headteachers to choose from is a step in the right direction.

It is not about reinventing the wheel. There is a lot of great work happening out in our local authorities, which will continue to be the employers, providing human resources and other support services. Most important, the democratic accountability will remain with councils for the schools in their areas and for the appointment of new headteachers.

I have worked with a number of headteachers. In the Renfrewshire Council area, around four senior headteachers are leaving. David Nicholls, the headteacher of Gleniffer high school, is retiring after 40 years in teaching. When we speak of leadership and headteachers, I automatically think of people such as him. David has been involved in education so long that he was at the school when my wife, Stacey, was a pupil. Replacing such expertise can be challenging for local authorities, but, by using many of its proposed powers, the Scottish Government will encourage the right people to aspire to the role of headteacher. It is all about what can be done to change young people's lives and giving them the tools so that they can do that. That relates to the Scottish Government's £750 million attainment programme, which includes £120 million this year for pupil equity funding that will go direct to headteachers.

It is early days, but I think that the Scottish Government has provided us with a positive place to start looking at ways in which we can share best practice, engage with parents and ensure that our children have opportunities to achieve all they can in their school life.

16:14

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I declare an interest as my daughter is a secondary school teacher, and I congratulate Tom Mason on his first speech in this chamber.

I welcome the direction of travel for school governance that John Swinney has indicated today and I recognise that it has long been championed by Liz Smith and her team on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives. It is refreshing that, every now and again, the Government takes ideas from parties around the chamber, even if the source of the inspiration for change remains officially undisclosed. Mr Swinney will be happy to know that the Scottish Conservatives magnanimously accept our part in helping the Scottish Government to shape its thinking.

The cross-party agreement is positive, but the cabinet secretary's proposals do not go nearly as far as we would like. Perhaps we should describe the plans as being similar to the standard of a certain low-cost airline: they promise to go somewhere, but they land some distance away from the place we would expect, with onward

travel still required to get to the destination we desire.

Members would be surprised if I did not take a moment to discuss the pupil equity fund and its potential uses in areas such as outdoor learning. In many ways, the fund is a reflection of the cabinet secretary's wider reform agenda: the proposal at its core is a sound one, but it remains to be seen whether it will do what is intended. The cabinet secretary has expressed his support before in the chamber for using equity funding to support provisions such as outdoor learning and, importantly, transport costs for school trips. Several conversations with bodies such as the National Trust for Scotland and RSPB Scotland have highlighted the decline in the number of schools visiting their sites in recent years; the most common reason given is the cost of transport.

Outdoor learning, or time that is spent learning outside the classroom, can have benefits for learning inside the classroom. Physical activity leads to improved focus, and fresh air and physical fitness benefit mental health and concentration. Some people question whether that is the best use of time and funds, but those are people who see education as pupils sitting neatly in rows in a classroom all day and every day. However, how best to deploy the funds for the benefit of their charges should be a decision for teachers.

As has been expressed, the regional improvement collaboratives might add another layer of bureaucracy. There is an uncomfortable sense that the creation of the collaboratives means that schools will swap one point of central control for another, so it is important that we understand how close to the school the decision-making process will be. As is often the case with politics, it is not necessarily the policy itself but its implementation that defines its impact.

With that in mind, the proposals seem to call for Education Scotland to be both referee and player when it comes to curriculum development, as Tavish Scott mentioned. How does the cabinet secretary expect Education Scotland to be seen as an impartial auditor of the curriculum when it bears some of the responsibility for its creation?

Like Liz Smith, I will highlight Newlands junior college as an example of a greater autonomous approach and a demonstration of what can be done when new ideas and innovation are allowed into education to address a problem. I was pleased to visit the college last year to see at first hand what it is doing. It takes disenfranchised young people and helps them to find purpose and direction. Ultimately, those young people go on to positive destinations and they input positively into their communities. Nobody is suggesting that the

same idea should be applied across the country, but it does not have to be—that is the beauty of offering greater autonomy. We need specific solutions to address specific local problems.

There is a need for a pragmatic approach and to do what works, instead of following the constant desire for a uniquely Scottish solution. The challenges in the Scottish education system are not unique to Scotland; other nations have experienced them and acted. We know what works but, instead of taking a big, bold leap, we are presented with a watered-down alternative. We have decaff autonomy—it has the same appearance, but not enough kick.

What our education system needs more than anything is innovation. Giving schools greater autonomy gives headteachers a greater opportunity to try new things and to tailor their approach to the particular circumstances of their pupils and staff. The world that pupils enter when they leave school continues to evolve. The curriculum for excellence appears to recognise that the range of skills that pupils need when they leave school has changed significantly, particularly in an economy where people are now considerably less likely to have the same job for the duration of their working lives.

I will conclude with a quotation from Friedrich Nietzsche:

“The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently.”

We need to think differently. Every student is an individual. Teachers and headteachers need headroom and flexibility to get the best out of their pupils and ensure that youngsters have every opportunity to succeed.

16:20

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I declare an interest as I am a board member of the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre. I also congratulate Tom Mason on his maiden speech in Parliament. I empathise with his comments about his dogs and his wife. I have only one dog but, as someone who has lived for 20 years with a now-retired teacher and union rep, I feel that I have a unique insight into today's proceedings.

In the short time I have, I will concentrate on the funding issues that have been talked about this afternoon. We should remember that the “Education Governance: Fair Funding to Achieve Excellence and Equity in Education” consultation document is out at the moment, and I encourage people to contribute to it.

In his opening remarks, the cabinet secretary said that we are clear that, if we are to deliver transformational change to our education system, it must be underpinned by fair and transparent funding that puts schools at the heart of decision making. The way in which we fund schools needs to recognise the crucial role of the school and support the collaborative and flexible culture that we are seeking to develop.

We must also remember that, in 2014, the Accounts Commission published a report that suggested that it was how local authorities decided to spend their education budgets rather than the overall spending that had the most impact on attainment levels. Getting the funding to the people who are most in need is what matters.

That is what the governance review is all about. It is about school and teacher-led education with the pupil at its centre, and with the decisions about those pupils being taken by those closest to them.

In order to talk about the future and where we might go with this, I have to talk about what is happening right now in my local area. North Lanarkshire Council, a Labour administration that is being supported by the Tories, attempted to divert PEF funding from the control of their headteachers and use it to backfill some of their own education cuts. Thankfully, the Government prevented that but the result is that 198 classroom assistant posts have been lost from North Lanarkshire, which has had a devastating impact on the schools and pupils affected by the decision.

For years, we heard it said over and over again in the chamber that the council tax freeze was underfunded. I refuted that claim and, of course, in his previous role, the cabinet secretary also refuted it. When the local authorities were given the opportunity to raise the council tax by up to 3 per cent to fund such services, North Lanarkshire Council was one of those that chose not to do so.

We want headteachers to have the autonomy to determine how PEF is used to tackle difficult and persistent attainment problems, and for them to be able to focus on the key business of learning and teaching. The development of a fair, more consistent, transparent and targeted method of allocating funding would be to the benefit of all our pupils.

The Government's document contains two options. One is a legislative, more standardised and Scotland-wide approach to allocating the maximum amount of funding directly to schools, and the second is to build on the success of the pupil equity funding approach, targeting a greater proportion of funding directly to schools and basing it on the specific needs and factors that are known to impact on performance and outcomes.

The majority of school funding will continue to be channelled through local authorities—democratic accountability will not be impacted by the proposals—which will continue to have a role in ensuring that public resources for education are properly accounted for.

Iain Gray: Will the member take an intervention?

Clare Adamson: I am sorry; I do not have time today.

Specifically, the new regime will be consistent and transparent.

Empowering headteachers to focus on the key business of learning and teaching is imperative. They must have the autonomy. They will be consulted on developing and moving forward—the headteachers charter will be developed in consultation with headteachers—and they will be able to benefit from regional support and collaboration to make sure that throughout Scotland, all our headteachers have support and advice to ensure excellence in curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): We move to the closing speeches. I am disappointed to note that not all members who have spoken in the debate are present for the beginning of the closing speeches.

16:25

Tavish Scott: I do not entirely blame them, Presiding Officer.

I congratulate Tom Mason on his first speech in the Scottish Parliament—he is not here, but there we are—and his very kind words, which those of us who knew Alex Johnstone for a long time will entirely relate to.

Given that we are trying to have a debate about young people, I would like to mention 17-year-old Seumas Mackay who, last night, won the 800m at the island games. I mention it because he beat an athlete whom Brian Whittle used to coach.

Brian Whittle: He won it before.

Tavish Scott: I could not resist that. Even worse, Liam McArthur was there to watch it rather than me.

This is an important debate for two reasons. First, Liz Smith, Iain Gray, Daniel Johnson and many others across Parliament have recognised that there is merit in the proposals that the cabinet secretary and the Government are making—as do I. However, although many of us accept that there is some merit, there are also concerns, which are principally based on the evidence heard by the Education and Skills Committee over the previous

year. I hope that Mr Swinney will accept that many members are being entirely consistent in the points that we made about those concerns, particularly in relation to Education Scotland. That is the basis of the questions that we are asking the Government today. As Johann Lamont is right to say, do not shoot the messenger, but at least recognise the concerns that have been raised over some time.

There are significant challenges for Scottish education. Members of all political persuasions have set those out. I am sure that the Government accepts—perhaps privately—the teacher vacancies situation, the need for more classroom assistants, the pressure on additional support needs, the financial pressures on classrooms and the attractiveness of the teaching profession to undergraduates and to people thinking of changing profession. Those are all really significant issues that need to be constantly worked on, which is why I made the point about the national improvement plan and the importance of Parliament regularly keeping on top of what is happening.

Jenny Gilruth was right and many members will agree about the importance of visiting schools—in my view, the best part of the job—and listening carefully to classroom teachers, subject teachers and headteachers. I am sure that I am not the only member to note that those teachers have consistently said that implementing curriculum for excellence, the change to the exam structure and the workload pressures are the three aspects of education and their jobs that have come at them so significantly and consistently over the past year. That is why many of us have sought to make the point about being realistic about the challenge that Scottish education faces.

I want to be clear about my support for the direction of travel and for schools being at the heart of any reforms, and the importance of the right support around schools to allow that to happen. Many of us have made the case for school clusters and that structure, which can and does work very effectively.

Gillian Martin made the point about the northern alliance and its role. She was right in her argument. My point to the cabinet secretary in that context—we will debate this issue in the autumn when Parliament resumes and after he has given us further clarity—is that his proposals, if I read them correctly, are for a mandatory regional structure and a mandatory responsibility on local government to collaborate in those regional structures, yet the northern alliance appears to be a structure that is working very effectively without any need to make it mandatory. As Johann Lamont has put it and as others have said in committee, there needs to be evidence to back up

the suggestion that not all is working effectively in different parts of Scotland. The evidence might be there; it is for the cabinet secretary to lay it out to the Education and Skills Committee and the Parliament.

I want to reflect on the case for reform of Education Scotland. Bob Doris rightly said that those of us who argue for reform need to set out our proposals, which is entirely fair. I have believed for many months that Education Scotland is a conflicted organisation, given the two quite distinct roles and responsibilities it has. It was difficult for Bill Maxwell, the previous chief executive, to come along to the committee and to hold together that inherent contradiction. I hope that his successor—whoever Mr Swinney appoints in the fullness of time—will not have to do the same. That is why many of us have made the case for sensible and constructive reform, which is about supporting schools, rather than leaving in place a situation that I do not believe provides the right form of challenge to bring about the improvement that we are all demonstrably in favour of achieving.

James Dornan, in his capacity as convener of the Education and Skills Committee, made a strong argument about teachers responding to the proposals and speaking to the committee. That has had merit in the past and I believe it has strong merit in the context of reviewing the proposals.

Brian Whittle said of the reforms that it is not just the policy but the implementation that matters. That indeed will be the test of what is being proposed.

16:31

Ross Greer: As others have done, I congratulate Tom Mason on having made his first speech in the chamber. The sense of privilege in being here and having the opportunity to make speeches has certainly not worn off for me after more than a year in the job.

The Greens are open to working with the Government to improve Scottish education, even though we believe that the proposals are fundamentally misguided. Although we oppose the general direction of the reforms, I will highlight some areas where we can work with the Government—or where, at least, we believe we can do so.

Initial teacher education needs to improve and to become more consistent, in particular in areas such as equipping teachers to support pupils with additional support needs. I do not underestimate how difficult it will be to do that while respecting the independence of our universities, but I look

forward to seeing what the Scottish Government proposes.

I agree that routes for career development need to be improved. I regularly hear feedback from teachers who wish to progress their careers without making an immediate leap into management, as Jenny Gilruth highlighted.

Members will be aware of my particular insistence that support for pupils with additional support needs has to improve significantly. As our understanding of additional support needs has developed, so has our ability to identify pupils who need extra support. We now recognise that one in four Scottish pupils has an additional support need, although there is a range—from very low levels of support being needed for pupils with mild dyslexia, to high levels of support being needed for pupils with more significant learning disabilities or physical disabilities.

The nationwide figure is one in four, but the figure varies considerably from one local authority to another. The figure is less than one in 10 in South Ayrshire and more than one in three in the Highlands, and the variation is too high to be natural. It has also become clear that there must be enhanced quality-assurance procedures for provision of additional support needs. When considering the enhanced role for Education Scotland—or, preferably, for a distinct inspectorate—thought must be given to whether and how support for additional needs is being provided, and how inspections can properly assess that to ensure that there is not a postcode lottery for proper support.

Even if those issues are addressed, that will not tackle the most pressing challenges for Scottish education, which are, as the Government's consultation responses summary notes, budget cuts and staff-related issues including workload.

The Government now faces the result of 10 years of budget cuts. We could spend—and have spent—more than one afternoon debating where the cuts came from and whether they are fair, but I would rather look to what we can do now. We have the tax-raising and financial powers to put money back into education. It is a matter of political choice if we do not use them and instead see a growing number of cuts in teachers and support staff.

The Greens will support the Labour amendment—especially given the point that it makes about restoring budgets and staff numbers. Bob Doris asked which reforms the Greens would support. We support an evidence-led approach and we simply do not see the evidence for wholesale structural reforms—it is certainly not in the Government's documents. However, one reform that we would support is the ending of

Education Scotland's inherent conflict of interests, through the creation of a separate independent inspectorate. We will therefore support the Liberal Democrat amendment.

Bob Doris: Does Ross Greer support the proposal on who makes final decisions on employing teachers? Headteachers can be restricted in respect of whether they can award permanent contracts in that they have sometimes to accept surplus teachers from elsewhere in the local authority area, rather than make positive and proactive choices by appointing teachers themselves. Would Mr Greer consider movement on that?

Ross Greer: We have significant concerns about the proposal to move employment responsibility to headteachers. I have lodged a number of written questions on that and would like to come back to it in a future debate, once I have had answers to those questions. At this point, we are not minded to support the proposal.

Members may recall that the last time he brought it to the chamber we did not support Tavish Scott's proposal to separate the roles of Education Scotland, but we did pledge to consider the suggestion seriously. We have done that now, and we believe that the argument has merit.

Gillian Martin mentioned the Green amendment and refuted our suggestion that the proposals will take power away from councils. Councils strongly disagree—and they are right. We cannot pretend that moving powers down to overburdened headteachers and up to unaccountable regional structures will leave councils with the same responsibilities as they had before. They will have significantly less power and responsibility, but they are the democratically accountable bodies. A particular concern that has been raised with me is the priority that will be given to Gaelic-medium education, if local government is to have a weakened role. I hope that the Scottish Government will take that on board.

The problem in the process so far has been that the Scottish Government has not taken on board concerns and feedback. Jenny Gilruth rightly asked us to go out and speak to teachers, but teachers have spoken—quite clearly—directly to the Government throughout the consultation. The Government's documents note the overwhelming opposition to the proposals, but it will carry on regardless.

The Scottish Government cannot claim that it does not know what the problems are. From the consultation, from multiple reports from the Education and Skills Committee and from work that has been undertaken by teaching unions and others, the problems of budget cuts, staff reductions and workload are clear. We can fix

them, but the proposals do not aim to do so. They will instead take us in a direction of travel with which the Conservatives may be comfortable, but too many people who have significant stakes in education—teachers, parents, pupils, educationists and professional bodies—are simply not comfortable with it. Neither are we. The Scottish Government needs to think again if it is serious about improving Scottish education and not simply centralising its control over it.

The Greens will oppose the Government's motion.

16:37

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I extend Scottish Labour's congratulations to Tom Mason on his election and on having made his first speech in this important debate.

In his opening remarks, Mr Swinney said that he wants a world-class education system. Who would disagree? We have heard today that there is consensus around the need for change in order to improve standards in the education system, and to give our young learners the opportunities that they deserve. Things cannot go on as they are.

In moving the amendment in his name, Iain Gray explained why Scottish Labour believes that the status quo just will not do. We fundamentally disagree with the cabinet secretary's diagnosis and prescription. Unlike the Tories, we will not support the Scottish Government motion, and we will certainly not support the Tory amendment.

The cabinet secretary's consultation was a golden opportunity to listen with an open mind to what people who are working in our school communities have to say, and to develop a reform package that is based on what they know will work, rather than on what will not.

When my daughter—who, unlike Jenny Gilruth, is not a fan of homework and who, like the cabinet secretary, would like to make it go away—was at nursery school, the early years teacher used to encourage the class to put their "listening ears" on. That is a lesson that would have served the Scottish Government well. If the responses to the consultation had been properly listened to, we would be having a very different debate today.

Ross Greer made the points very well that the reforms have clearly been opposed and that there is no evidence to back up the plan on which the cabinet secretary has settled. Simply moving the existing education resource around without delivering the urgent investment that is required to support learning in the classroom will contribute nothing to closing the attainment gap.

We heard from Alex Rowley about the impact of cuts. The pupil equity fund has been much

welcomed, but it amounts only to spin if there is no honesty about the deep cuts that have already been enforced. Nothing in the proposals directly addresses the key concerns that were raised in the consultation process: staffing issues and budget cuts are the key barriers to educational improvement.

Despite the spin, the focus of the reforms is structural and centralising. The creation of an overarching education council that is directly answerable to the Government, with regional directors being appointed by the cabinet secretary, will lead only to removal of local accountability and to more bureaucracy, which is the exact opposite of what is intended. Therefore, the cabinet secretary should stop, listen and reset his plans.

The Government has had a decade in power: it has had 10 privileged years to look after the education of our children and to give them the best possible start, but in those 10 years we have seen falling education budgets and falling attainment. That begs the question: where are the progressive SNP voices? Who in the SNP is speaking out about the underlying issue of inadequate resources? Who in the SNP is prepared to admit that imposing unnecessary bureaucratic reform will not raise standards or close the attainment gap? Our children will—again—continue to pay the price.

The facts speak for themselves. There are 4,000 fewer teachers, 1,000 fewer support staff and even bigger class sizes than was the case when the Government came to power. Spending per pupil across all ages is down since 2012.

James Dornan: Will the member take an intervention?

Monica Lennon: Mr Dornan would not take my intervention. I do not know whether he will be wearing his convener's hat or his member's hat, but I gladly give way.

James Dornan: I ask this question with my member's hat on. Will Monica Lennon clarify for me whose responsibility it is to hire and fire teachers and support staff?

Monica Lennon: Mr Dornan had an opportunity earlier, when he used the privilege of his position as convener of the Education and Skills Committee to make a speech, to be honest about the debate that we are having. He switches between his hats incredibly neatly.

What we need to close the attainment gap is urgent investment in our classrooms and our schools. I think that Mr Dornan would agree with that, if he was prepared to be honest. That is how we will deliver high-quality pupil-centred learning. We need more teaching staff.

The reforms largely appear to offer nothing more than a bureaucratic top-down restructuring of the system, which will have little effect on helping our teachers to do their job on the ground. Daniel Johnson made an excellent point: where is the analysis of the impact of falling resources? With not a single extra teacher or a single extra penny being promised to deliver the reforms, it is difficult to see how the system-based reforms will remedy the problems of resources, teacher numbers and teacher time.

We welcome from the reforms the opportunity for enhanced career development opportunities for teachers, the delivery of the pupil equity fund and the emphasis on parental involvement by enhancing family learning, and the role of home-school link workers. I have previously asked the cabinet secretary in the chamber for more information on how many home-school link workers will be recruited. Any update that he can provide would be appreciated.

The reforms offer significant new powers for headteachers, but we need clarity on the scope and scale of the new powers, as the headteacher charter progresses.

Without clear guidelines on accountability and responsibility for providing human resources support, the changes—I hope that Mr Dornan is listening—will place even more risk and burden on our teachers, rather than reducing them. There are a number of former teachers in the chamber who should be alive to those risks.

Additionally, any procurement—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close, Ms Lennon.

Monica Lennon: Finally, Presiding Officer, we have entered into this discussion about how to reform our education system because we all want to tackle the attainment gap. We are seeing, in black and white, that the responses to the Government's consultation have largely been ignored.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Lennon, you must close.

Monica Lennon: The cabinet secretary needs to ditch the plans and then urgently return to Parliament with the concerns of teachers, parents—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Lennon, you must close.

Monica Lennon: —and educationists addressed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I call Graham Simpson. You have no more than seven minutes, please.

16:43

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I too, praise Tom Mason for his maiden speech. I also congratulate him for bucking a trend in the chamber and being well within time. I am sure that that will not catch on.

Way back in March 2013, the commission on school reform published a detailed document “By diverse means: improving Scottish education.” Headed by Keir Bloomer and consisting of cross-party representation—I was the Conservative rep—as well as experts who had no party baggage, it was a serious attempt to suggest ways in which we could improve Scotland’s educational performance. Nothing has happened since to do that; we have got worse.

Our paper started with two quotations. The first, from the French philosopher Montaigne, was:

“By diverse means we arrive at the same end.”

The second, from General George S Patton, was:

“Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.”

In other words, we should trust people to do a job and allow them to do it in different ways. It was clear then and it is clear now that the education system in Scotland is too uniform. That might not be the case for Labour, whose position in the debate has been unclear; it is even more unclear following Monica Lennon’s speech.

Daniel Johnson *rose*—

Graham Simpson: That excessive uniformity is why the Scottish Conservatives have been arguing for years that we need greater diversity in the system and that we need properly to empower headteachers. On that point, it is good to see that the SNP has finally arrived at the table—it is talking about autonomy, leaving teachers free to teach and involving parents more—but, of course, the devil is always in the detail. When we look at the detail, things start to unravel.

The background, as Liz Smith, John Swinney and Colin Beattie have all said, is that our educational performance is in the “See me after school” category. Our standing internationally has declined since the SNP came to power. That was highlighted by last year’s PISA scores, which Liz Smith recounted. We learned only at the weekend that more than half of school leavers last year did not have a maths qualification at national 5 or above. If education really was the SNP Government’s top priority, we would not be in this position.

The commission on school reform argued that future improvement would be achieved only by promoting increased variety in the system, and that the way to achieve that would be to increase

the autonomy of schools. But what is autonomy? John Swinney uses the word, but I wonder whether he understands it or wants it. “Autonomy” is

“freedom from external control or influence”,

or the right of an organisation to govern itself. That would mean, for example, schools being able to commission services from whomever they chose. That would be genuine autonomy.

Is that what John Swinney is proposing? The answer is no. If someone wanted to design a system that was more bureaucratic and centralised than the one that we have now, they would have to look no further than the cabinet secretary’s blueprint. If John Swinney was a localism proponent, he would be saying to the parents of pupils at St Joseph’s primary in Milngavie that they were free, if they wanted to do so, to make their school autonomous from state control, but he is not. He would not be setting up an extra layer of governance—the regional improvement collaboratives—which will be reportable and accountable not to locally elected members, but to him.

When I suggested to Mr Swinney in the chamber recently that that might be the arrangement, he denied it, but the evidence is in his own paper. In describing how the giant new bodies will be run, it says that they will be

“led by a Regional Director, to be appointed by the Scottish Government and provide a direct line of accountability for the performance of the regional improvement collaboratives to Ministers.”

So there we have it—John Swinney will appoint the regional directors and they will be answerable to him. Any pretence that the new structure is about empowering anyone other than John Swinney is—despite his earlier protestations—a smokescreen. Our children’s education is in the hands of Mr Swinney; woe betide anyone who steps out of line.

What will the new bodies—of which there will be up to seven—actually do? They will provide educational improvement support and produce an annual regional plan and an associated work programme. Councils will have to meet a new legislative duty to collaborate on certain functions.

What is left for local government in all this? It is being stripped of powers. Councils will be left with a few admin functions and HR. What is the point of having education committees any more or, as Jeremy Balfour said, education directors? There is no point.

Daniel Johnson, who wanted to intervene on me, rightly mentioned the loss of local accountability. He is entirely right: John Swinney talks about empowering headteachers, for which

the Scottish Conservatives have been calling for years. The generous Mr Swinney is going to allow them to choose their staff, to decide on curriculum content—which they can do anyway—and to have control over more, although not all, of their funding.

However, just in case anyone has any ideas above their station, Mr Swinney warns darkly in the same paper that

“The freedom for headteachers to choose the staffing mix and management structure within their schools could have implications for the national pupil-teacher ratio.”

That suggests to me that heads cannot decide on staffing numbers. That is not true autonomy—although Gillian Martin seems to think otherwise.

John Swinney wants to create a system in which schools will be answerable to two bodies and, ultimately, to him. He is stripping councils of powers and going down a regionalisation route; indeed, we can be certain that this is the route that the SNP wants to go down with council services, full stop. We need more autonomy and choice in schools, but this approach is not that. I hope that John Swinney is really prepared to listen to the many voices in the chamber.

16:50

John Swinney: I extend words of welcome to Tom Mason on his introduction to and first speech in Parliament, and I wish him well in the task to which he has committed himself of representing constituents in the north-east of Scotland. I also very much associate myself with his kind words about Alex Johnstone, a parliamentary colleague who displayed all the attributes of a fine parliamentarian in working with members across the political spectrum and who is dearly missed by all of us in Parliament.

Since I became the education secretary, 12 months ago, the one thing that has been crystal clear to me is that there is a diversity of opinion about what to do in education, and that diversity has been on display this afternoon. [*Laughter.*] That was not meant to be a funny remark, although I appreciate my natural hilarity in the chamber; it is a statement of the reality of the debate that there is no true holy grail of what is absolutely the right thing to do. That is why I said in my opening remarks that the Government is interested in working with others to address the issues contained in the governance review.

I gently point out to the Conservatives that there is a bit of a natural contradiction between some of the arguments that Graham Simpson and Jeremy Balfour marshalled and those that were marshalled by Brian Whittle and Liz Smith. Brian Whittle and Liz Smith argued strongly for giving ever more power to headteachers—indeed, much

more power than is envisaged under the review. Naturally, that power would have to come from somewhere, and that would be local authorities. On the other hand, Graham Simpson and Jeremy Balfour argued for the preservation of local authority power and responsibility. I am all for diversity of opinion, but I point out to Parliament that reconciling what has been argued by the Conservative Party front bench would be a bit of a challenge even for me.

Graham Simpson: I can clarify for Mr Swinney that we are saying that the creation of these new regional bodies amounts to greater centralisation, not autonomy. Headteachers will be answerable to regional bodies, not locally accountable elected members.

John Swinney: I will talk about the regional collaboratives in a second.

The accusation—or, I should say, the inference—that has been made is that I do not listen to teachers or members of the teaching profession. However, I want to make it clear to Parliament that, on my frequent visits to schools around the country, I spend a significant amount of time speaking privately to and listening to teachers, headteachers and members of the profession, and many of the issues that teachers have raised with me are the reasons for the proposals that are before Parliament today.

Despite all the differences of opinion, there is a lot of agreement in the chamber, and one area of agreement relates to the Government's commitment to empowering teachers and headteachers and putting schools at the heart of the reforms. Those sentiments have been expressed powerfully to me by teachers.

Iain Gray: We had that discussion before, when the Education and Skills Committee gathered evidence from teachers. The cabinet secretary dismissed that evidence and said that he had spoken to teachers and that they agreed with him. The Government's own formal consultation process now disagrees with him, but he posits to us the idea that all the teachers whom he speaks to on his visits support what he is doing. Can he not see that that is not a valid way to govern?

John Swinney: People cannot accuse me of not listening to teachers and at the same time accuse me of listening to teachers, which is precisely what I am doing in the process.

Let us turn to some other areas of agreement, including the issues around regional collaboratives. Iain Gray said that he can see merit in the regional collaboratives providing educational improvement services. That is their purpose. Johann Lamont made the case—I think that I heard her correctly; if I misrepresent what she said, she can correct me—for requiring

collaboration between local authorities. That point was made powerfully by George Adam, who said that local authorities have not been good at sharing best practice. The northern alliance, which Mr Scott talked about, is a voluntary collaboration that I welcome, but it is the only effective collaboration in the country.

I receive advice, as Parliament does, from Education Scotland and the Accounts Commission, both of which have highlighted weaknesses in educational improvement services that are offered at the local authority level. The regional collaboratives are an attempt by me to address those issues and ensure that every school in the country, no matter where it is, has access to regional improvement services.

Johann Lamont: I do not accept the characterisation that there is no collaboration. In fact, I go back far enough to remember the regional councils, where there were good examples of liberation at the local level and work across councils. We have a problem because of the fragmented nature of local authorities.

My point is that the model that the cabinet secretary has produced is highly bureaucratic. It hurts the brain even to read about what it does. We should be working to people's best instincts to work together, and there is already a lot of good practice.

John Swinney: I agree with the sentiments that underlie Johann Lamont's intervention. I want to see liberation at the local level in schools, but I also want to see collaboration on best practice across a wider canvas. That does not currently exist in sufficient abundance or sufficient depth. That is not just my opinion; it is the assessment of Education Scotland and the Accounts Commission.

It is clear that there is agreement today on parental involvement—the National Parent Forum of Scotland has warmly welcomed our proposals on that—and on career progression pathways. I take from the debate that there is substantial agreement on the details, but I accept that there are issues to be addressed relating to regional collaboratives and the role of Education Scotland—particularly those issues that are raised in Tavish Scott's amendment. That is why I set out in my opening remarks that we will not have top-down regional collaboration or shift power towards ministers. That is not what we want.

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): Will the Deputy First Minister outline how his school governance plans will build momentum around Gaelic-medium education? It is, of course, right to put more money and power into the hands of schools and teachers.

John Swinney: That will remain a key responsibility of local authorities as part of the process. We set out in "Education Governance: Next Steps" the important role that we expect local authorities to take in strengthening and developing those aspects of educational practice.

I made the point that we will not have top-down regional collaboration.

Iain Gray: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

John Swinney: If Mr Gray will forgive me, I must draw my remarks to a close.

I also clarified that education policy will be the responsibility of the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government owns the responsibility for education policy. That responsibility is not owned by Education Scotland; it is owned by me as the responsible cabinet secretary. I have no problem with Tavish Scott's amendment, because we will satisfactorily address those issues.

I am sorry that I could not take an intervention from Mr Gray. He accused me of wanting to run schools from St Andrew's house and of not trusting teachers. I put on the record that I have no desire to run schools from St Andrew's house and that I have every desire to trust teachers. That is why I am bringing forward proposals to empower teachers and the teaching profession.

I want to see an active, all-systems approach to improving the capacity and capability of Scottish education for one important purpose: to transform the life chances of every young person in our country. That is at the heart of the proposals that we have brought forward, and that is why the Government will talk to interested parties about how we can advance from the level of agreement in Parliament today in order to take forward and implement those reforms.

Code of Conduct for MSPs and Written Statement Revision

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of motion S5M-06346, on the code of conduct for members, and motion S5M-06347, on the interests of members. I call Clare Adamson to speak to and move the motions on behalf of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

17:00

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee has reviewed the “Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament” and the written statement form that members are required to complete when they register interests. We felt that the code could be more streamlined and user friendly, and we wished to avoid the confusion that sometimes arises between what constitutes an enforceable rule of the code and what is provided as guidance and best practice.

I am happy to reassure members that none of the rules in the code has been altered or removed, although the wording of some has been altered where we felt that that could provide greater clarity. Our report “Code of Conduct for MSPs and Written Statement Revisions” sets out the recommended changes. We propose that the existing four-volume structure be replaced with a single code of conduct document that is as succinct as possible, and a companion guidance document.

The new format of the code means that the determination by which Parliament agreed the format and content of the written statement needs to be updated. We also took the opportunity to make some minor textual changes to the form so that it reflects more closely the legislation that governs registration of interests. The new written statement form appears in annexe B of the committee’s report. All MSPs have been consulted on the revised determination, as required by standing orders.

As ever, members will be able to seek advice from the standards clerks on all matters relating to the code of conduct and the register of interests.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to amend the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament by making the alterations set out in Annexe A of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee’s 7th Report 2017 (Session 5), *Code of Conduct for MSPs and Written Statement Revisions* (SP Paper 174) with effect from 30 August 2017.

That the Parliament, in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 4(1) and 4(2) of the Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Act 2006 (asp 12)—

makes the Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Act 2006 (Form and Content of Written Statement) Determination 2017 as set out in Annexe B of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee’s 7th Report 2017 (Session 5), Code of Conduct for MSPs and Written Statement Revisions (SP Paper 174);

revokes the Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Act 2006 (Form and Content of Written Statement) Determination 2016; and

provides that these changes shall have effect from 30 August 2017.

Business Motions

17:02

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motions S5M-06423, S5M-06424 and S5M-06425, which set out a business programme and the timetables for two bills at stage 1.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 5 September 2017

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 6 September 2017

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Finance and Constitution;
Economy, Jobs and Fair Work

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 7 September 2017

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.45 pm Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 12 September 2017

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 13 September 2017

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Environment, Climate Change and Land
Reform;
Rural Economy and Connectivity

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 14 September 2017

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.45 pm Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 1 December 2017.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Islands (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be completed by 9 February 2018.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motions agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:03

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of seven Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the bureau, to move motions S5M-06426, S5M-06427 and S5M-06428, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments; motions S5M-06429 and S5M-06430, on designation of lead committees; and motions S5M-06434 and S5M-06435, on committee membership and substitution on committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 (Agreements of a Specified Kind) Regulations 2017 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Registration of Independent Schools (Prescribed Person) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (Additional Amount-Second Homes Main Residence Relief) (Scotland) Order 2017 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Security Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Social Security (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the following changes apply from close of business on Thursday 29 June 2017—

Graham Simpson be appointed to replace John Scott as a member of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee;

Jamie Halcro Johnston be appointed to replace Bill Bowman as a member of the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee;

Oliver Mundell be appointed as a member of the Education and Skills Committee;

Donald Cameron be appointed to replace Maurice Golden as a member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee;

John Scott be appointed to replace Alexander Burnett as a member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee;

Jamie Greene be appointed to replace Jeremy Balfour as a member of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee;

Alexander Burnett be appointed to replace Liam Kerr as a member of the Finance and Constitution Committee;

Brian Whittle be appointed to replace Donald Cameron as a member of the Health and Sport Committee;

Liam Kerr be appointed to replace Oliver Mundell as a member of the Justice Committee;

Maurice Corry be appointed as a member of the Justice Committee;

Bill Bowman be appointed as a member of the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee;

Michelle Ballantyne be appointed to replace Maurice Corry as a member of the Public Petitions Committee;

Jeremy Balfour be appointed to replace Gordon Lindhurst as a member of the Social Security Committee; and

Jamie Halcro Johnston be appointed to replace John Scott as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that the following changes apply from close of business on Thursday 2017—

Dean Lockhart be appointed to replace Margaret Mitchell as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee;

Bill Bowman be appointed to replace Annie Wells as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee;

Tom Mason be appointed to replace Brian Whittle as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee;

Michelle Ballantyne be appointed to replace Miles Briggs as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Education and Skills Committee;

Maurice Golden be appointed to replace Peter Chapman as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee;

Alison Harris be appointed to replace Maurice Golden as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Equalities and Human Rights Committee;

Jamie Halcro Johnston be appointed to replace Oliver Mundell as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Finance and Constitution Committee;

Annie Wells be appointed to replace Brian Whittle as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Health and Sport Committee;

Michelle Ballantyne be appointed to replace Alexander Stewart as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Justice Committee;

Tom Mason be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Local Government and Communities Committee;

Finlay Carson be appointed to replace Liz Smith as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee;

Maurice Corry be appointed to replace Edward Mountain as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Public Petitions Committee;

John Scott be appointed to replace Alexander Burnett as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee;

Gordon Lindhurst be appointed to replace Dean Lockhart as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Social Security Committee; and

John Scott be appointed to replace Alison Harris as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Decision Time

17:03

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are eight questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S5M-06376.1, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S5M-06376, in the name of John Swinney, on education governance: next steps, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)

Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 31, Against 92, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-06376.4, in the name of Iain Gray, which seeks to amend motion S5M-06376, in the name of John Swinney, on education governance: next steps, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)

Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)

Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 30, Against 93, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-06376.3, in the name of Ross Greer, which seeks to amend motion S5M-06376, in the name of John Swinney, on education governance: next steps, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)

Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 30, Against 92, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-06376.2, in the name of Tavish Scott, which seeks to amend motion S5M-06376, in the name of John Swinney, on education governance: next steps, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-06376, in the name of John Swinney, on education governance: next steps, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: We are agreed.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. When you asked for our verbal agreement to the Government's motion, the members of the Green Party said no. There should have been a division.

The Presiding Officer: I did not hear that, although I looked over to your benches, because I thought that I might have heard something. As it is only fair that we record an accurate vote, we will rerun that vote. I will put the question once more.

The question is, that motion S5M-06376, in the name of John Swinney, on education governance: next steps, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caitness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 96, Against 27, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament notes the publication of *Education Governance: Next Steps*, which sets out proposals for the reform of school education; further notes the emphasis that these proposals place on empowering schools and teachers; acknowledges the need to support schools and teachers through the provision of enhanced career and development opportunities, and strengthened improvement support, including access to expert, peer-led, professional help, backed by resources; recognises the importance of not burdening schools and teachers with unnecessary bureaucracy or workload as part of these reforms; calls on the Scottish Government to engage with all parties and stakeholders, including parents and young people, in continuing to develop these plans; opposes compulsory top-down regional collaboration and the shifting of further control towards Scottish ministers; recalls the evidence presented to the Education and Skills Committee in favour of separating the policy and inspection functions of Education Scotland and believes that this is necessary, and

notes the essential role of support services for schools, notably youth workers.

The Presiding Officer: I do not normally urge members to speak up, but I will do so now. The next question is, that motion S5M-06346, in the name of Clare Adamson, on the code of conduct for members and written statement revision, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees to amend the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament by making the alterations set out in Annexe A of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 7th Report 2017 (Session 5), *Code of Conduct for MSPs and Written Statement Revisions* (SP Paper 174) with effect from 30 August 2017.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-06347, in the name of Clare Adamson, on the Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Act 2016, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament, in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 4(1) and 4(2) of the Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Act 2006 (asp 12)—

makes the Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Act 2006 (Form and Content of Written Statement) Determination 2017 as set out in Annexe B of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 7th Report 2017 (Session 5), Code of Conduct for MSPs and Written Statement Revisions (SP Paper 174);

revokes the Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Act 2006 (Form and Content of Written Statement) Determination 2016; and

provides that these changes shall have effect from 30 August 2017.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on the seven Parliamentary Bureau motions. If any member objects, they should say so now. As no member has objected, the question is, that motions S5M-06426 to S5M-06430, S5M-06434 and S5M-06435, all in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 (Agreements of a Specified Kind) Regulations 2017 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Registration of Independent Schools (Prescribed Person) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (Additional Amount-Second Homes Main Residence Relief) (Scotland) Order 2017 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Security Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Social Security (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the

Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the following changes apply from close of business on Thursday 29 June 2017—

Graham Simpson be appointed to replace John Scott as a member of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee;

Jamie Halcro Johnston be appointed to replace Bill Bowman as a member of the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee;

Oliver Mundell be appointed as a member of the Education and Skills Committee;

Donald Cameron be appointed to replace Maurice Golden as a member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee;

John Scott be appointed to replace Alexander Burnett as a member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee;

Jamie Greene be appointed to replace Jeremy Balfour as a member of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee;

Alexander Burnett be appointed to replace Liam Kerr as a member of the Finance and Constitution Committee;

Brian Whittle be appointed to replace Donald Cameron as a member of the Health and Sport Committee;

Liam Kerr be appointed to replace Oliver Mundell as a member of the Justice Committee;

Maurice Corry be appointed as a member of the Justice Committee;

Bill Bowman be appointed as a member of the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee;

Michelle Ballantyne be appointed to replace Maurice Corry as a member of the Public Petitions Committee;

Jeremy Balfour be appointed to replace Gordon Lindhurst as a member of the Social Security Committee; and

Jamie Halcro Johnston be appointed to replace John Scott as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that the following changes apply from close of business on Thursday 29 June 2017—

Dean Lockhart be appointed to replace Margaret Mitchell as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee;

Bill Bowman be appointed to replace Annie Wells as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee;

Tom Mason be appointed to replace Brian Whittle as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee;

Michelle Ballantyne be appointed to replace Miles Briggs as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Education and Skills Committee;

Maurice Golden be appointed to replace Peter Chapman as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee;

Alison Harris be appointed to replace Maurice Golden as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Equalities and Human Rights Committee;

Jamie Halcro Johnston be appointed to replace Oliver Mundell as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Finance and Constitution Committee;

Annie Wells be appointed to replace Brian Whittle as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Health and Sport Committee;

Michelle Ballantyne be appointed to replace Alexander Stewart as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Justice Committee;

Tom Mason be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Local Government and Communities Committee;

Finlay Carson be appointed to replace Liz Smith as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee;

Maurice Corry be appointed to replace Edward Mountain as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Public Petitions Committee;

John Scott be appointed to replace Alexander Burnett as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee;

Gordon Lindhurst be appointed to replace Dean Lockhart as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Social Security Committee; and

John Scott be appointed to replace Alison Harris as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

Charter of Rights for People with Dementia and their Carers

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-05935, in the name of James Kelly, on a charter of rights for people with dementia and their carers. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes that, in October 2009, members of all political parties supported a members' business motion, S3M-04852, on a Charter of Rights for People with Dementia and Carers; notes the view that, while progress in rights-based approaches has been made, more can be done to increase visibility and access to rights; understands that there are 8,116 people who have dementia in Glasgow; notes the content of 3,000 letters from carers of people with dementia, which were presented in Parliament in 2011 and published in the Journal of Ageing University of Illinois, noting that feelings of loneliness and isolation are central to the caring process; values the work of the Alliance's Dementia Carer Voices project in reaching out to 80,000 people, resulting in 14,000 pledges across the UK to make a difference to the lives of people with dementia and their carers, based on the life experience of Tommy and Joan Whitelaw; notes that analysis of 6,000 pledges in Scotland describes the views of frontline staff regarding the importance of time for compassionate caring; considers that the experience and stories of over 90,000 people with dementia and their families are key to driving forward improvement; believes that dementia is everyone's business, and considers that the original sentiment of motion S3M-04852 and the importance of driving culture change and empowering people with dementia remains true, and that everyone can make a difference to drive that change.

17:11

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to host this members' business debate on a charter of rights for people with dementia and their carers. I thank all the members from across the Parliament who have signed the motion and given support on this important issue.

The starting point is to understand the issue that we are dealing with. We have a growing elderly population in Scotland, and something that comes from that is that, unfortunately, we have a growing number of people who suffer from dementia. It is a difficult condition for those who suffer from it, and also for their families and carers. Suddenly, in the latter stages of their lives, people enter a vulnerable position. It becomes difficult for them to understand and difficult for those around them to give them proper support. In Glasgow alone, over 8,000 people suffer from dementia. That shows us the size and scale of the problem. From that point of view, it is important to reinforce the importance of rights for people with dementia and their carers.

In this debate, I want to pull together several strands that reinforce the importance of a charter of rights for people with dementia and their carers. As a starting position, it is important to look back and note a motion that was agreed to in the Parliament in 2009, which was put together by the cross-party group on Alzheimer's and dementia. I pay tribute to the work that former MSP Irene Oldfather did in that group—[*Applause*—]and particularly on that motion on a charter of rights. I know that Irene Oldfather, who is in the gallery this evening, continues to champion the issue as a director of the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland. That motion was the forerunner, as it flagged up this important issue and put in train a lot of important work.

No one personifies the campaign on the issue more than Tommy Whitelaw, who has done a lot of work with the alliance and has been at the forefront of its dementia carer voices project. Tommy's mother was diagnosed with dementia and he cared for her for five years until, sadly, she passed away in 2012. It is a mark of the person that Tommy Whitelaw is that, even after his mother's passing, he embarked on an intensive campaign to make people aware of the issue. Many parliamentarians will have come across him not just here in the Parliament but on his various tours throughout the country. He had 85 conversations with health professionals, enlisted 14,000 pledges from people and has been to 600 locations. It is important not just to pay tribute to that work, but to look at some of its key findings.

What Tommy found in speaking to people with dementia and their carers was that one difficulty they struggled with was loneliness as they tried to face up to the condition. They felt that they were on their own and not properly supported. There was also frustration. It is frustrating enough to have an illness, but with the illness of dementia there is a real frustration for people trying to come to terms with what is happening in their lives. There are also serious economic challenges as those people need to be supported. The reality is that care is not always consistent throughout the country and not always of the quality we would like. Those were some of the findings from Tommy's work.

I also want to pay tribute to the work of Age Scotland, which has worked very closely with the Scottish Trades Union Congress in order to focus on the rights of people at work who have started to suffer from dementia. It is important to realise that dementia is something that people can start to suffer from at a younger age when they are still working, and that we have an older working population. People should be able to keep as much normality in their lives as possible, and continue to work. The work that Age Scotland and the STUC have done has reinforced that.

A rights-based approach is crucial, because it gives people with dementia a voice, it helps them to make a difference and it looks to maintain, build on and improve their quality of life. In looking at all of those strands, the Scottish Government has worked very constructively with the different organisations, and today it has published a new dementia strategy. That is a very welcome contribution. There are three points to the strategy: first, support for timely, person-centred care; secondly, making progress on the provision of support; and thirdly, responding to the fact that there is an increasing number of older people with dementia.

The strategy is very welcome, and a lot of progress has been made since the original motion was debated in 2009, which I mentioned earlier. However, I think that much more can be done to support people with dementia, and also their carers. A rights-based approach would help vitally in that area, so I hope that members' contributions from across the chamber will not only inform the Scottish Government's work but make a difference not just to on-going budgets and strategy, but to people around the country who are having to deal with the consequences of dementia.

17:18

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests, in particular to the fact I am a registered mental health nurse still in clinical practice, and I thank James Kelly for bringing the motion forward for debate in Parliament. I doubt whether there is a family in Scotland that has not experienced the loss of a loved one through dementia, and I mean loss in all meanings of the word. As many of us know, dementia takes our loved ones away from us little by little, day by day. It is estimated that currently, 855,000 people in the United Kingdom are living with dementia. That figure is expected to rise to 1 million by 2021.

Dementia is not a disease in itself; it is a word used to describe a group of symptoms that occur when brain cells stop working properly. That happens inside specific areas of the brain that affect how we think, remember and communicate. Over time it affects a person's ability to make judgments and to act in their own interests, and the condition severely compromises their ability to protect their rights.

That is why the rights-based approach taken by the charter of rights, together with subsequent policy work placing an individual's rights at the core of a person-centred approach, are so important. We should remember that people with dementia are individuals first and foremost, and their care should take into account their unique

personal circumstances, needs and wishes, as well as the needs of their family and carers.

The charter has taken the United Nations-endorsed PANEL approach, which focuses on the rights of everyone to P for participate in decisions that affect their human rights; on A for the accountability of those responsible for the respect, protection and fulfilment of those human rights; on N for non-discrimination and equality; on E for empowerment—for people to know their rights and how to claim them; and on L for legality in all decisions, through an explicit link with human rights legal standards in all processes and outcome measures.

It is good to hear from respected charities such as Age Scotland that progress has been made in recent years in promoting a rights-based approach but I am sure that, across the chamber, we can all agree that there is still work to be done.

Many years ago, when I was a young staff nurse, I saw at first hand the effects of dementia on people while working in hospitals and nursing homes, both here and overseas. Most of the people I nursed would be considered elderly—they were in their 80s and 90s—but dementia is a condition that affects not just older adults but those in their 60s, 50s and even 40s. It is projected that, by 2031, the number of 50-year-olds will have increased by 28 per cent, so juggling a career and a diagnosis of dementia will become a real issue for many people, families and employers.

We are seeing more relatively young people with the condition, and we need to be prepared to accommodate their particular needs. With a number of people still working when they receive their diagnosis, reasonable adjustments need to be made by workplaces to support a person with dementia to allow them to continue to work for as long as they want to do so.

As James Kelly did in his speech, I welcome Age Scotland's work with the STUC to highlight the difficulties that many people experience with their employers following diagnosis. Dementia fits the criteria of a disability under the Equality Act 2010. As a consequence, employers are legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments to support someone with dementia to work, should they wish to do so. Employers need to be more aware of the charter of rights for people with dementia.

Dementia friends is an Alzheimer Scotland initiative aimed not only at raising awareness about dementia but at reducing stigma around the illness. My staff and I have registered with the initiative, and I encourage other MSPs and employers to do so as a first step in being more

understanding about dementia and how we can make our communities more dementia friendly.

When we value and embed the experience of those with dementia and their carers, as has been done through the Scottish dementia working group and the national dementia carers action network, we can ensure that the voices of people with dementia are heard and that their rights and concerns are heeded.

I welcome today's launch of the third dementia strategy, which will respond to the increasing proportion of older people with dementia, continue to deliver person-centred treatment and support those with a dementia diagnosis. It is that focus on improving standards by listening to those with dementia, putting them at the centre of their care and working in collaboration with their carers and third-sector organisations that will help us to improve their quality of life.

17:23

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I start with an apology, because I will need to leave the chamber before the conclusion of the debate.

It is fitting that we are debating the charter of rights for people with dementia and their carers on the day on which the Scottish Government has launched its third dementia strategy. Politics is all about timing, of course, so let me join others in thanking James Kelly for his foresight in lodging his motion for members' business on this day.

Let me go back at least four or five years, to when I first met Tommy Whitelaw. Tommy cared for his mum, Joan, as we have heard. She had vascular dementia until she passed away in 2012. His story is a moving one, but it is what Tommy did next that was so inspiring. I have to confess that I thought he was cool anyway, because he was a tour manager and had been a band assistant. What he did next, however, was even cooler. He used his knowledge, his understanding and his experience to help others.

Tommy kept a blog and, to connect with other dementia carers, he started collecting letters. Those were their stories—the carers' stories of isolation and loneliness, stories of lack of support and information, but also stories of hope and love.

So began the Tommy on tour campaign, as he crossed Scotland collecting letters demonstrating people's lived experience to present to the Government. How powerful that was, and it led to action in the form of the dementia carer voices project. Run by the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland with Government funding, which is always welcome, the project is all about people. It builds on Tommy's tour and captures the

experience of carers across Scotland to shape future policy and provision.

The project is about raising awareness with health and social care professionals. I recommend that anyone who is on Twitter should follow Tommy. If they do, they will learn that there is nowhere that he has not been—hospitals, care homes, universities and colleges all over the place—and, aside from Tommy being one of the most prolific tweeters that I know, the comments from health and social care professionals are truly impressive. After a talk with Tommy, they understand the challenges that are faced by carers, and just how important a person-centred approach really is, and they recognise that carers are the experts. If we are honest about it, who else knows better? Carers bring huge value to society, but they also provide care for their loved ones with dementia. As James Kelly said, 80,000 people have been spoken to, which has resulted in 14,000 pledges across the UK. That is an awful lot of talking.

Tommy has, of course, been aided by many people, and I want to mention just one or two. The first is Irene Oldfather, who is a former member of the Scottish Parliament and is now a director of the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland. For those who do not know, Irene set up the cross-party group on dementia and she championed the charter of rights for people with dementia and their carers, but she did not do that alone—I see two other former colleagues sitting in the gallery with her.

There is something that former MSPs can do that is really useful. Mary Scanlon was also a member of that cross-party group. She was recently awarded a CBE in the Queen's birthday honours, which was very much deserved. With Mary and Irene is my former colleague Richard Baker, who now works at Age Scotland and has always had a keen interest in the issue. I hope that he will forgive me for saying this, but with such formidable women behind the campaign, it is no wonder that the charter was agreed. It is about driving culture change and empowering people with dementia and their carers. Taking a rights-based approach is essential, but there is much more that we still need to do to raise awareness, increase visibility and ensure that people can access their rights.

Finally, Presiding Officer, I want to make a very small plug. There is a dementia carer voices event in committee room 2 at 2 pm tomorrow. Come along and join us if you want to hear from Tommy and Irene and others. To be frank, it will be so much better than listening to us.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I certainly would not say that of your speeches, Ms Baillie.

17:28

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I congratulate James Kelly on securing today's debate. I also thank the organisations that have contributed useful briefings, including Age Scotland, Alzheimer Scotland, the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland and dementia carer voices. It was particularly important to see representatives of those organisations in the garden lobby this week, and I know that many members had a great time chatting to them about some of the personal stories to which Jackie Baillie referred. I am pleased that James Kelly's motion has attracted broad cross-party support, because it is right that all of us in Parliament speak up for and promote the rights of people with dementia and those who look after them.

The charter of rights for people with dementia and their carers is a very positive initiative, so I pay tribute to all who have helped to produce it, including colleagues on the Parliament's cross-party group on dementia who led on the development. I am particularly pleased to see three former MSP colleagues here this evening—Irene Oldfather, Mary Scanlon and Richard Baker. Some may say that they have, having left Parliament, now entered politics, but I would not go so far as to say that.

The motion highlights the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland's dementia carer voices project, which I commend as an important platform for the voices of health and social care staff who work with people with dementia and their families. As has rightly been said, Tommy Whitelaw is to be congratulated on his efforts and his passion in campaigning to ensure that no family in Scotland that includes a family member with dementia goes through the caring journey experiencing loneliness and isolation. As James Kelly said, there is much work to be done to increase people's awareness and understanding of the rights of dementia sufferers and of their families and carers. Integration joint boards need to take the lead in ensuring that all staff who work with people with dementia are aware of the charter of rights and of the imperative for person-centred and rights-based care.

As has already been mentioned, the increase in the number of people under 65 with dementia is an issue of concern in this country. Figures indicate that the number of people under 65 in Scotland who are being treated for dementia has risen by a third in the past six years and, in 2015-16, 808 people aged between 15 and 64 were recorded as having the condition. That is one of the many reasons behind my support for Frank's law. I am pleased to announce that I will lodge my members' bill proposal on that issue later this

week, and I look for the support of members of all parties in taking it forward.

In its briefing for today's debate, Age Scotland is entirely right to highlight that dementia is increasingly an issue for the workplace, and not just among older and retired people.

The Scottish Government's 2013 commitment to ensure that all who are diagnosed with dementia receive support from a link worker for one year after diagnosis was widely welcomed, but the delivery of that has been patchy around the country and many people still fail to receive it. With the number of people who are diagnosed with dementia being expected to continue to rise in the years ahead, the staffing and resourcing of that pledge and of dementia care in our national health service are very significant challenges for which we need to plan now.

Again, I very much welcome today's debate and the cross-party support that exists for promoting the rights of dementia sufferers and of their families and carers. I welcome the publication of the Scottish Government's third dementia strategy, and the recognition in the strategy of the critical importance of working with, and listening to, those with dementia and those who care for them.

17:31

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank my colleague, James Kelly, for lodging his excellent motion, which gives members the opportunity to highlight the importance of a rights-based and person-centred approach to the care of the growing number of people living with dementia, and to their families and carers.

Today in Scotland, 90,000 people live with dementia, but it is estimated that, by 2020, there will be 20,000 new diagnoses each year. It is a condition that often leaves the person who has been diagnosed, their family and their carers feeling increasingly powerless and as if they are losing control of their lives. A rights-based approach must be at the centre of dementia policy so that we can give that control back, give those living with dementia and their families and carers the ultimate say in the care that they receive, and ensure that that care is of the highest standard possible.

The charter of rights for people with dementia and their carers in Scotland has been fundamental in shaping the development of dementia policy and practice since its publication in 2009. It has underpinned key dementia policy developments since its agreement and, like James Kelly, I pay tribute to the work of Irene Oldfather and the former cross-party group on Alzheimer's—now the CPG on dementia, of which I am proud to be vice-convenor—in implementing the charter.

James Kelly and others have rightly focused on the excellent work of the alliance's dementia carers voice project and Jackie Baillie, in particular, spoke about the amazing experiences of Tommy and Joan Whitelaw.

My brief comments are focused on the next step. That is the long-awaited third dementia strategy, which was published today. The strategy will shape policy until 2020, and its vision is of a Scotland

"where people with dementia and those who care for them have access to timely, skilled and well-coordinated support from diagnosis to end of life which helps achieve the outcomes that matter to them."

Everybody in the chamber shares that vision, but we need to turn it into a reality.

In one of the forewords to the new strategy, Alzheimer Scotland said:

"The gap between the policy commitments found in all three strategies and the real life experience of many people is far too wide."

"Older and wiser" was published in 2008, "Remember, I'm still me" was published in 2010 and "Dignity and respect: dementia continuing care visits" was published in 2014. Although there has been significant progress, we cannot still be sitting here at the end of 2020 repeating Alzheimer Scotland's words because yet another policy initiative has not been fully implemented. People with dementia do not have that time.

There is much in the strategy that Labour agrees with, from the missing persons initiative to the commitment to improve palliative and end-of-life care, but the positive words must be backed up by adequate Government resources. That means scrapping the cuts to local councils that have impacted severely on social care, ensuring that social care staff have the time to provide the compassionate care that is needed and ending the scandal of 15-minute care visits.

The implementation of the new strategy must also be properly monitored. If there is a working group to help to do that, I hope that the minister will ensure that there will be regular reports back to Parliament on progress.

As the strategy is implemented, it is also crucial that policies are constantly reviewed. There is no doubt that the commitment to one-year post-diagnosis support for people who have dementia is very laudable, but it lacked flexibility. The figures speak for themselves, with only two out of five people benefiting within the Government's own target. A key role of the working group and parliamentary scrutiny of the new strategy must be to detect any problems with commitments at an early stage, and not wait for three years.

Disappointingly, there is no reference to care charges in the 26 pages of the new strategy. It is 14 years since the Labour-led Government introduced free personal and nursing care to everyone over the age of 65. It is now time to take that policy to the next step. To use the words of the Frank's law campaign website,

"no disability, illness, condition or disease waits until a person reaches the age of 65, then strikes."

Of the 90,000 people who are living in Scotland with dementia, 3,000 are under the age of 65. Those people face the prospect of having to pay for their own care. The publication of the strategy is a positive move forward. I know that much progress has been made, but there is an awful lot more still to do.

17:36

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I welcome our guests to the public gallery. I will mention them shortly.

I congratulate James Kelly on securing a debate on the charter of rights for people who have dementia and their carers. I believe that, as the motion says, "dementia is everyone's business". I also welcome the publication today of the third national dementia strategy for Scotland and I look forward to working with the cross-party groups that the former MSPs who are in the gallery were members of as well as with my own cross-party group on older people, age and ageing, which has a particular interest in dementia.

As other members have done, I thank former MSP Irene Oldfather and Tommy Whitelaw for the fantastic work that they have done and what they have achieved. It is important to mention what they have achieved through their work. I also welcome Mary Scanlon, a former MSP and member of the cross-party group, and Richard Baker, who has also led on the topic. I thank them all for what they have achieved.

One of the cross-party groups' aims has been achieved: they have pushed the issue of dementia to the top of the political ladder, which is no mean feat. The group's work has been informative, and professionals such as doctors have become much more aware of the condition. Clare Haughey mentioned employers, and recognising dementia and providing training for their staff is a huge issue for employers. As has been mentioned, the cross-party groups have pushed for that and they must be proud of achieving it.

From working with Irene Oldfather and Tommy Whitelaw, I know that a lot of what they did came from a personal perspective. It says something about what they went through that they have pushed dementia to the top of the agenda.

My mother had dementia and my experience is that it is difficult. Sometimes, people do not know what to expect. Although employers and other professionals now know about it, lots of families did not know what to expect from dementia and were left to sink or swim without information. The people and organisations that I have mentioned gave us information so that we knew what was going on, but some families are still not quite there.

I am proud of my city of Glasgow, which aims to become a dementia-friendly city. It will—not just on one day or through the launch of a project but throughout people's lives—encourage the development of resilience in communities while recognising the impact and effect that dementia has not just on the people who have dementia but on their families. It will enable people who have dementia to enjoy the best quality of life in their communities and ensure that they are treated with dignity and respect. That development has come out of the work that has been done by many groups and by people like Irene Oldfather and Tommy Whitelaw.

17:40

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

I am glad to speak in the debate, particularly as the Scottish Government's third national dementia strategy was published today.

I thank Alzheimer Scotland and Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland's dementia carer voices project for supporting the production of the charter alongside all the important work that they do to support local communities and those who are affected by dementia in any way.

I recognise the work of Alzheimer Scotland in providing community support in my region, where it runs dementia resource centres, dementia cafes and musical memory groups. Alzheimer Scotland continues to drive change and empower people with dementia.

It is fair to say that there is increasing understanding and awareness of the support that people who are diagnosed with dementia require. The charter of rights for people with dementia and their carers has influenced the policy and practice that we have seen implemented in the past six years. However, there is still a lot that we can learn from it.

An estimated 90,000 people in Scotland suffer from dementia, yet only two in five of them received post-diagnostic support in 2014-15. That leads to the question: the Scottish Government can boast impressive diagnosis rates, but why are post-diagnostic care waiting lists so long? Although the new strategy continues to pledge a minimum of one year's post-diagnostic support,

there is no indication of how the Government plans to improve the waiting times.

Henry Simmons, the chief executive of Alzheimer Scotland, has commented on that inconsistency and the fact that the gap between policy and practice is far too wide. More needs to be done to ensure that strategies are carried out fully and that the appropriate support and care is a reality for those living with dementia.

As we know, dementia does not discriminate and can strike at any age. Around 3,200 of those who are currently diagnosed with dementia are under the age of 65. However, at present, anyone under the age of 65 who requires personal care for dementia or any other degenerative brain disease must fund the cost of care themselves.

Given that the charter is based on real-life experiences, it is appropriate to mention Amanda Kopel, who lost her husband, Frank Kopel, to dementia in April 2014. In addition to caring for her husband and losing him to the disease, Ms Kopel had to face the discriminatory policy that saw her husband ineligible for financial help with care. Frank's condition deteriorated and his need for personal care was evident, so Amanda paid nearly £300 every week for the support that he needed. Frank died just four weeks before he was due to reach the qualifying age for free care.

That experience has led to Amanda bringing her campaign, Frank's law, to the Scottish Government. Frank's law calls for a fairer charging system and the provision of free personal care for anyone suffering from a degenerative brain disease, not just for those over the age of 65.

The seventh point of the charter is based on non-discrimination and equality. It states:

"People with dementia and their carers have the right to be free from discrimination based on any grounds such as age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, social or other status."

Amanda's story shows that such discrimination is currently happening.

We must look at the impact that dementia has not only on those suffering from the condition, but on their carers, too. Family members are often the chosen carers for those suffering with dementia and, when dementia happens at an early age, not only will the person suffering with dementia have to leave their job but so, too, will their carer. That can lead to the loss of two incomes when neither person is of pension age.

The Scottish Government's national dementia strategy for 2017-20 follows the two previous strategies in mentioning no further plans to provide personal care for those who are aged under 65. The new strategy outlines that the first main challenge to be addressed is to offer timely,

person-centred, co-ordinated and flexible support, which should be consistently available to every person living with dementia and their carers. Surely, that means that those aged under 65 who are suffering from dementia should be entitled to the same free personal care.

Given that around 7,780 people in my constituency suffer from dementia, I fully support the charter of rights for people with dementia and their carers.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: May I ask you to conclude, Mr Chapman?

Peter Chapman: I am almost there, Presiding Officer.

It is safe to say that every community in Scotland is affected by dementia. I agree with the charter that dementia is everyone's business and that more must be done to provide consistent post-diagnostic support for people of all ages.

17:45

The Minister for Mental Health (Maureen Watt): I, too, thank James Kelly for bringing the debate to Parliament and for his welcome for the new strategy. I acknowledge Irene Oldfather, who is sitting in the gallery. When she was an MSP we used to share stories about how our mothers' dementia was progressing. We have heard powerful stories today about how dementia touches the lives of so many families across the country, including my own. Clare Haughey talked about the loss that we experience prior to death, which I am sure resonated with everyone.

It is absolutely clear from all the speeches that a rights-based approach can make a fundamental difference to people living with dementia and their carers.

In preparing for the debate, I read the *Official Report* of the debate that Irene Oldfather led in 2009. I recognise Mary Scanlon, who was another contributor to that debate, sitting in the gallery; I read her speech from that debate, too. I am sure that Irene Oldfather and Mary Scanlon would both acknowledge, as others have done tonight, what a long way we have come since 2009 in improving care and support for people with dementia. That includes the introduction of what we should not forget is our world-leading post-diagnostic support for everyone who is newly diagnosed with dementia. We have improved the skills and capacity of staff working across health and social care services through our promoting excellence framework, embraced the principle of personalised dementia care in acute and specialist NHS dementia care settings, and extended carers' rights and support through the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016.

All that has been achieved in no small part through the commitment of our partners and health and social care staff working together to improve outcomes. That work has been informed by our listening to people with dementia, their families, carers and staff. Their experiences, like that of Tommy Whitelaw who cared for his late mother, Joan, have helped us to identify what was working well and what could be improved.

Although much of the work in Scotland, particularly around post-diagnostic support, is recognised as being world leading, there is a shared view that we can go further. Over the past two years we have worked closely with people who are affected by dementia and our partners to develop Scotland's third dementia strategy for 2017-20. I am very grateful for the contributions and support of all those who have been involved, including the national dementia carers action network and the Scottish dementia working group among others whom I have met over the period.

Our strategy sets out 21 commitments that are, as the previous strategy was, underpinned by a rights-based approach. They focus on improving the quality of care across the whole care pathway, from diagnosis to provision of person-centred care for people at the end of their lives. Importantly, it focuses on the needs of carers at every stage of the journey. It also stresses the need for earliest possible diagnosis, so that the person with the diagnosis can be at the centre of decision making about their on-going care, which is very important.

Our shared vision is of a Scotland where people with dementia and those who care for them have access to timely, skilled and well co-ordinated support, from diagnosis to end of life, that helps to achieve the outcomes that matter to them.

Together with our national and local partners we will work to ensure that the ambitions in the strategy are realised, but the approach is not about the strategy in isolation. Improving care and support for people who are affected by dementia is everyone's business, so we are committed to implementing a range of other related policy ambitions that reinforce our vision and strategy.

Improving support for carers is one such area. From next April, the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 will bring new rights and support for carers, ensuring that they can continue to care—if they so wish—in better health, and to have a life alongside caring. Carers will have a right to an adult carer support plan or young carer statement to identify their needs and personal outcomes. Local authorities will have a duty to support carers, based on their identified needs that meet local eligibility criteria, and to consider whether that support should include a break from caring. There will be new requirements for carers to be involved in decisions about discharge from hospital of the

person whom they care for, and for carers' views to be taken into account in community care assessments. We will shortly consult on a carers' charter, which will set out all the rights for carers under the 2016 act, to be published before the act takes effect next April.

I know that integration authorities and carer organisations are working hard to prepare for the act. I also want to acknowledge some of the other initiatives that we are supporting, such as "respite", which involves hospitality businesses gifting short breaks for carers, co-ordinated by local carers' centres and Shared Care Scotland. We are also committed to increasing carers allowance to the same level as jobseekers allowance, from April 2018.

More widely, I am pleased that the dementia carer voices project, which is managed by the alliance, has involved more than 70,000 NHS staff, care-home staff and students on the make a difference pledge campaign. The campaign supports the objectives of the charter of rights for people with dementia and their carers, which seeks to ensure participation, accountability, equality, empowerment and legality across services.

I am pleased that there have also been considerable advances in local areas in developing and embedding dementia-friendly community initiatives, including those in Motherwell, the Highlands, Stirling, Edinburgh and Prestwick. Such initiatives bring people from across communities to work together to help people with dementia to remain a part of their community. I was particularly pleased to see some such initiatives in supermarkets: for example, in Forres in Moray, a supermarket has piloted a relaxed checkout to support people with dementia and others who need extra time at the till.

Several members have talked about meeting post-diagnostic support needs. Earlier today, I visited St Triduana's medical practice in Portobello in north-east Edinburgh, where I met staff who will test the value of delivering post-diagnostic support in primary care, which we hope will improve accessibility for people with dementia and their carers. Improved accessibility, with joined-up care with a link worker, will mean quicker diagnosis and, thereafter, support being put in place more quickly.

Members have also mentioned Frank's law. As most members will know, the Government is carrying out a feasibility study that is looking at how to extend free personal care to everyone under the age of 65, regardless of their medical conditions—not just people with dementia. The study, which is being carried out by Scottish Government officials, is due to be completed this summer. We will share the findings with

Parliament. We are seeking views to inform the feasibility study and officials are holding meetings with stakeholders to feed into it. We are also working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and we have issued a questionnaire to local authorities in order to gather up-to-date information to inform the study. I am sure that we will all be interested in seeing what that work produces.

Today's debate has provided another opportunity for us all to recognise the importance of a rights-based approach to improving the lives of people who are affected by dementia. I reiterate the Government's continuing commitment to adopting such an approach, as we work with partners and people who are affected by dementia in realising the ambitions of our third strategy.

Meeting closed at 17:55.

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