



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Conveners Group

## Agenda

3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, 2024 (Session 6) Wednesday 24 April 2024

The group will meet at 12.45pm in Committee Room 3.

1. **Minutes**
2. **Elected conveners:** The Group will consider correspondence from the Convener of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee on elected conveners.
3. **Framework bills:** The Group will consider correspondence from the Convener of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee on framework bills.
4. **Strategic priority - Continuous professional development for Members:** The Group will be invited to consider a proposed approach to continuous professional development for Members.

The papers for this meeting are as follows –

- |                                       |                 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Minutes of last meeting            | CG/S6/24/1/M(P) |
| 2. Elected conveners: correspondence  | CG/S6/24/3/1    |
| 3. Framework bills: correspondence    | CG/S6/24/3/2    |
| 4. CPD for Members: proposed approach | CG/S6/24/3/3    |

## **Committee debates this Parliamentary year**

<b>Debate no.</b>	<b>Date of debate</b>	<b>Committee leading the debate</b>	<b>Title of debate</b>
1	21/09/2023	Criminal Justice Committee	Tackling online child abuse, grooming and exploitation
2	26/10/2023	Citizen Participation & Public Petitions Committee	Embedding Public Participation in the work of the Parliament
3	7/11/2023	Net Zero, Energy & Transport Committee	A Modern and Sustainable Ferry Service for Scotland
4	16/11/2023	Constitution, Europe, External Affairs & Culture Committee	Culture in Communities: The challenges and opportunities in delivering a place based approach
5	28/11/2023	Health, Social Care & Sport Committee	Female participation in sport and physical activity
6	12/12/2023	Equalities, Human Rights & Civil Justice Committee	Asylum Seekers in Scotland
7	09/01/2023	Constitution, Europe, External Affairs & Culture Committee	How is Devolution Changing Post-EU
8	14/03/2024	Social Justice and Social Security Committee	Addressing Child Poverty through parental employment
9	02/05/2024	Citizen Participation & Public Petitions Committee	Petition: create an Unborn Victims of Violence Act
10	23/05/2024	Public Audit Committee	Audit Scotland report, Adult mental health
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12	Intentionally blank	Intentionally blank	Intentionally blank

## **Contact details for the clerk**

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## **Elected Conveners: correspondence**

### **Introduction**

1. This paper invites the Conveners Group to consider correspondence from the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee on elected conveners. The letter is attached in the annex.

### **Background**

2. The SPPA Committee is seeking CG's views on the possible introduction of a system of elected conveners for committees.
3. It is also gathering views on this issue from MSPs, the Parliamentary Bureau, the SPCB and political parties to inform its consideration of the matter.

### **Issues on which views are sought**

4. The Committee has set some specific questions for consideration, summarised below:

#### **General views**

- Are Conveners in favour of introducing the election of Committee Conveners by the Parliament?
- What would be the advantages or disadvantages of the election of Conveners.

#### **Nomination of candidates**

- Should members of any party be able to nominate a Member for election as a Committee convener or should that be limited to Members of the party to which the Convenership has been allocated?
- Should a nomination need to be seconded by another Member (as is the case with nominations for the Presiding Officer, deputy Presiding Officers and members of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body).
- Should candidates be given the opportunity to provide a short statement (oral or written) in support of their election?

#### **Election process**

- What method of election should be adopted, and should the election of Committee Conveners be carried out by secret ballot?

## Removal of Conveners

- Should the rules regarding removal of a Convener also be changed to require a vote of the Parliament rather than of the Committee as is currently the case?
- Removal of a Convener by a Committee currently requires an absolute majority. If the rules regarding removal of a Convener were changed to require a vote of the Parliament, should that vote require an absolute majority?

The Committee also invites any other comments Conveners may have regarding the election of Committee Conveners.

## Next steps

5. The views of Conveners on these issues would be welcome in formulating a response to the SPPA Committee.

## Recommendation

6. **The Conveners Group is invited to share views on a possible response to the correspondence set out in the annex.**

**Conveners Group clerking team  
April 2024**

## **Annexe: Letter from Convener of Standards Procedures and Public Appointments Committee**

The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee in looking into the possible introduction of a system of elected conveners for committees. As part of that work, the Committee is seeking to gather views from MSPs, the Conveners Group, the Parliamentary Bureau, the SPCB and political parties.

We would welcome the Conveners Group views on all or any of the following issues:

### **General views**

- Would you be in favour of introducing the election of Committee Conveners by the Parliament?
- What do you consider would be the advantages or disadvantages of the election of Conveners?

### **Nomination of candidates**

- It is proposed that nomination should take place once the Parliament has agreed the party to which convenership of each committee should be allocated. Should members of any party be able to nominate a Member for election as a Committee convener or should that be limited to Members of the party to which the convenership has been allocated?
- Nominations for the Presiding Officer, deputy Presiding Officers and members of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body require a nomination to be seconded by another Member. Should the same threshold of support apply to nominations for election as Committee conveners?
- Should there be an opportunity for candidates to provide a short statement (oral or written) in support of their election?

### **Election process**

- What method of election should be adopted, and should the election of Committee Conveners be carried out by secret ballot?

### **Removal of Conveners**

- Should the rules regarding removal of a Convener also be changed to require a vote of the Parliament rather than of the Committee as is currently the case?
- Removal of a Convener by a Committee currently requires an absolute majority. If the rules regarding removal of a Convener were changed to require a vote of the Parliament, should that vote require an absolute majority?

### **Other issues**

- Do you have any other comments regarding the election of Committee Conveners?

**Conveners Group**  
**Wednesday 24 April 2024**  
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## **Framework Bills: correspondence**

### **Introduction**

1. This paper invites the Conveners Group to consider correspondence from the Convener of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee (RAI) on framework bills. The letter is attached in the annex.

### **Background**

2. Referring to its stage 1 consideration of the Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill, the RAI Committee raises concerns over the lack of detail around how the powers in the Bill would be used, and the associated costs. It also highlighted the difficulties in scrutinising secondary legislation implementing a framework bill due to committees having limited time and resources.
3. The Conveners Group has been asked by the RAI Committee to consider how the Parliament and Government can work together to ensure the Parliament has sufficient time and information to allow effective scrutiny of subordinate legislation brought forward under some framework bills.
4. The Convener of the RAI Committee will speak to the letter at the meeting.
5. Conveners may also wish to note that the Convener of the Finance and Public Appointments Committee has [written to the Presiding Officer](#) highlighting the committee's concerns in relation to the adequacy of Financial Memoranda and framework bills.

### **Other consideration of Framework Bills**

6. The Conveners Group has discussed framework bills previously, the most recent being the session with the First Minister on 27 March. At that meeting, questions asked included the impact that framework bills have on parliamentary scrutiny and stakeholder consultation, and concerns around the quality of financial memoranda being provided for such bills.
7. In response, the First Minister said "we do not consider such bills to be an easy option, nor do we take using them lightly". The First Minister also indicated that the Scottish Government would always work with the Parliament, including its committees, to determine whether any measures can be brought to allow further scrutiny down the line.

## **Recommendation**

- 8. The Conveners Group is invited to share views on the issues raised in the correspondence.**

**Conveners Group clerking team  
April 2024**

## **Annexe: Letter from Convener of Rural Affairs and Islands Committee**

As you will be aware, the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee published its stage 1 report on the Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill on Monday 18 March.

The Committee agreed with the Scottish Government's approach to introduce this legislation as a framework bill, but we also agreed that framework bills can have implications for parliamentary scrutiny of both the primary and secondary legislation.

We felt that the lack of detail around how the powers in the Bill would be used, and the associated costs, can make it challenging for the Parliament to take a view on whether delegating these powers to the Scottish Ministers is appropriate. We also felt that committees often have limited time and resources to scrutinise the secondary legislation implementing a framework bill when they are laid. Both the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee's report on the delegated powers memorandum and the Finance and Public Administration Committee's letter on the financial memorandum expressed similar concerns.

Recognising the importance of parliamentary scrutiny of secondary legislation made under framework legislation, the Committee agreed to ask the Conveners' Group to consider how the Parliament and Government can work together to ensure the Parliament has sufficient time and information to allow effective scrutiny of subordinate legislation brought forward under some framework bills.

The relevant recommendations from our report relating to framework bills is set out in the annexe to this letter.

I am happy to speak to this letter at a forthcoming Conveners' Group meeting, if that would help progress this conversation. I am copying in the conveners of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee and the Finance and Public Administration Committee, for their information.



Conveners Group  
Wednesday 24 April 2024  
3rd Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

# Supporting Members as Parliamentarians: Continuous Professional Development for Members

## Introduction

1. This paper invites the Conveners Group to consider next steps for the Group's strategic priority on continuous professional development (CPD) for Members.

## Background

2. This paper is a follow up to the Group's discussion at its meeting on 31 January where it considered what training or support would be beneficial for Members in fulfilling their roles as Parliamentarians.
3. Conveners were invited to consider what CPD would best support the delivery of the objectives in the Group's strategic priorities, as well as more general support for Members.
4. The Group noted the challenges experienced in delivering a programme including the capacity of Members to participate in CPD offered. Consideration was also given to the method of delivery, whether on an individual, committee or party group basis, as well as in person or online.
5. As part of the discussion the Group also noted the induction and training sessions which have been organised for new Members since they were returned in May 2021. The paper for the CG meeting on [31 January](#) sets this out in more detail.

## Approach to CPD

6. During the discussion Conveners raised a number of issues. This paper draws these together into a number of principles to apply in supporting CPD for Members. Rather than address specific learning needs, these principles are intended to support embedding of CPD for the remainder of session and address some of the challenges identified by Conveners.
7. The specific areas of training raised at the meeting can be taken forward on a committee or individual basis. There is also a [page on the Parliament's intranet](#) which sets out training that is offered by the Parliament's offices or who to contact on particular matters. Officials are available to support Members in accessing training and development.
8. Some of the issues raised related to induction of Members. The approach here is addressed later in the paper.

## Principles

9. It was agreed that business planning days provided the best opportunity to consider Members' CPD needs. In particular how CPD could support committee business and be best worked into business programmes. It is proposed that the Group sets out clear expectations for CPD to be embedded into business planning days as a matter of course.
10. The Group also noted the need for training to be delivered on a needs-led basis so that it is provided at the most appropriate time and when necessary eg when dealing with particular items of business such as legislation.
11. It was also noted that a reflection period should be built into the provision of training to further embed learning. This is intended to give Members the opportunity to reflect on learning needs with the benefit of experience once they have carried out particular types of scrutiny work.
12. CG receives regular updates on progress being made on each strategic priority. It is proposed as part of these updates that CG also be invited to consider any CPD that would be helpful in supporting the delivery of these actions as a matter of course.
13. The cross-cutting nature of scrutiny work was highlighted as a challenge. It is proposed that embedding of cross-cutting issues such as net zero, human rights and budget should form part of CPD
14. The role of officials in supporting this work was acknowledged, in particular their awareness of work being carried out across committees. It is proposed that officials consider ways in which to embed CPD provision, in particular when considering approaches to inquiries and other business, how committee business fits with work of other committees, as well as consideration of CPD at business planning days.
15. Finally, the format of any training or development which would best deliver CPD should be taken into account at all stages.
16. A summary of these principles is set out in the annex.

## Induction

17. Part of the Group's discussion focused on induction and the support required for new Members at the start of session. In particular on understanding their role when they first join the Parliament, as well as their responsibilities and what expectations there are of them.
18. The Group noted the restrictions in place at the beginning of session 6 limited the amount of induction that could be provided. This included the significant impact the restrictions had on the amount of social interaction Members were able to carry out.

19. There will be the opportunity at the start of session 7 to provide a detailed programme of induction for Members.

20. It is proposed that a separate exercise be carried out by CG to consider what induction would be welcome for Members at the start of the session to feed into the general induction provision and parliamentary training. This will include the role of conveners and committee members and the roles, expectations and responsibilities of Members.

21. The outcome of CG's consideration of this will feed into the central induction programme to be developed for Members at the start of session 7.

## **Next steps**

22. The Conveners Group is invited to endorse these principles. Officials will work together in applying these principles and will support Members in ensuring the provision of CPD identified for the remainder of the session.

23. A paper on induction will be brought forward to a future meeting.

## **Recommendation**

**24. The Conveners Group is invited to:**

- a) **consider and endorse the principles set out in the annex, and**
- b) **note that the Group will be invited to consider an induction programme for session 7 at a future meeting.**

**Conveners Group clerking team**

**April 2024**

## Annexe: CPD for members - principles

### Provision of support and actions

1. **Business planning days:** CG to set out clear expectation for CPD to be embedded into business planning days as a matter of course.
2. **Needs-led training:** Training to be provided at the most appropriate time and when necessary eg when dealing with particular items of business such as legislation.
3. **Reflection based on experience:** Period of reflection to be built into provision of training once the committee or member has carried out particular scrutiny work to reflect on learning needs based on their experience
4. **CPD built into strategic priorities:** CG to be invited to consider learning needs as part of updates on strategic priorities as a matter of course
5. **Cross-cutting issues:** Embedding of cross-cutting issues such as net zero, human rights and budget should form part of CPD
6. **General committee CPD:** Support to be provided by officials on what training is available and build CPD provision into approach to inquiries etc where needed, and what work is being carried out by other committees, as well as building in consideration of CPD at business planning days.
7. **Format of training and development:** Format of any or training or development which would best deliver CPD should be taken into account at all stages
8. **Induction programme:** CG to develop an induction programme for session 7.