

CROSS PARTY GROUP IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ON CONSTRUCTION

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CR4, SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT,
EDINBURGH, EH99 1SP

5.30pm TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2017

1. Welcome

Ms Lennon said that Alex Johnstone MSP had sadly died on 7 December 2016 and members' thoughts were with his wife, Linda, and children Alexander and Christine.

Alex had been a long-term supporter of the group and a well-liked individual within the Scottish Parliament.

Alex had been the longest serving Conservative MSP of the Scottish Parliament and the last remaining Conservative MSP to have served continuously since the 1999 election and would be sorely missed by all those who had the pleasure of getting to know him.

Ms Lennon said she was looking forward to her new role as Convenor of the Group Party Group and thanked members for their support.

2. Matters Arising

- Notes of meeting on 27 September 2016

Ms White reported that apprenticeships had previously been discussed as a topic for a meeting and wondered when this would take place. The Secretary reported that the topic was on the work-plan for the group and would have a meeting dedicated on the topic before the end of the year.

3. Treasurer's Report

Mr Barn gave a report on the groups finances.

4. Planning

Ms Lennon reported that "A Planning White Paper, People, Places and Planning" had been issued by the Scottish Government. The consultation paper came at a time when ambitious targets had been set for affordable housing in Scotland, with 50,000 affordable homes (35,000 for social rent) to be delivered in the lifetime of the current parliament.

The consultation would close on 4 April 2017.

Ms Lennon introduced Ms Houghton and Ms Miller who gave the following presentations (details attached).

Secretary : John McKinney

Scottish Contractor Group, 51 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7HL

Tel : 01721 729309 : E.mail : info@ScottishCG.org.uk

Treasurer : Grahame Barn

CECA Scotland, Enterprise House, Springkerse Business Park, STIRLING, FK7 7UF.

Tel. : 01786 430007 : E.mail : Grahame@cecascotland.co.uk

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- Kate Houghton – Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland
Repositioning planning; an overview of the Scottish Government planning consultation paper
- Nikola Miller – Homes for Scotland
Housing Delivery: the golden thread through planning reform

The current shortfall in housing provision was widely acknowledged and there was a need to address this across all housing ranges and types.

It was hoped that the review of planning would result in better, and earlier, consultation with the immediate community on proposed developments.

It was generally agreed that there was currently a lack of communication with local residents regarding proposed developments and new developments not always in-keeping with the built environment of the area. The current system of communication with local residents was outdated and ineffective.

There were also concerns regarding the availability of land and the processes for addressing such instances.

There was support for an infrastructure first approach to ensure sufficient education, health and services in the area. Infrastructure should be planned for the long-term as it could make positive contributions to imminent and future developments.

There were significant concerns regarding the skills shortage across the whole supply chain to deliver the ambitious targets for housing.

It was thought that the procurement system could be improved to speed up the delivery of new homes as this was another factor which impacted on the delivery of new homes.

It was felt that the new planning model should create the right environment for small housebuilders to flourish. The number of small housebuilders had decreased significantly during the recession and they played an important role in the delivery of new homes. Details of this could be found at:

<https://www.fmb.org.uk/about-the-fmb/policy-and-public-affairs/new-fmb-research/>

Information regarding future developments should be more specific to ensure that the immediate infrastructure reflected the needs of the existing and long-term future communities. Infrastructure requirements would differ according to the demographics of inhabitants of new developments.

There was widespread concern about a lack of expert knowledge in certain key areas among planners. This could often result in delaying the planning process as local authorities had to seek guidance from external sources on technical issues such as flood prevention and land contamination.

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Mr Wightman did not feel that the planning system needed to be speeded up but rather it needed reformed to ensure a long-term pipeline of applications enabling a more sustainable level of appropriate housing developments to be processed, approved and built. He also felt that the issue of inflated land prices needed to be addressed.

He also highlighted the type of residential development should be regulated to ensure that existing homes, and new developments, were used for the residential purposes required by the area.

Ms Lennon was surprised to hear in the presentations that planners had little involvement in the development of City Deals. Ms Houghton said that often funding for City Deals largely involved projects which had been in the pipeline for a while but had not progressed until City Deals funding came available.

5. Any Other Business

None.

6. Date of Next Meeting

5.30pm on 6 June and will be addressing the issue of Gender Equality in Construction.

Members will be advised of the full details in due course.

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Attendance

Monica Lennon MSP (Convenor)
Sandra White MSP
Andy Wightman MSP

Grahame Barn – CECA Scotland (Treasurer)
Mike Brown - Institution of Structural Engineers
Willie Crowe - Institution of Structural Engineers
Anne Galbraith – SECTT
Robert Girvan – CITB
Cara Hilton – CECA Scotland
Kate Houghton – RTPi Scotland
Rudi Klein – SEC Group
Iain McCaskey – BESA Scotland
Gerry McGinn – GMG Contractors Ltd
Margo McGinn – GMG Contractors Ltd
Stewart McKillop – South Lanarkshire College
John McKinney – Scottish Contractors Group (Secretary)
Nikola Miller – Homes for Scotland
Gordon Nelson – Federation of Master Builders
Martin Richardson – MMR Construction and T J Ross Ltd
Alan Seath – Seath Planning Ltd
Stephen Sheridan – Skills Development Scotland
Sara Thiam – Institution of Civil Engineers
Karyn Watt – Scottish Contractors Group/Anderson Strathern
Alan Wilson – SELECT
Stephen Young – Institution of Structural Engineers and CECA Scotland

Apologies

Alison Johnstone MSP
Christine McKelvie MSP

Maureen Douglas – Forster Roofing
Frank Gray - Unite the Union
Malcolm Horner - University of Dundee
Newell McGuinness – SELECT
Allan Thomson - Central Training Services Limited

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