

## **Commission on Parliamentary Reform**

### **Your Parliament Your Voice – Peebles Community Council**

**Thursday 9 March**

#### **Topics Discussed:**

##### **Experience watching the Parliament**

- When watching debates on television the often empty spaces in the chamber can make it appear the MSPs do not think the debate is important. Gives a negative impression.
- Debates and question times can be argumentative; it was felt the layout of the chamber was supposed to make the discussions less combative. This can put people off from engaging.
- Being able to watch the debates and committee meetings online is extremely convenient for people who are unable to watch during the day. Being able to pause and rewind means you don't miss anything that was said.

##### **Experience visiting the Parliament**

- When attending a cross party group meeting the staff were extremely welcoming and encouraged them to participate.
- When giving evidence to a committee there was a sense of disappointment with the outcomes of the discussions. An hour meeting was condensed into a few lines in the final report and felt they weren't really listened to.

##### **Voting system**

- General agreement that the system used for selecting committee members etc. (d'hondt method) did not work as originally planned during the last session of Parliament. A possible inquiry looking into this was discussed.
- There was discussion concerning the different roles and responsibilities of list and constituency MSPs and the relative visibility and accountability of both in their community.

##### **Legislative scrutiny**

- The lack of a revising chamber at the Scottish Parliament can lead to poorer legislation. This means that ministers and the Government aren't being properly held to account. A possible solution to this would be a second chamber with Lord Provosts representing the views of Local Authorities.

##### **Petitions System**

- It was felt the Scottish Parliament Petitions system lacked the visibility of the Westminster system. The Parliament should do more to promote the petitions it is considering, as people don't have time to go searching to see if there is a petition they wish to support.

## **Education**

- The Scottish Parliament should do more to get out into schools to teach young people how it works. They can then go home and inform and educate the parents. By providing people with the knowledge at a young age they are more likely to stay engaged and participate. Civic education classes should be held in schools, at present you only learn about the Scottish Parliament if you study Modern Studies.
- Information could also be placed in school bulletins to inform pupils what is happening that week in the Scottish Parliament.
- The Parliament needs to be more proactive if it wants the information to get out there. People lead busy lives and don't have time to visit the website every day; therefore the site needs to come to them.