Question 3

The Code should include a specific section on the appointment of the secretariat to Cross-Party Groups. The Code should include the requirement of any organisation or individual who is not an MSP who is serving on a Cross-Party Group as its secretary, to state their reasons for supporting the Group and declare any and all pecuniary interests of both the organisation for which they are offering the services as secretary and any other associated business interests that they may have.

The Code should be extended to state that the Secretariat of a Cross-Party Group may not use Parliamentary facilities to hold any meeting associated with the Cross-Party Group, such as a planning or subcommittee meeting, without an MSP member of the Cross-Party Group being present throughout.

Question 7

We would support the strengthening of the rules around the provision of secretariat services to a Cross-Party Group. An organisation or individual that would benefit financially in any way through providing the secretariat service to a Cross-Party Group, directly or indirectly through a different business that any staff of the body offering the secretariat may also work for or with, should be barred from taking up office as secretary to a Cross-Party Group.

We would support the Westminster approach of full declaration of interests including financial interests being required of a body or individual offering a secretariat service, including the full client list and details of donations.

We would further suggest that any and every secretariat offered by anyone other than an MSP or a member of his or her staff, should be required to make a declaration of interests that specifically requires them to state the financial interests not just of the organisation under which they are offering the secretariat but also any and all other commercial or not for profit organisations that any member of the group providing the secretariat receives an income from. This will allow full disclosure of those cases where a for-profit consultancy operates a not-for-profit enterprise for the delivery of some aspects of its work.
Where a CPG is well established with a valuable work programme, it does not make sense for another CPG to set up with similar or overlapping issues—encroaching on the others work, this is a waste of peoples’ time/money and as there are so many groups, will make it even more difficult to get MSPs along. CPGs should have to very clearly state their purpose when setting up, and explaining the reasons, for the newer one, if another CPG exists already with similar/overlapping issues. The code ought to make this clear—to prevent duplicity. SPPA should prevent duplicity if possible.

Also, SPPA should ensure CPG activities are not Political/seen to favour/promote any one political party or MSP. Charities/members of CPGs ought to be apolitical if possible, when working with the CPG.

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