

Inquiry on Lobbying – call for evidence

The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee has agreed to conduct an inquiry into lobbying.

The remit for the inquiry is—

“To examine whether there is a problem, either actual or perceived, with lobbying and, if so, how this can most effectively be addressed; to what extent a register of lobbyists would help with this process, who such a register should cover and how it would be operated in practice; and whether other steps might be needed to improve probity and transparency in this area”.

The Committee is interested in receiving views as part of this inquiry.

Details of how to submit your views can be found below. The deadline for response is 10 January 2014.

Background

On 17 May 2013, Neil Findlay MSP introduced a final proposal for a member’s bill to require certain individuals and organisations who lobby MSPs, Scottish Ministers or relevant public officials, either on their own account or on behalf of third parties, to record relevant information about their lobbying activity in a published register. On 13 June 2013 the Scottish Government indicated that it will legislate within this parliamentary session to give effect to these proposals. Meanwhile the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill is currently being scrutinised by the UK Parliament. That bill provides for a register of consultant lobbyists who lobby Ministers of the Crown and Permanent Secretaries.

In Session 1 the Standards Committee undertook an inquiry into lobbying and recommended the introduction of a statutory registration scheme for commercial lobbyists and a voluntary code of conduct for all lobbyists.

That Committee’s report also recommended revisions to the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament on lobbying and access to MSPs. This is now covered by [Volume 2, Section 5](#) of the Code. [Volume 2, Section 4](#) of the Code covers paid advocacy.

In light of developments mentioned above, the Committee is keen to build on this work by carrying out a thorough inquiry into whether there is a problem, either actual or perceived, with lobbying in Scotland, and what steps should be taken to address this.

Key questions

The Committee is particularly interested in the following questions—

The Need for Change

- have there been significant changes over the last decade in the way that lobbying is carried out?

- is there a problem or perceived problem with lobbying in Scotland? If so, how can this best be addressed? If not, do steps still need to be taken to address any problem arising in future?

Register of lobbyists

- To what extent will the introduction of a register of lobbyists address any problem or perceived problem with lobbying?
- To whom should such a register apply? Should it be voluntary or compulsory? How should it be maintained and who should maintain it? What level of information should be on it? Should thresholds be set for registration? If so what should they be? What are the likely cost implications of registration for groups that lobby?
- What sanctions should there be for failure to register lobbying activity? How will the register sit alongside the UK register? How will compliance be monitored?
- What are the implications of a register for (a) the Parliament, (b) MSPs, (c) organisations that lobby and (d) Ministers and civil servants?

Other measures

- Whether other changes could be made to improve transparency in lobbying in Scotland? What, if any, changes should be made to Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament?
- Should there be a Code of Conduct for lobbyists? Should it be statutory or voluntary?

You are invited to respond to as many or as few of these questions as you wish.

Next steps

The call for written views will help the Committee gather information and opinions about lobbying.

This will inform a decision by the Committee on whether to take oral evidence as part of the inquiry and, if so, from which individuals / organisations.

How to submit your views

The call for written views will close on **Friday 10 January 2014**.

Before making a submission, please read our [policy on treatment of written evidence by subject and mandatory committees](#).

Owing to the timescale required to process and analyse evidence, late submissions will only be accepted with the advance agreement of the Committee Convener. Responses should be no more than four sides of A4 in length.

We welcome written views in English, Gaelic, Scots or any other language.

Responses should be sent, where possible, electronically in Word format to the following address:

sppa.committee@scottish.parliament.uk

You may also make hard copy written submissions to:

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee
TG.01
Scottish Parliament
EH99 1SP