



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 26 January 2017

Session 5



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STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
2nd Meeting 2017, Session 5

CONVENER

*Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)

*Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP)

*Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)

*John Scott (Ayr) (Con)

*Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab)

Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP)

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con)

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Douglas Wands

LOCATION

The Adam Smith Room (CR5)

Scottish Parliament

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 26 January 2017

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Clare Adamson): Good morning. Welcome to the second meeting in 2017 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. I remind everyone to switch off or put to silent mobile phones and electronic devices.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on taking business in private. Are members content to take consideration of our work programme in private at our next meeting?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Cross-party Groups

10:00

The Convener: Item 2 is an evidence-taking session on four proposed cross-party groups. The first group to consider is the CPG on sexual health and blood-borne viruses. I welcome to the meeting Kezia Dugdale MSP, who is a co-convener of the proposed group. I invite her to make an opening statement.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): Good morning. This is more nerve-wracking than First Minister's questions, so please be gentle. I am here to propose the establishment of a cross-party group on sexual health and blood-borne viruses. No other cross-party group looks specifically at those issues and there is a clear demand for that given the increasing number of HIV cases in Scotland. Over the past 10 years, the trend has not declined and 5,200 people live with HIV. Separately, hepatitis C remains a persistent issue across the country, with more than 35,000 people living with the condition, many of whom are unaware that they have it. We can do a lot of work in this area.

There would be some overlap with other cross-party groups. Clearly, there would be similarities with some of the issues that, for example, the cross-party group on health inequalities and, indeed, the cross-party group on LGBTI+—I am a member of that group—might look at. However, there is more than enough in the programme to demand or to justify a specific cross-party group, not least the rising issue of sexual health education and whether it should be compulsory in our curriculum, issues to do with sexual coercion and violence, digital health and pregnancy. We know that the Scottish Government is about to come forward with a whole new sexual health and blood-borne viruses framework, so there are obvious landmarks in the months and years ahead that the cross-party group could work around.

Members will be aware from our pro forma that a wide range of organisations and groups are keen to participate in the cross-party working group. We have had a welcome offer from HIV Scotland to provide the secretariat. You will also be aware that two members of your committee are signed up to be prospective co-convener of the group, and I am sure that they would diligently commit themselves to that task, too.

The Convener: Thank you very much, Ms Dugdale. Do committee members have any questions?

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): As you rightly say, there is no question but that there is a real demand for the cross-party group. The groups and organisations that you

have listed in your application have massive amounts of experience in the field. Given that there will be so many experts supporting the group, how will you manage to make progress and ensure that how the group moves forward is not taken over by the way in which one or two of the organisations want to promote the issues? I think that there is a commonality in this for everybody, but what is important is that the issues are progressed.

Kezia Dugdale: That is a fair question. At our first meeting, at which we contemplated the steps to establish a cross-party group, many of the organisations that are listed on the form were in attendance—in fact, we had more than 60 organisations or individuals representing organisations there. As chair, I took the approach to have as open and discursive a first meeting as we possibly could, giving everyone the opportunity to put forward their organisations' priorities on what the cross-party group should work on. We collated all that information and, having written it all down on a piece of paper, it was clear that there were common themes.

There is a legitimate concern in the group that, given that there are so many organisations working in the field of HIV, HIV issues might become more dominant than hepatitis C issues. We could easily manage that as a cross-party group of conveners and ensure that the work programme reflects the priorities of all the groups involved.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): It is not often that your own party leader appears before you at a committee, so there are one or two things that I would like to get off my chest. [*Laughter.*]

In all seriousness, the issue is important. From the discussions that I have had with Waverley Care—Milestone house is in my constituency—I know that the issues around blood-borne viruses, in particular HIV, are quite pronounced. I was quite shocked to hear that my demographic is most at risk, because of rising complacency and other issues. The case for the group is well made.

The committee is aware that there is a large number of CPGs that focus on health issues. How do you see the group working collaboratively with other groups and using the multitude of interests to develop opportunities?

Kezia Dugdale: There are two things to say about that. In the previous parliamentary session, we had a CPG on sexual health and BBV, of which Patrick Harvie and I were co-conveners. It worked fairly effectively for the first two years of the five-year session, as I remember it, and then the rules on the number of parties that had to be involved in a CPG changed and we were unable to

attract enough cross-party support to keep it going, despite there being substantial issues to discuss. It is relevant that the proposal that you have before you has representation of four political parties, which is important in giving it impetus.

In our early discussions on our work programme, we have talked about having joint meetings with other CPGs. With compulsory sex education, for example, there is a clear correlation between what the CPG on sexual health would like to discuss and the priorities that the CPG on children and young people, which I convene, might be working on. There is a lot of common ground. I believe that the CPG on drug and alcohol misuse is being re-established, and there is some commonality there, as well.

By having open discussions, clear priorities and a definitive work programme, we can have our own defined agenda in the Parliament and seek to work with other long-established CPGs.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I am very happy to be involved in the CPG and very happy that it is being re-established.

During session 2, the first CPG on sexual health had some opportunities to work with the CPG on international development, particularly on how sexual and reproductive rights, as well as HIV, are dealt with at the global level. Is there the chance for some of that work between the two groups to be done again, particularly given current events: the Scottish Government's refresh of its international development strategy and the US's threats to withdraw funding from any organisations that are involved in sexual and reproductive health, particularly around contraception and abortion?

Kezia Dugdale: When you look at how well attended and thorough the recent members' business debate on world AIDS day was, and at how it covered a mix of domestic and international issues in that context, it is quite clear that there is an appetite in the Parliament not just to look at what is happening at home but to look abroad on these issues.

Collaboration with the CPG on international development did not come up in our early discussions, but it is clear that there have been developments that put such collaboration higher up the priority list. Again, that is something for the members of the CPG to determine.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): You are to be commended for setting up the CPG, which is full of merit.

There has been a huge growth in sexually transmitted diseases among people aged over 50. I see that paediatric and adolescent health groups want to be members of your group and you have

been talking about education and contraception, which may not affect the over-50s so much. Have you put any thought into how you would engage that demographic and what groups that represent that age group you might invite along?

Kezia Dugdale: LGBT Health and Wellbeing does some work in the area, with regard to people living with HIV. Of course, advances in medicine mean that many people can live well for much longer, so there is a growing group of people in the over-50 category who are living with HIV or are exposed to BBV. Those issues were put on our list of priorities at the first meeting. It is fair to say that they were not in the top 5, but they are on the list. There is scope to do more work in that area. Daniel Johnson mentioned Milestone house, and Waverley Care works in the area of the ageing population. I guess that we could do work on that with the CPG on older people, age and ageing. That is not considered to be high up the list, but we are very much open to it.

It is worth saying that one of the other issues that were raised at the first meeting for the proposed CPG was the degree to which the list of participants was exhaustive. People asked about how we could advertise the CPG and ensure that everybody who might have an interest in the issue knew of the CPG's existence and how to participate in it. You have identified an area in which we could probably do more work to ensure that people living in older communities know of the CPG's existence and know that it could represent their interests as well.

The Convener: There are no further questions from the committee, so I thank Ms Dugdale for her attendance. We have established that sexually transmitted diseases affect all demographics and that it is an important issue for everyone in Scotland.

We will deliberate on the CPG under item 3 today, and you will be informed of our decision as quickly as possible. Again, I thank you for your attendance

Kezia Dugdale: I thank you for your time.

The Convener: I suspend the meeting briefly to allow witnesses to change over.

10:10

Meeting suspended.

10:11

On resuming—

The Convener: The second group for consideration by the committee this morning is a proposed CPG on architecture and the built environment. I welcome to the meeting Linda

Fabiani MSP, the proposed convener of the CPG, and I invite her to make an opening statement.

Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): Thank you, convener. The CPG on architecture and the built environment has been sustained since the beginning of the Scottish Parliament. However, I say up front that, although it should have been easy to meet the deadline, we missed it—hence my appearance here today.

The CPG's purpose is to recognise Scotland's places. The group brings together planners, architects, surveyors and everyone who is involved in Scotland's built environment. The group has been very successful and we have always had good membership. We have a broad range of stakeholders who regularly come to our meetings, from which we produce reports that are circulated to all MSPs.

Over the piece, we have been involved in, for example, last year's festival of architecture and we have engaged with the Government and all the stakeholders who are involved whenever there are Government consultations. It is always about promoting good spaces for people in Scotland to live and work in.

The Convener: Thank you, Ms Fabiani. I invite questions from committee members.

Daniel Johnson: Our built environment is very important, and the esteem in which architecture is held is equally important. I will take this opportunity to air a personal hobby-horse of mine. There is a bit of work to be done to ensure that mid-20th century architecture is elevated in esteem. I still lament the loss of the Scottish Provident building on the corner of St Andrew Square, which I thought was a remarkable building. However, sadly, it has been lost to us mainly because it was built in the wrong decade for many people. I think that, if it had been an older building, we would have protected it. Have you given any thought to including in your group's work programme looking at mid-20th century architecture, such as brutalist architecture, and how we can change the perception of those buildings?

Linda Fabiani: That is something that comes up fairly often. You are right that there is not often a recognition of how excellent architecture is in the modern context. Even where our Parliament is situated, we have an excellent example of more modern architectural work just across the road in the Basil Spence flats, but they are not recognised as excellent architecture.

That is an on-going issue, but we try to promote such architecture as well. For example, as part of the year of architecture, there was a list of Scotland's 100 favourite places. It was quite uplifting to see that people have started to

recognise more modern structures as being architecturally brilliant. In fact, I might as well say while I am here that the list included two structures in East Kilbride, one being the Dollan baths.

10:15

It is an on-going issue and part of the group's remit is very much about the appreciation of how important it is to have decent, good places in our built environment—and, indeed, in our landscapes, because it is about more than just looking at all these buildings and where they are. You are absolutely right—perhaps you could come along to our group and put your point forward.

Daniel Johnson: I may well do that.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I declare a slight interest, as my degree was in engineering. Given the natural tensions that exist, do you invite civil engineers along to bring the different groups together?

Linda Fabiani: Excuse my smile—having been involved in the construction industry myself, developing housing, I did not mean anything worse than that the minute that someone said an engineer was coming to a meeting, we thought, “Oh no, here we go.” [*Laughter.*] Sorry about that.

John Scott: That makes my point for me. I am sure that the group will work to pursue an inclusive approach—

Linda Fabiani: It has been a very inclusive group. We had interaction with the cross-party group on construction over the period in which the two groups were in operation.

I am pretty sure that there are engineering organisations in the membership list—or that there were, last time round—but, to be very honest, I do not think that we had much attendance from that section of the membership. I will very much take that point on board and I shall perhaps bully the architects into being more proactive about inviting engineers.

The Convener: As members have no further questions, I thank Linda Fabiani very much for her attendance.

I recognise your passion and commitment to this area over the years of the Parliament. We will take a final decision at item 3. You will be informed of the decision on the proposed cross-party group then. I suspend the meeting briefly to allow witnesses to change over.

10:17

Meeting suspended.

10:17

On resuming—

The Convener: The third group to consider is the proposed cross-party group on Nordic countries. I welcome Maurice Golden MSP to the committee and invite him to make an opening statement about the proposed group.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): The overall objective of the proposed cross-party group on Nordic countries is

“To promote political, cultural, educational and environmental links between Scotland and Nordic Countries; and to foster ties between Scottish and Nordic politicians.”

As members can see from the registration form, we have achieved cross-party support for the group. I have met the relevant consuls for the Nordic nations, which—for the avoidance of doubt—we are defining as Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. The consuls are very keen for the group to be established. I have also spoken to relevant societies, as well as businesses operating in Scotland that are linked to those nations.

The Convener: Thank you very much. I invite questions from committee members.

Alexander Stewart: There are already a number of great ties between Scotland and the Nordic countries, especially in relation to trade and culture. The registration form refers to the digital economy. How will you engage on the digital economy and how will you progress things to ensure that you can capture everything? We are advanced in some aspects, but the Nordic countries are even more advanced than us.

Maurice Golden: That is a good point. The cross-party group will seek to address a range of issues, including the digital economy. Where possible, we will link up with other cross-party groups that have a specific focus on a theme, whether it be connectivity, health or renewables. We will be dealing with a geographical region rather than a thematic issue and we will seek synergies for parliamentarians and other interested stakeholders. I genuinely think that it will be a two-way learning process. There is much that Scotland does where we are leading the way, and vice versa. We can learn from those respective nations about the interesting and innovative projects that they are carrying out.

Clare Haughey: I note from the registration form that two individuals are noted as members of the group: the honorary consul of Finland and a member of MSP staff. You said that you had reached out to other consuls. Why have they not been listed as members of the group?

Maurice Golden: Those are the people who attended the initial meeting of the cross-party group. After today, the formalisation of the group will give confidence to the other consuls to become involved. As members will appreciate, stakeholders outwith Parliament may not be aware of a cross-party group until it is established. There are a number of honorary consuls—people who are effectively doing a full-time job in addition to their membership of groups such as this. The other aspect of the process is to reach out to the relevant embassies, which will provide the authority to join. I expect the group's membership to increase.

Clare Haughey: We often hear that it is outside organisations that lobby MSPs for a group, and who say, "This would be an interesting cross-party group." Given that only one honorary consul is a member, where is the drive for this cross-party group coming from?

Maurice Golden: As is referred to in my register of interests, prior to entering Parliament I did a project with the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management to look at the application of the circular economy in nations similar to Scotland. As part of that study, I spent significant time in Finland and Denmark, and realised that there is much that we can learn from those countries, for example on district heating.

On members more widely, Angus MacDonald MSP has lived in Norway and has a keen interest in the country. From talking to each other, we realised that there is much to be learned from such discussions. The proposed cross-party group has been led by members, which is entirely appropriate. That is why the consuls are coming on board with the relevant members of the Scottish Parliament.

Clare Haughey: What plans do you have to reach out to organisations, as no organisations are currently members of the CPG?

Maurice Golden: The obvious organisation to meet, which was discussed at the cross-party group's initial meeting, would be the Nordic horizons group. There are other stakeholders and groups in society that we would like to meet, as well as relevant businesses and chambers of commerce for those nations. The other deputy conveners and I will seek to speak to those groups.

Patrick Harvie: In the list of countries that you identify as the Nordic countries, you mention the full members of the Nordic Council. However, there are other countries that are observer members. Does the CPG intend to establish some kind of relationship with the Nordic Council?

Maurice Golden: That would definitely be beneficial. As you point out, there are other

interested parties in the wider Nordic region. That would be entirely appropriate and we are flexible enough to accommodate it. We would like the relevant Nordic countries to lead discussions on particular areas, and we have discussed with them some of the subject areas that they would like to lead on. We would also link in with the ambassadors as and when they come to Scotland.

The Convener: I thank Mr Golden for attending. The committee is delighted that we are not considering applications for five or six CPGs on individual countries, so congratulations on bringing the group together. As someone who attended a number of the Nordic horizons events in the previous session of Parliament, the issues are certainly of interest to me. We will take a decision on the group under agenda item 3 and you will be informed of our decision as soon as possible.

I suspend the meeting briefly to allow the witnesses to change over.

10:26

Meeting suspended.

10:26

On resuming—

The Convener: The final group to consider this morning is the proposed CPG on walking, cycling and buses. I welcome Graham Simpson MSP and invite him to make an opening statement.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I will speak from the heart, rather than from notes, if that is okay. Before I became an MSP, I was described as the cycling tsar for South Lanarkshire, when we set up a cycling partnership. In fact, I still hold that position. When I became an MSP, I was keen to see whether there was a similar group in the Parliament. After asking around, I discovered that there had been a group in the previous session and that it dealt only with cycling. I found out that Alison Johnstone and Claudia Beamish were the conveners, and so I got chatting to them.

Where we are now has been quite a long time coming. There was a feeling that the previous group was, to be fair, a bit of a talking shop, and we wanted to make it a bit better. In discussions, we thought that the group should be not just about cycling but about sustainable transport. Therefore, as members can see, we have widened the remit to include walking and buses. The idea is to get the issue out there and on the agenda. We want to publicise the issue and get it in front of the public. It will not be a talking shop.

The Convener: Thank you.

Daniel Johnson: I think that it is worth while to have a CPG on alternative forms of transport, sustainable transport and active transport, but I want to ask about the remit. I understand why you want to extend it beyond cycling, but you seem to have been somewhat selective about the additional modes of transport. Why did you choose to identify walking, cycling and buses? You used the term “sustainable transport”, which might better reflect the broad spectrum of modes of transport that you might look at.

10:30

Graham Simpson: That is a fair question, but I understand that there is already a group on rail. I suppose that it would have been obvious to include rail, but because of the group that already exists, we did not include it and decided instead to limit the scope to cycling, walking and buses.

Daniel Johnson: The list of organisations that will be members includes a wide range of groups and voluntary organisations. However, I notice that Stagecoach is on the list. That raises an alert with regard to the possibility of commercial interest, given the scope of that company. Has any thought been given to that?

Graham Simpson: We cannot avoid the fact that there are commercial operators that run buses in large parts of Scotland. Certainly, in the part of Scotland that I live in, that is just the reality. I think that it would be remiss if we did not invite them along.

I think that the list of organisations will grow. As you can see, it is quite bicycle orientated, because of the people who were on the CPG that the proposed group follows on from, so I think that it needs to be expanded.

Daniel Johnson: I think that the range of organisations is commendable and I do not disagree that, clearly, there are commercial operators who operate buses—that is a fact of the landscape. My concern is really more to do with the fact that you have only one such operator on the list. I wonder whether that needs to be considered further. Have other bus operators been invited? Would it perhaps be better if a trade body were a member of the group rather than individual commercial interests?

Graham Simpson: That is a fair point. However, as I say, the list that you have before you is not the end of the membership. I agree with your point and will take it on board.

Alexander Stewart: It is laudable that you are trying to expand the remit from just cycling to walking and buses. That gives you lots of opportunities, but will also give you some challenges. That is especially true of the bus

situation, because, as is the case in your area and mine, a large number of buses operate but, from time to time, things become a little bit difficult when services are streamlined or reduced, which can result in communities feeling that they are being left out. How will you manage that? The issue is bound to appear on your agenda.

Graham Simpson: There are different situations in different parts of Scotland. Edinburgh appears to have a very good bus service but other parts of the country do not. Part of the role of our group will perhaps be to shine a light on that and come up with suggestions for how things can be improved in other parts of the country.

Alexander Stewart: As I said, I think that there will be some real opportunities for that to happen. I wish you well.

Clare Haughey: I wonder, given that you raised the subject of Edinburgh, whether you have thought about including someone to do with trams in the membership list?

Graham Simpson: We have not discussed that, but now that you have mentioned it that might be a thought.

The Convener: As there are no further questions, I thank Mr Simpson for his attendance. It is worth putting on record for the information of everyone who is involved in cross-party groups that they have a duty to inform the clerks, within a 30-day period, of increases in membership.

Our final decision will be taken under agenda item 3 today. We will inform Mr Simpson of our decision as quickly as possible.

Under agenda item 3, we will consider the proposed cross-party groups. First, is the committee content to approve the proposed CPG on sexual health and blood-borne viruses?

Members indicated agreement.

John Scott: I would just like to put in a word for the over-60s.

The Convener: That is noted, Mr Scott.

Secondly, do we agree to approve the proposed CPG on architecture and the built environment?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Do members have comments on the proposed CPG on Nordic countries?

Clare Haughey: Previously, we have asked proposed CPGs that have extremely narrow or small memberships to come back to us in a year. I think that the membership list of the CPG on Nordic countries would come under that criterion.

The Convener: I concur and suggest that we issue the same wording to that CPG as we have

done to others with small memberships. With that in mind, do we agree to approve the proposed CPG on Nordic countries?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Do members have comments on the proposed CPG on cycling, walking and buses?

Daniel Johnson: This is certainly not an objection, because the group is worth while, but I think that the scope of the group is quite particular. I think that the group might want to expand that scope, and I would welcome it if that happened.

The Convener: That is duly noted. The group is in a strange situation, in that it is a sort of follow-on group from a previous CPG. I believe that it will expand its remit to cover the areas that have been put forward. Are we content to approve the CPG on walking, cycling and buses?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I thank everyone for their attendance today.

Meeting closed at 10:36.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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