

## **Cross Party Group on Women in Enterprise Meeting, 28.9.16**

Attendees (members of the CPG in bold):

From Women's Enterprise Scotland (WES):

**Anne Meikle**

**Carolyn Currie**

MSPs

**Gillian Martin**

**Clare Haughey**

**Ivan McKee**

Other Attendees

**Laura Galloway – Heriot Watt University**

**Graeme Roy, Fraser of Allander Institute**

Minutes

*Anne Meikle, WES: Opening Comments on the CPG's Purpose*

WES is a community interest company with 3 employees and a board. The goal of WES is to get involved in policy surrounding business, in particular to help bridge the gender gap. They are keen to work in partnership with other agencies. For example, in 2014, WES launched the Framework and Action Plan for Women's Enterprise to encourage the Scottish Government to take these issues into account. The Framework had an associated Implementation Group, which includes Scottish Enterprise, RBS, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, among others.

The key issues for the CPG to address are the gender gap in enterprise, the gendered nature of advice and support mechanisms, and the gender blindness of Government/skills agencies. This gender blindness means that these agencies focus on businesses of a certain size, that grow in a certain way. Men's and women's businesses may grow in different ways, and in fact growth may not always be the goal of some businesses. Other issues may be the types of finance available, the lack of human/social capital, and discrimination against women business owners (in networking, as well as against the types of businesses women may start—lifestyle or micro-businesses).

*Election of Office Bearers*

Women's Enterprise Scotland was confirmed as the secretariat of the CPG.

Gillian Martin MSP was nominated and elected as Convenor.

Jackie Bailie MSP was nominated and elected as Vice Convenor in absentia (pending her acceptance of the role). Ms. Bailie later wrote the to accept her role as Vice Convenor.

### *Group Discussion on the Goals of the CPG*

Through discussion, the group determined that the CPG has a number of goals:

- Improving information about women owned businesses, particularly looking at the data and statistics held/collected by the Government
- To bring in women owned businesses to encourage networking
  - Can draw on WES's ambassador programme and the MOD start up programme which helped train spouses of people in the military to start their own businesses
- Work with skills agencies to raise awareness of the gendered nature of business
  - The Framework and Action Plan is currently being refreshed
  - Need to encourage:
    - Micro-finance
    - Gender specific support
    - Mentoring
    - Procurement and internationalization support
  - The CPG could/should feed into the Enterprise review
- Work with Higher Education to encourage female students
  - Try to break sectoral boundaries/limitations
  - Support students before graduation
  - Vocational subjects are not being addressed by "enterprise awareness"
- Tie into the inclusive growth agenda
  - Activating more people economically
  - Encouraging regional diversity
  - Focusing on quality of life
  - Understanding the cumulative value of 'marginal businesses'
  - Understanding that "women's" industries are those in which growth is possible—care, for example.

### *Outline Future Meeting Structure:*

The group discussed how these goals might be taken forward in future meetings with a few themes pulled out as important to address in the first year:

- Bringing in women from the WES ambassador and MOD programme
- Graduate enterprise
- 'How do we know and what do we know about women in enterprise' (data, statistics)
- Working with Skills Agencies to increase gender awareness