Cross Party Group on Science and Technology

Minute of Meeting on 21 March 2017

1. **Attendance**
   MSPs: Clare Adamson; Liam McArthur; Tavish Scott. MSP staff: Lis Bardell; Kate Barclay.

   Non-MSPs: Bristow Muldoon; William Hardie; (both RSE); Iain Wall (STEMEC Committee); Andy Mount (University of Edinburgh); Fred Young (SSERC); Karen Petrie (University of Dundee); Eoin Welsh (West College); Iain Hunter (SSAC); Alan Roach; Joan Davidson (Ediburgh Science Festival); Ellen Doherty (GTCS); Alison McLure (IoP); Ian Strachan (Edinburgh Mathematical Society); Emma McGlynn; Julie MacKay (both Nethercurrie PS); Saddah Aziz; Alison Bowyer.

2. **Apologies**
   Iain Gray MSP; Daniel Johnson MSP; Liz Smith MSP; Patrick Harvie MSP; Stephen Benn (Royal Society of Biology); William Duncan (RSE).

3. **The Scottish Government STEM Strategy & the independent STEMEC Report**
   Professor Ian Wall, Chair of the independent STEMEC group that had written a report for the Scottish Government on science education that was published in May 2016 gave an introductory talk.

   Among the points that he made were:
   - The Scottish Government's draft STEM Strategy that had been launched in November had been a response to the STEMEC Report and the results of a consultation on the Government's proposals had just been published
   - That many of the points raised in the STEMEC report had been echoes of earlier reports on science education going back to 2003 – he said that the time for reports was over and it was time for action – an implementation plan is what is needed
   - He also referred to the RSE Report "Tapping all our Talents" from 2012, which had addressed many of the gender inequality issues
   - While he did not disagree with much contained in the Government draft Strategy what it lacked in his view was measureable targets and dates by which they should be achieved

   In questions and discussion the following points were raised:

   - That if regionalisation of school education went ahead there may be a role for colleges in linking with schools both for pupils and also teacher CPD opportunities
   - The absence of published workforce planning for teachers by the Scottish Government was raised as a concern
   - In particular in relation to workforce planning the major shortage on Computing Science teachers was raised, as was the need to equip primary teachers with more knowledge on computing
   - In many schools, particularly in rural areas there was no qualified Computing Science teacher

- More broadly another speaker made the case that there needs to be a significant expansion of science CPD for primary teachers as many currently did not have a science background, but were expected to teach science topics
- The pressure on primary teachers was noted in how much they were required to fit into the school week with existing requirements on literacy, numeracy & PE. The shortage of science equipment and resources was also highlighted

Meeting closed at 1930