

PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

COMMITTEES REQUEST TO MEET JOINTLY AND AT THE SAME TIME AS THE PARLIAMENT

Introduction

1. A request has been received (see Annexe) from the following committees to meet jointly to consider the implementation by the Scottish Government and others of the recommendations of the Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce:
 - Criminal Justice
 - Health, Social Care and Sport
 - Social Justice and Social Security.
2. Joint meetings would take place on 1 and 2 February 2022, with a further joint meeting envisaged for June to consider if there has been any further progress with the delivery of the recommendations of the Taskforce.
3. In addition to requesting to meet jointly, the Committees are requesting permission to meet at the same time as the Chamber on Tuesday 1 February.

Arrangements for the joint meeting

4. Subject to the Bureau's approval, the meetings would take place in a wholly virtual format, chaired by the Convener of the Criminal Justice Committee. Each committee would be represented by 3 to 4 Members on a cross-party basis. The Members listed below are expected to attend the meetings:
 - Audrey Nicoll (SNP) (to convene this meetings)
 - Miles Briggs (Con)
 - Foyso Choudhury (Lab)
 - Russell Findlay (Con)
 - Neil Gray (SNP)
 - Gillian Mackay (GRN)
 - Gillian Martin (SNP)
 - Pauline McNeill (Labour)
 - Paul O'Kane (Lab)
 - Sue Webber (Con)
5. If any of these Members are unable to attend, any other party member on their Committee can attend in their place (or the Committee substitute can do so).
6. The Bureau may wish to note that there are no Scottish Liberal Democrats members of any of the three committees. If a member of that party wished to

participate, it is expected that the three conveners would look on that favourably.

Consultation with Conveners Group

7. Standing Orders require that the Bureau consults the Conveners Group prior to deciding on a request for committees to meet jointly. Due to the timings involved in relation to this request, the views of the Conveners Group have been sought in advance of the Bureau's meeting. The Conveners Group's response will be provided to Business Managers in advance of the Bureau meeting.

Request to meet at the same time as the Parliament

8. The purpose of the meeting on 1 February would be to take evidence from Kit Malthouse MP, Minister of State at the Home Office. This is because certain aspects of drugs policy, namely the Misuse of Drugs Act and potentially also the law around safe consumption rooms, is reserved. The Taskforce has also made recommendations for the UK Government. The Minister has indicated to the committees that he is keen to give evidence on this issue and has requested that the committees consider taking evidence from him on either the afternoon of Tuesday 1 February or the morning of Thursday 3 February. As Thursday morning clashes with a meeting of the Social Security and Social Justice Committee, and then FMQs, only 1 February is considered to be a realistic option.

Timings proposed for meeting

9. The proposed timings for the meeting are:
 - 3.00pm onboarding of members and witnesses
 - 3.30pm start of the meeting
 - 4.30pm close of the meeting.
10. In terms of Chamber business, the timings above would mean the committees would be meeting during questions on the Covid-19 update and during a Scottish Government debate, the topic for which has not been confirmed at this point.
11. It may be possible, subject to Mr Malthouse's diary, to move the timings slightly and start onboarding from 3.15pm and finish the meeting by 4.45pm. If Decision Time was brought forward that day, the clerks would advise the Convener to bring the meeting to an end to enable members to vote at Decision Time. For Members who are attending the Chamber virtually, any later finish (than 4.45pm) would run the risk that Members may not be able to log on in time for Decision Time.

Decision

12. Business Managers are invited to consider the request from the three committees and to agree whether to—
- approve the request for the committees to meet jointly
 - recommend to the Parliament that the committees be given permission to meet at the same time as the Chamber.

Parliamentary Business Team January 2022

REQUEST FROM COMMITTEES TO THE BUREAU – 19 JANUARY 2022

We are writing to you on behalf of the Criminal Justice, Health, Social Care and Sport, and Social Justice and Social Security committees.

The three committees wish to hold a limited number of joint meetings in the coming months (starting on 1st and 2nd February) to consider the issue of the misuse of drugs and efforts to tackle the number of drug deaths in Scotland. Part of this will be to consider the work of the Scottish Drugs Deaths Taskforce and the delivery of its recommendations. We consider it is important to meet jointly as measures to address this cross-cutting issue cover areas of criminal justice, health and social justice.

Standing Orders rule 6.14.1 states that, “where a matter falls within the remit of more than one committee, the committees concerned may, with the agreement of the Parliamentary Bureau, consider that matter jointly. The Parliamentary Bureau shall consult the Conveners’ Group before giving such agreement.” We would therefore request such permission.

If approval is given, we intend to select three to four MSPs from each of the three committees, on a cross-party basis, and to take evidence from the relevant Scottish and UK Government Ministers, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

One of our planned meetings involves hearing virtually from Kit Malthouse MP, Minister of State at the Home Office. He is keen to give evidence to us but is only free on the afternoon on Tuesday 1st February. We therefore seek permission to meet at the same time as the Chamber. We would envisage our meeting running between 3.00pm and 4.30pm, thereby avoiding Topical Questions and Decision Time.

Our second planned meeting takes place on the morning of the following day – Wednesday 2nd February – involving Angela Constance MSP and representatives of the Scottish Drugs Deaths Taskforce.

You will be aware that the Conveners' Group is keen to look at how greater cross-committee working on issues such as drugs or climate change can be achieved. Tackling drug misuse in Scotland is an issue on which we are keen to see progress made and we hope, therefore, that the Parliamentary Bureau and the Conveners' Group will give their approval.

Yours sincerely,

Audrey Nicoll MSP

Gillian Martin MSP

Neil Gray MSP