STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

REFORM OF PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS: REMODELLING THE PARLIAMENTARY WEEK

WRITTEN SUBMISSION RECEIVED FROM CHRISTINE GRAHAME MSP

Reviewing our procedures and practices.

I am aware that your committee, like mine, may have a day set aside in recess with a view to planning committee business. May I suggest some issues your committee may wish to consider?

- Election of Presiding Officer.

This was the first session when we had a substantive election process with three candidates. I think the process had deficiencies which were plain to see this time. I am aware this might not be read as disinterested but it is not a comment on the current incumbent I can assure you! There were a substantial number of MSPs as new intake who would have little knowledge of the duties and role of P.O. and therefore of the skills and qualities required of candidates for the position yet within days of being elected voting had to take place. There was not even an opportunity for candidates to make a pitch for votes to the Chamber. This was most unsatisfactory and a look at the final vote demonstrates it split virtually on party lines. I don’t think this is a good start for a new session.

- Election of committee chairs.

These are much under-rated positions in part because there is only a selection process by the party leaders yet it takes certain attributes to chair a committee successfully especially when it becomes politically heated. I would suggest that conveners should be subject to election, but not at the beginning of a session, perhaps before recess when candidates will have had the opportunity to make themselves known to members. This incidentally might also apply to the role of P.O.

I appreciate that parliamentary business would have to be executed in the meantime, but in the case of the P.O. and convener perhaps the oldest MSP in the Chamber (as currently happens on the committees) could fulfil that role meantime. These are I know flawed suggestions but I think worthy of discussion.

- “Constituency motions”

These we all recognise as the very localised motions congratulating for example some primary on being awarded a “green flag” and so on. I do not consider these appropriate for a business bulletin in juxtaposition with motions
of a more “substantive” nature. I also would suggest we consider a separate section for those motions seeking support for a debate. With regard to those “local” motions can I suggest that these are displayed on the electronic notice board in the public area where there are already notices welcoming named schools as they visit parliament?

I do hope the committee will give consideration to these thoughts and look forward to hearing from you.

Christine Grahame MSP
12 July 2011