Parliamentary Bureau – Correspondence

Response from Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee correspondence

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 16 December 2026, the Bureau considered a proposed temporary amendment of Standing Orders to vary the lodging deadlines for public bills. The proposal was to alter the current deadline from 4.30pm to 2.30 pm on any day that amendments may be lodged excluding the final day.

2. The Bureau agreed to write to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee recommending a change and seeking its views (attached at Annexe A).

3. The SPPA Committee's response is attached at Annexe B. The Committee agreed to recommend a change to Standing Order rules to support the Bureau's recommendation and will publish a report setting out a temporary rule change and lodge a motion seeking the Parliament's agreement to this change.

4. The SPPA Committee's response also supports the Bureau's request that it considers the impact of the temporary change should be subject to an interim review at the end of the current session and a further review at the end of 2026. It recommends that the Bureau write to the Committee with the conclusion of that interim review at the end of the session.

Recommendation

5. A letter from the SPPA Committee is attached at Annexe B and Bureau members are invited to note the response.

Parliamentary Business Team
January 2026

Annexe A – Letter to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

The Presiding Officer

Martin Whitfield MSP
Convener
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

17 December 2025

Dear Convener,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, given the responsibility of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments (SPPA) Committee for recommending the temporary amendment of Standing Orders under Rule 17.1A.

At its meeting on 16 December 2025, the Bureau considered the lodging deadlines for public bills and agreed to request that the SPPA Committee consider recommending by motion the temporary amendment of Standing Orders to vary these deadlines for a trial period from early 2026 to the end of 2026.

Standing Orders make provision in relation to the time by which amendments to a Bill may be lodged on any day up to the deadline day for amendments. Amendments may be lodged until 4.30 pm, except on a final lodging day when the deadline is 12 noon (Rules 9.10.2 and 9.10.2A in relation to standard Bills and Rule 9.16.6 and 9.16.6A in relation to Budget Bills,).

Any amendments lodged before the deadline on any day will appear in a Daily List of amendments. The Daily List is circulated to those Members who have lodged amendments and to relevant committee members (lead and any secondary committee) that evening and published in the Business Bulletin.

The Legislation clerks prepare the Daily List of amendments following the deadline of 4.30 pm and then check the amendments on the list for compliance with proper form requirements, admissibility and marshalled order as well as checking that everything lodged that day (including any consequential amendments) has been included on the list. Where a large volume of amendments has been lodged on any day, tabling amendments and preparing and checking the list may take a significant amount of time, leading to the Daily List being circulated and published into the evening (and resulting in late notification of the amendments that have been lodged to Members).

The Bureau considered the time at which Members had received notification of amendments for a number of recent Stage 2s and Stage 3s and recognised that this notification could occur late into the evening.

Notification of amendments lodged by other Members, including the Member in charge of the Bill, via the Daily List, forms an important part of the amendment process and may impact on a Member’s decision about the amendments they

themselves decide to lodge (or to withdraw) and those they seek to amend and to support. The Scottish Government, by convention, lodges its own amendments one or two days in advance of the final deadline (depending on whether it is Stage 2 or 3) and other Members may be waiting for Government amendments before lodging their own. As such, the Bureau recognised that late circulation of the Daily List, particularly close to the deadline day, is less than ideal.

The Bureau considered that an earlier deadline on the days before the final lodging day would enable the Legislation clerks to prepare the Daily List at an earlier point in the day and consequently should lead to the Daily List being circulated to Members earlier too. Any amendments lodged after the deadline on that day would appear in the Daily List the following day (as is the case now).

The Bureau is of the view that a temporary change to Standing Orders would allow for a pilot to take place for earlier lodging deadlines. The Bureau invites the SPPA Committee to propose a temporary rule to be in place until the end of 2026 to alter the time by which amendments may be lodged on any day leading up to (but excluding) the final day, from 4.30 pm to 2.30 pm. The Bureau proposes that this change should apply to the daily deadline in relation to Stage 2, Stage 3, Reconsideration Stage and the Budget Bill. The deadline on the final lodging day (where relevant) would remain at 12 noon and the overall time available to Members to lodge amendments would therefore not change.

The Bureau considered that the impact of the proposed change should be subject to an interim review at the end of the current session and then a further review at the end of 2026. As part of this review, views would be sought from the Scottish Government, Business Managers and the Non-Government Bills Unit. Any comments or concerns expressed to clerks by individual Members during the period of the temporary change would also be taken into account. A key assessment will be whether this change has resulted in Daily Lists being circulated at an earlier point (in comparison to the time lists of equivalent volume of amendments had been circulated earlier in the session).

In conclusion, the Bureau requests that the SPPA Committee takes the necessary steps to propose the temporary amendment of Standing Orders under Rule 17.1A Temporary Amendment to Standing Orders for the period from early 2026 to the end of 2026.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP
Presiding Officer

Annexe B – Letter from the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Parliamentary Bureau

By email

8 January 2026

Dear Presiding Officer,

Thank you for your letter of 17 December 2025 on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau requesting the SPPA Committee consider recommending by motion the temporary amendment of Standing Orders to vary the lodging deadlines for public bills from early 2026 to end of 2026.

The Bureau's request specifies altering the current deadline from 4.30pm to 2.30pm on any day that amendments may be lodged, but excluding the final day.

We considered this request at our meeting on Thursday 8 January 2026.

The Committee agreed to recommend a change to Standing Order rules to support the Bureau's recommendation. We hope that this change will facilitate the Daily List being circulated to Members earlier. We note that as the deadline on the final day will remain at 12 noon the overall time available to Members to lodge amendments will not be affected.

The Committee will publish a report setting out a temporary rule change and lodge a motion seeking the Parliament's agreement to this change. We intend to publish our report this week to enable the Parliament, subject to the business programme, to consider the proposed change next week.

Your letter also details that the Bureau consider the impact of the temporary change should be subject to an interim review at the end of the current sessions and then a further review at the end of 2026. We support this request and consider that the Bureau would be best placed to undertake the interim review at the end of this Session and to write to the Committee with the conclusions of that interim review.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Whitfield MSP

Convener