Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Lobbying (Scotland) Bill

Written submission received from the Cross-Party Group on Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector

I write on behalf of the Cross-Party Group on Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector following our meeting on 24th November 2015.

An item on our agenda was the Lobbying (Scotland) Bill which is currently being scrutinised by your Committee. Mindful that the closing date for the submission of written views to the Committee is 30th November, it was felt that our meeting provided an opportunity for discussion on the Bill and its potential impact on existing arrangements and relationships with MSPs and Ministers and to determine if members wished the Cross-Party to make a submission to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

The Group has asked me to convey to the Committee about the need for further clarity regarding the obligation for registration and whether all communications with a MSP, a member of the Scottish Government or a junior Scottish Minister would be deemed to be lobbying.

Examples were given of many Third Sector Organisations who neither employ nor engage personnel whose role is solely dedicated to lobbying on behalf of the organisation but have other paid staff who, as part of their remit, will have a requirement to communicate with a MSP, a member of the Scottish Government or a junior Scottish Minister. Do these organisations need to register?

Also, there was confusion as to whether communication requesting that a MSP, a member of the Scottish Government or a junior Scottish Minister to visit a project run by a Third Sector organisation would constitute ‘lobbying’.

The Group’s view is the Bill must not adversely impact on the Parliament’s principles of openness, ease-of access and accountability.

We urge the Committee to ensure that further clarification is provided to avoid further confusion.

Margaret McDougall MSP
Convener
Cross-Party Group on Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector
25 November 2015