

# **Aye, Minister**

What civil servants really do!

*Colin MacLean – previously a Director  
in Scottish Government*

# Summary

- *Roles*
- *Values*
- *Activities*
- *Illustrations*
- *Issues*

# Roles of Ministers

- *MSP*
- *Senior figure within a political party*
- *Carry out the formal business of Government (bring forward legislation, spend money, appoint people, represent the country, answer questions, meet people, cut ribbons, etc)*
- *Develop and implement policy*

***Result – intense pressure on Ministers***

***Consequences for civil servants?***

# The Caricature



# The Original Mandarin



# Civil Service Values

- *Impartiality*
- *Integrity*
- *Objectivity*
- *Honesty*

A wide range of jobs in some countries



Even secret agents!





# Roles of Civil Servants in Scotland

- *Support Ministers in their official role*
- *Support the democratic process*
- *Ensure high quality government processes*
- *Work (with others) to deliver services and improve outcomes for Scotland*

# Civil servants at work in Scotland



## **Types of activity - services**

- *Looking after castles*
- *Running prisons and courts*
- *Paying pensions*
- *Building roads and bridges*
- *Inspecting schools and care homes*
- *Disqualifying unsuitable people*

# Types of activity – policy, democracy and money

- *Providing advice to Ministers on policy*
- *Helping Ministers make decisions*
- *Working with others to implement policy*
- *Ensuring the democratic process operates effectively*
- *Supporting Ministers in the discharge of their formal duties*
- *Managing the Scottish budget*

# Types of activity – communication and relationships

- *Communicating with the public and with organisations working in Scotland*
- *Building and making effective use of good relationships with*
  - *the public, private and third sectors*
  - *other governments*
- *Managing an effective organisation that provides leadership and is a role model*

# Illustrations

- *Budget process*
- *A broad approach to policy: **Prevention***
- *A single policy area: **Curriculum for Excellence***
- *Working with politicians before, during and after an **election***

# Example 1 - Scottish Budget

*(data included in draft budget for 2013-14 published by Scottish Government in September 2012. All figures show £m available)*

<b>Scottish Government Spending Limits — Real Terms 2012-13 prices</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>
Revenue	27,259	26,270	25,896	25,429	24,961
Capital	3,462	2,837	2,707	2,319	2,320
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,721</b>	<b>29,107</b>	<b>28,603</b>	<b>27,748</b>	<b>27,281</b>
Real-Terms Change – year on year		-5.30%	-1.70%	-3.00%	-1.70%
Real-Terms Change – cumulative		-5.30%	-6.90%	-9.70%	-11.20%

# 'Our fundamental priorities for this Budget are:

- to accelerate **economic** recovery, create jobs and secure new opportunities through the low-carbon economy;
- to continue the decisive shift to more **preventative** approaches to public service
- delivery and to deliver our wider public service **reform** programme; and
- to maintain our commitment to a **Social Wage** for the people of Scotland at a time of acute pressures on household incomes'

*Scottish Government – Draft Budget 2013-14: Sept 2012*



# Budget Process

- Internal negotiation
- Publication of draft
- Parliamentary scrutiny
- Budget Bill / Act
- Allocation of money
- Managing spend – response to events
- Reporting and scrutiny

# Example 2 - Prevention

- Doing something today to stop bad things happening tomorrow – for example
  - Parenting programmes
  - Crash barriers
  - Infection control
  - ‘blue light’ discos
  - Public health programmes

# Is prevention always good?

- Is it improving outcomes?
- Is it good value for money?
- Would it be better to intervene when something starts to go wrong?
- Does 'prevention' limit freedom?
- Does 'prevention' take resources away from 'crisis intervention'?

**Civil servants work with others to identify and address these questions and agree a way forward**

# Example 3 - Curriculum for Excellence

- A new approach to defining what learning is intended to achieve - how to secure the change:
  - Imposition or consensus
  - Detail or broad outline
  - Involving stakeholders
  - Clear principles / flexibility
  - Programme of work

# Example 4 - Elections

- Manifestos – possible scenarios
- Pre-election period – business of government
- Pre-election discussions with parties
- Supporting coalition discussions
- Programme for Government
- Fixed or maximum term – planning delivery

# Issues

- Supporting Ministers but being impartial
- Openness
- Trust
- Competence
- Connected Government
- Public value