



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Published 13 February 2026  
SP Paper 1008  
1st Report, 2026 (Session 6)

## Conveners Group

# Legacy report of the Conveners Group in Session 6



**Published in Scotland by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.**

---

All documents are available on the Scottish  
Parliament website at:  
<https://www.parliament.scot/documents>

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact  
Public Information on:  
Telephone: 0131 348 5000  
Textphone: 0800 092 7100  
Email: [sp.info@parliament.scot](mailto:sp.info@parliament.scot)

# Legacy report of the Conveners Group in Session 6

## Introduction

1. This legacy report provides an overview of the work of the Conveners Group (CG) in Session 6. It makes recommendations for its successor about the important stewardship role and influence that the CG can have on the effectiveness of committee scrutiny in Session 7.
2. The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments (SPPA) Committee's inquiry into [Strengthening Committees' Effectiveness](#) has been a significant piece of work in Session 6. The report sets out important recommendations for strengthening the scrutiny function of committees. This includes recommendations that relate specifically to the CG's stewardship role and priorities. Where that is the case, this has been highlighted alongside the relevant issues outlined in this report. However, some of the recommendations contained in the report, such as a proposed rule change on elected conveners, have yet to be formally considered by the Parliament at the time this report was agreed. The CG therefore encourages its successor to review the SPPA Committee's inquiry report in full, alongside any subsequent rule changes, as part of its business planning activities in the new session.
3. The CG also recognises that individual committees may publish legacy papers making recommendations for their successors in relation to their remits and the scrutiny they have undertaken. The CG's legacy report does not intend to summarise the scrutiny conducted by individual committees over the course of Session 6 or the findings of their respective legacy papers. The CG therefore encourages its successor to review individual committee legacy papers in full alongside the recommendations outlined here.

## Remit and membership

4. Chapter 6A of Standing Orders provides for the CG and its role and functions in relation to the operation of the Scottish Parliament's committees. Rule 6A.2.1 provides that the functions of the CG include—
  - a) to consider and make recommendations in connection with the operation of committees;
  - b) to report to and be consulted by the Parliamentary Bureau on questions regarding competence under Rule 6.13;
  - c) to report to and be consulted by the Parliamentary Bureau on any decision on joint consideration by committees under Rule 6.14;
  - d) to decide with the Parliamentary Bureau on the approval of the place in Scotland of a committee meeting in accordance with Rule 12.3.2;

- e) to decide with the Parliamentary Bureau on the approval of travel by a committee member outwith the United Kingdom in accordance with Rule 12.10; and
  - f) to refer matters to the Parliamentary Bureau, a committee or the Parliamentary corporation where it considers it appropriate to do so.
5. The membership of the CG consists of the Presiding Officer and the convener of each subject and mandatory committee. The Presiding Officer may delegate chairing the CG to a Deputy Presiding Officer. Liam McArthur MSP, Deputy Presiding Officer, chaired the CG's meetings in Session 6 accordingly.

## Strategic priorities

6. At its [meeting](#) on 27 October 2021, the CG agreed to take a proactive role in setting strategic priorities to enhance committee scrutiny. This decision was informed by the recommendations contained in the [Session 5 CG legacy report](#), which encouraged the Session 6 CG to "...actively explore, and encourage, the use of techniques and working practices which promote a collaborative approach by committees to better enable systems-based scrutiny."<sup>1</sup>
7. The CG agreed to prioritise four issues where it felt it could bring improvements to the scrutiny role of the Scottish Parliament, ensuring that those issues did not fall between different remits and were considered in a holistic way, rather than through a departmental silo. These priorities formed the basis of the CG's strategy for Session 6 and included: cross-committee working; participation, diversity and inclusion; post-legislative scrutiny; and supporting Members as parliamentarians. The group received regular updates on these strategic priorities throughout the session, which are linked to in the Annexe.
8. **Overall, the CG considers that the approach to setting strategic priorities has enhanced committee scrutiny in Session 6, as detailed below. The CG therefore recommends that its successor continues to have a co-ordination role for committee scrutiny and consider adopting a similar approach to identifying strategic priorities to underpin its work in the new session.**

## Cross-committee working

9. A key issue that the CG wanted to address was to support the scrutiny of policy matters and referred work that straddles more than one committee's remit. The CG therefore set out to provide leadership in driving cross-committee scrutiny forward using its co-ordination role. Initially, the CG agreed to prioritise cross-committee working on net zero and post-EU policy scrutiny because almost all committees had a role to play in scrutinising these issues and they were likely to remain current for the duration of Session 6. Further opportunities for cross-committee working were identified throughout the session, which are highlighted below.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Conveners Group, Session 5 Legacy Report](#), 24 March 2021, para 39.

## **Net zero policy scrutiny**

10. The Net Zero, Energy and Transport (NZET) Committee played a lead role in co-ordinating cross-cutting scrutiny of the Scottish Government's delivery of net zero targets. This included supporting and encouraging other committees to effectively embed net zero policy scrutiny in their work programmes and co-ordinating cross-committee scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan.<sup>2</sup>
11. Staffing support for CG in net zero scrutiny was bolstered in this session by a secondment from the UK Parliament and through partnering with the UK Research and Innovation Economic and Social Research Council (UKRI-ESRC) and the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Strathclyde and Stirling, to externally fund a dedicated post to develop diverse academic networks related to climate change across Scotland, the UK and globally. The NZET Committee also appointed an adviser to support all committees in their scrutiny of policies impacting on climate change and net zero targets.<sup>3</sup> Advisers have previously been used to support a single committee only, so this was a novel approach to making a specialist resource available to all committees to support cross-committee working on an issue.
12. The CG agreed to invite the Climate Change Committee to attend its meetings annually to provide an update on net zero policy issues. The CG held three sessions with the Climate Change Committee, hearing from Chris Stark (former Chief Executive) on 26 October 2022 and 25 October 2023, and Emma Pinchbeck, Chief Executive, and Dr Eoin Devane, Head of Carbon Budgets, at its meeting on 24 September 2024. These sessions supported the strategic objective of encouraging and facilitating cross-committee working on net zero policy scrutiny, whilst also supporting committees to embed climate change scrutiny in their work.
13. The CG's strategic priority on cross-committee working throughout the session helped deliver two overarching benefits for committee scrutiny of the Scottish Government's net zero policies. It supported sustained political and administrative attention on the scrutiny of net zero policy delivery throughout Session 6, enhancing cross-committee awareness of and engagement with climate change, encouraging committees to apply a 'climate lens' and supporting effective communication and coordination. It also enabled innovation and new approaches to net zero scrutiny, giving Members access to external resources, new scrutiny approaches and tools.

---

<sup>2</sup> The other committees involved in scrutinising the draft Climate Change Plan included: Economy and Fair Work Committee; Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee; Rural Affairs and Islands Committee; Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee; Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee; Criminal Justice Committee; Health, Social Care and Sport Committee; and Public Audit Committee.

<sup>3</sup> Dr Kirsten E H Jenkins, Senior Lecturer in Energy, Environment and Society, the University of Edinburgh: adviser on climate change and net zero targets (January 2024 to the present). Previously, Dr Dan Barlow, Honorary Fellow, Edinburgh Climate Change Institute: adviser on climate change and net zero targets (October 2022 to October 2023).

## **Post-EU scrutiny**

14. The CG also prioritised the UK's withdrawal from the EU for cross-committee scrutiny this session, recognising the challenges presented by the complexity of the issues involved. The Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture (CEEAC) Committee played a lead role in delivering this priority by co-ordinating cross-cutting scrutiny of the issues involved.
15. The CG agreed to focus on five key issues related to the UK's withdrawal from the EU: the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023; the Scottish Government's commitment to align with EU Law; the development of an EU law tracker; the intergovernmental relations written agreement; and to review relevant rules in Standing Orders. The CG developed an action plan to keep up to date with relevant developments against each issue. It received regular updates on developments throughout the session, which are linked to in the Annex.
16. The EU law tracker was one of the main tools used to promote cross-committee scrutiny of post-EU issues. The primary purpose of the EU law tracker was to provide transparency and allow parliamentary committees, business, the public and wider stakeholders to track relevant developments in EU law. It also informed business and civil society in Scotland of EU legislative developments which may affect them. The tracker also supported the Parliament in scrutinising the Scottish Government's commitment to EU alignment. The Parliament commissioned two reports a year, which were received by the CEEAC Committee. To date, five reports have been published.
17. Subject committees have used the case studies to support their scrutiny of the Scottish Government's commitment to align with EU law in their respective remits. For example, the Criminal Justice Committee used the information contained in the third EU law tracker report to seek the Scottish Government's views on the EU's adoption of a new Anti-Trafficking Directive ((EU) 2024/712) in June 2024. The Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee also wrote to the Scottish Government regarding its plans to consider alignment in respect to Directive (EU) 2024/2841 (establishing the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities) following information contained in the fourth EU law tracker report.
18. In response to the fifth EU law tracker report, the Criminal Justice Committee sought an update from the Scottish Government on Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. The Rural Affairs and Islands Committee also wrote to the Scottish Government for further information on legislative changes related to organic products and labelling resulting from Regulation (EU) 2018/848 and the adoption of other delegated EU acts in this area. It also queried the impact of legislative changes to EU trading rules regarding plant and pest imports and certification as a result Regulation (EU) 2024/3115.

## **Other cross-committee scrutiny**

19. The CG's strategic priority on cross-committee scrutiny also encouraged committees to identify opportunities to strengthen committee scrutiny of primary legislation. In Session 6, the following Bills were subject to cross-committee scrutiny:

- Bankruptcy and Diligence (Scotland) Bill
- Care Reform (Scotland) Bill
- Children (Care and Justice) Bill
- Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill
- Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill
- Housing (Scotland) Bill
- Scottish Elections (Representation and Reform)

20. The CG also encouraged committees to identify opportunities to work together to scrutinise high-profile government consultations, such as the National Performance Framework and the Good Food Nation Plan. The use of reporters was more limited but provided another means for committees to enhance scrutiny through collaboration. For example, the NZET Committee appointed a reporter for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions (CPPP) Committee's high-profile inquiry into the A9 Dualling Project. The CPPP Committee concluded that the A9 Dualling Project would benefit from an ad hoc committee being established to "...provide oversight on major infrastructure projects being pursued by the Scottish Government, specifically where the project is likely to run over multiple parliamentary sessions".<sup>4</sup>

21. Whilst this recommendation was not taken forward by the Parliamentary Bureau in Session 6, the CG notes that the SPPA Committee has recommended that next session the Parliamentary Bureau "...considers recommending to the Parliament the formation of time-limited committees during the parliamentary session, [some of which]...could be established to consider specific inquiry issues, whether these be of a topical or cross-cutting nature.."<sup>5</sup>

22. The SPPA Committee has also recommended a new approach to 'hosting' members from other committees to enhance cross-committee scrutiny and the reporter function. According to the Committee, a 'hosting' approach:

"...enhances the current reporter approach where a member with the agreement of the other committee's convener can participate in the other

---

<sup>4</sup> Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee, Inquiry into the A9 Dualling Programme, 2nd Report, 2024 (Session 6), para 145.

<sup>5</sup> Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Strengthening committees' effectiveness, 4th Report, 2025, (Session 6), paras 393-396.

committee's proceedings. A hosting mechanism would mean that a member would have new enhanced rights to access private sessions of the other committee and private meeting papers, but they would not have the right to vote."<sup>6</sup>

23. **The CG considers that its successor should continue to promote the benefits of cross-committee working and to identify issues and opportunities to deliver this in Session 7. It also notes the SPPA Committee's recommendation that time-limited committees and an approach to 'committee hosting' be established in Session 7 to enhance the reporter function. The CG considers that its successor should work closely with the Parliamentary Bureau to identify opportunities where cross-committee working may strengthen committee scrutiny in Session 7.**
24. **The CG notes that the use of academic engagement, the appointment of fellows and advisers, and the production of the EU law tracker have been useful tools in supporting cross-committee scrutiny of complex policy matters in Session 6. The CG invites its successor to consider using tools such as these to support its work in Session 7.**
25. **The CG also considers its sessions with the Climate Change Committee were a useful tool in promoting cross-committee scrutiny and understanding key issues related to net zero scrutiny. It recommends that its successor consider a similar approach to hearing from relevant external bodies on cross-cutting issues in Session 7.**

### **Joint scrutiny**

26. Three committees took cross-committee working a step further to convene joint meetings on a session-long inquiry into Drug Deaths and Drug Harms.<sup>7</sup> In their joint meetings, the committees scrutinised the progress being made by Ministers and public bodies in delivering the recommendations of the Scottish Drugs Deaths Taskforce. These committees will publish a separate legacy paper reflecting on their joint scrutiny over the course of the session.
27. While there were several examples where cross-committee scrutiny, including joint scrutiny, was used effectively, some committees experienced barriers that impeded their ability to undertake scrutiny work jointly. For example, skills policy engaged the remits of both the Economy and Fair Work (EFW) and the Education, Children and Young People (ECYP) Committees. The EFW Committee's interest was from the perspective of the labour market and how skills policy and delivery aligned with business needs, supported innovation and the requirements for the workforce of the future. The ECYP Committee's interest was how the education system provides the foundation, conditions and choice of pathways for young people to develop and gain qualifications. The two committees agreed an approach to joint scrutiny but due to membership changes

---

<sup>6</sup> Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Strengthening committees' effectiveness, 4th Report, 2025, (Session 6), para 461.

<sup>7</sup> Criminal Justice Committee; Health, Social Care and Sport Committee; Social Justice and Social Security Committee.

and logistical challenges, adjusted their approach and agreed a co-ordinated approach to scrutiny instead.

28. The SPPA Committee specifically identified the rules on quorum as a barrier to undertaking cross-committee scrutiny via joint meetings in its report into strengthening committee effectiveness. It recommended that "...changes are made to Standing Orders to reduce the number of members who are required to be present from each individual committee when hosting a joint committee meeting."<sup>8</sup> In its view, this change will enable more committees to consider using joint committee meetings in the future.
29. **The CG welcomes the SPPA Committee's recommendations to address quorum in joint meetings and encourages the CG's successor to continue to identify and address any barriers to cross-committee working in Session 7.**

### **Interparliamentary working**

30. The CG agreed that interparliamentary working should be another priority for cross-committee scrutiny. The Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee played an active part in the Interparliamentary Forum, which met seven times between 2022 and 2025. Its purpose was to give parliamentarians from different parliaments and assemblies a way to discuss and work together on shared scrutiny issues that emerged after the UK left the EU. The Forum also aimed to strengthen cooperation between these institutions and help them work together to find solutions to these challenges.
31. The Finance and Public Administration Committee also played an active role in the Interparliamentary Finance Committee Forum, which involved participants from the Senedd and Northern Ireland Assembly. It provided an opportunity for participating Members to share information and network, hear from UK and Devolved Ministers and to share common challenges. It held meetings on 16 June 2022, 24 March 2023, 21 March 2024 and 19 March 2025.
32. **The CG recommends that its successor promote opportunities for interparliamentary working to committees in Session 7.**

### **Post legislative scrutiny**

33. The CG identified post legislative scrutiny (PLS) as another strategic priority. It encouraged committees to review laws that have been passed by the Scottish Parliament and to scrutinise whether they are working as intended. Following its adoption as a strategic priority, the CG agreed a detailed approach to increase the number of PLS inquiries this session and overall awareness of the merits of PLS amongst conveners, MSPs and parliamentary staff, at its meeting on 26 January 2022.

---

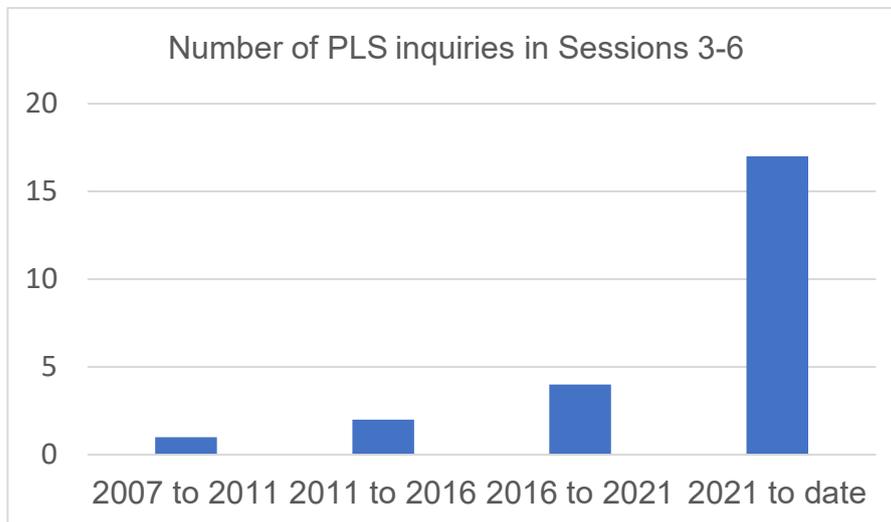
<sup>8</sup> Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Strengthening committees' effectiveness, 4th Report, 2025, (Session 6), para 459.

## Conveners Group

Legacy Report, 2026 (Session 6)

34. Since then, officials have implemented the agreed approach on behalf of the CG, progress on which has been reported to the CG on an annual basis. Table 1 below shows the growth in the number of PLS activities has been marked in this session compared to previous sessions.

**Table 1: Number of PLS inquiries in Sessions 3-6**



35. Dr Tom Caygill of Nottingham Trent University was appointed as a SPICe academic fellow to support PLS scrutiny as a strategic priority. Dr Caygill produced two evaluation reports<sup>9</sup> and supported the production of a list of all PLS activity, which is now available on the Parliament’s website.<sup>10</sup> This list makes committee PLS scrutiny more transparent and accessible to an external audience. The CG also encouraged committees to incorporate PLS in their approaches to Stage 1 inquiries. As a result, there have been some examples of references to the scope for PLS work in Stage 1 reports and amendments calling for reviews of Acts.
36. The SPPA Committee’s report into strengthening committee effectiveness concluded that PLS is an important aspect of committee scrutiny. It noted in this regard:

“We consider that the early stages of a Parliamentary session also provide a valuable window in which to consider approaches to post-legislative scrutiny, both in terms of identifying legislation to be reviewed and the form that the scrutiny could take. The Conveners Group is and will remain uniquely placed to take a coordination and agenda-setting role in relation to post-legislative scrutiny.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Dr Tom Caygill, [Post-Legislative Scrutiny in the Scottish Parliament: A Reflection of Session 5](#), SB 24-45, 3 October 2024; Dr Tom Caygill, [Post-Legislative Scrutiny in the Scottish Parliament in Session 6: A Strategic Priority](#), SB25-24, 18 June 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Scottish Parliament, Post-legislative scrutiny. Available at: <https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/post-legislative-scrutiny>.

<sup>11</sup> Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Strengthening committees' effectiveness, 4th Report, 2025, (Session 6), para 381.

## Conveners Group

Legacy Report, 2026 (Session 6)

37. The SPPA Committee also recommended that the Parliament consider establishing time-limited committees to undertake post legislative scrutiny of individual Acts, or to review the legislation in a particular policy area in Session 7.<sup>12</sup>
38. **The CG notes that making PLS a strategic priority has been particularly effective in encouraging committees to undertake this type of scrutiny. It invites its successor to consider making this a priority for Session 7 to maintain the momentum of the scrutiny done in Session 6. The CG also invites its successor to work closely with the Parliamentary Bureau to identify PLS topics that may benefit from scrutiny by a time-limited committee.**

## Participation, Diversity and Inclusion

39. The CG made Participation, Diversity and Inclusion a strategic priority with a view to strengthen parliamentary scrutiny by supporting a broader range of voices to contribute to committee inquiries. The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions (CPPP) Committee played a lead role in driving this strategic priority forward, supported by the Participation and Communities Team (PACT).

## People's Panels

40. A key strand of this work was the CPPP Committee's public participation inquiry. This led to three people's panels being delivered in Session 6, focusing on public participation in the Parliament, climate change and drug harms. These deliberative approaches have improved scrutiny, strengthened trust and deepened public understanding. The evaluation of the panels showed they had tangible policy impact. For example, the Scottish Government accepted all the Drug Harms Panel's recommendations.
41. The CPPP Committee's report entitled "A blueprint for participation - embedding public participation in the work of the Parliament" recommended that four people's panels be established in Session 7 (one in each year from 2027 until 2030).<sup>13</sup> The report also recommended that topic selection should be the responsibility of CG in Session 7, based on an evaluation from SPICe and PACT staff as to which topic best meets the selection criteria. The Parliament endorsed these recommendations on 3 June 2025.<sup>14</sup>
42. **The CG recommends that its successor consider and agree the criteria for topic selection, followed by the choice of topic for the first people's panel, by October 2026 to ensure that necessary preparations can be undertaken to deliver this commitment in 2027.**

---

<sup>12</sup> Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Strengthening committees' effectiveness, 4th Report, 2025, (Session 6), para 396.

<sup>13</sup> Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee, A blueprint for participation - embedding deliberative democracy in the work of the Scottish Parliament, 1st Report, 2025 (Session 6).

<sup>14</sup> [Motion S6M-17733](#), taken in the Chamber on Tuesday, 03 June 2025.

## **Digital engagement**

43. During Session 6, digital participation tools, such as Citizen Space and Your Priorities, were also embedded in committee scrutiny to support people across Scotland to share their views and contribute to parliamentary inquiries.
44. Parliamentary committees received 67,792 submissions across 280 calls for views hosted on Citizen Space, with the highest response rates relating to the Assisted Dying, Gender Recognition Reform and Wildlife Management Bills. Collectively, these tools have widened participation and demonstrated strong public interest in shaping legislation.
45. The Your Priorities platform attracted 6,844 users who supported committee questioning of Ministers and contributed to legislative scrutiny. Over 2,100 people provided input on major Bills, including those on fireworks, the circular economy, care services and visitor levies, while more than 1,600 shared lived experiences on issues such as rural healthcare and ADHD services.
46. In addition to supporting people's panels and digital engagement, PACT engaged directly with more than 4,600 individuals and 480 voluntary sector and community organisations over the course of Session 6. Of these, 2,500 were involved in committee work, 1,200 in parliamentary awareness initiatives and 900 through the Presiding Officer's Regional Programme.
47. **The CG recommends that its successor continue to encourage committees to use digital participation tools to support public engagement in Session 7.**

## **External meetings**

48. Supporting this priority of wider public engagement, committees undertook fact-finding visits in various locations across Scotland and held three external committee meetings.
49. **The CG recommends that its successor continue to play a role in encouraging committees to undertake participation-led activity in Session 7. The CG's successor may also wish to encourage committees to use external meetings as another way to engage with members of the public in areas where engagement with the Parliament is low.**

## **Witness diversity**

50. The CG was also interested to improve engagement with the witness diversity survey to ensure this information could be reliably recorded and published. The SPPA Committee concluded in its strengthening committee effectiveness report that the CG should continue to play a leadership role on this issue, noting:

“We recognise the importance of ensuring a wide range of expert witnesses and views and perspectives are heard and committees go beyond the 'usual suspects'. We recommend that the Conveners Group should monitor the

## Conveners Group

Legacy Report, 2026 (Session 6)

range of committees' witness bases to ensure committees hear from all relevant voices.”<sup>15</sup>

51. A new approach to advertising the witness diversity survey has been trialled in two committees in 2025. Initial results show this has led to an increase in response rates. The trial will be evaluated by the end of the session with a view to making recommendations for the successor CG to consider in the new session.
52. **The CG recommends that its successor consider an update on the witness diversity survey pilot and plays a role in encouraging committees to continue to trial new approaches to promoting the survey to witnesses in the new session.**

## Supporting Members as Parliamentarians

53. Continuous professional development (CPD) for Members was another key priority this session, focusing on how Members can be best supported in their scrutiny role, through the provision of training, support, and other CPD activities.
54. Training courses were offered to new and returning Members to support them in their role as parliamentarians at the start of the session. A programme of needs-led training was also offered, whereby training was provided in a reactive way when committees needed additional support to scrutinise specific items of business, such as legislation.
55. CPD has taken many forms during this session, including sessions delivered by parliamentary staff in committees (e.g., on legislation) and sessions with external trainers (e.g., questioning training for committees; and training on whistleblowing).
56. In September 2023, the CG agreed that trauma-informed training should be offered to committees undertaking relevant inquiries. Committees have since applied this approach to sensitive topics including assisted dying and police conduct. Officials are now developing training, guidance and risk-assessment standards to promote consistent practice across the organisation.
57. Looking ahead to next session, the SPPA Committee recommended in its report on strengthening committees' effectiveness that "...a clear and distinct programme for support for conveners is put in place from the start of Session 7. We suggest that this could be coordinated by the Conveners Group.”<sup>16</sup> The CG was consulted on the programme of induction and CPD for Members in Session 7 accordingly and this is being taken forward by the Election Project and the Committee Office.

---

<sup>15</sup> Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Strengthening committees' effectiveness, 4th Report, 2025, (Session 6), para 429.

<sup>16</sup> Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Strengthening committees' effectiveness, 4th Report, 2025, (Session 6), para 278.

- 58. The CG encourages committees to include a discussion of their CPD needs in their initial business planning days next session, supported by officials who can provide information on what training is available.**
- 59. The CG recommends that its successor consider making CPD for Members a priority in Session 7.**

## **Committee workloads and capacity**

60. Committee workloads and capacity have been a recurring issue this session, as many have struggled to accommodate and/or balance the volume of referred work and self-initiated inquiries within their work programmes. For some committees these challenges have at times been compounded by a lack of clarity in the scope of their remits and the length of time it has taken to resolve that uncertainty. The CG notes that some committees' remits have been too widely drawn this session, such as the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee. In this regard, transport (covering ferries, trains, buses, railways, roads, road building, parking speeds etc.) and net zero and energy should be covered by separate committees in Session 7.
61. In Session 6 the parliamentary week was arranged so that committee meetings were held on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning with Chamber business taking place on those afternoons. Some of the committees who meet on a Thursday expressed frustration that they are unable to meet beyond 11.40am, which directly impacts on their ability to carry out effective scrutiny. The Thursday morning meeting slot was particularly challenging for committees with broad remits.
62. The CG therefore welcomes the SPPA Committee's inquiry on strengthening committees' effectiveness considering committee workloads and capacity in detail. The SPPA Committee recommends that Standing Orders are changed to allow committees to meet in private at the same time as the Chamber is sitting,<sup>17</sup> and suggests that committees use the time allocated on Mondays and Fridays in the parliamentary week to undertake fact-finding visits and outreach activities.<sup>18</sup>
63. The SPPA Committee also recommends that the Parliamentary Bureau considers the need for committees to respond flexibly to issues when it recommends the establishment of committees at the start of the session and suggests that time-limited committees be established to manage committee workloads throughout the course of a session.<sup>19</sup>
64. Conveners had opportunities to discuss committee workloads and scheduling issues in 1-1 meetings with the Minister for Parliamentary Business and at the

---

<sup>17</sup> Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Strengthening committees' effectiveness, 4th Report, 2025, (Session 6), para 383.

<sup>18</sup> Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Strengthening committees' effectiveness, 4th Report, 2025, (Session 6), para 387.

<sup>19</sup> Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Strengthening committees' effectiveness, 4th Report, 2025, (Session 6), paras 391-396.

Minister's annual appearance at the CG. The Parliamentary Bureau also consulted committees on the referral of legislation and their workloads on an ad hoc basis. This enabled committees, and/or conveners, to raise individual issues directly with the Minister or the Parliamentary Bureau.

65. The Parliamentary Bureau also recognised the need to take a broader view of the management of parliamentary business in Session 6. It arranged bi-annual strategic planning meetings to consider issues affecting parliamentary business in the Chamber and committees. In order for it to influence decisions impacting all committees in a strategic way the CG considers that the chair of CG could be given a formal role to represent committees' views in the Parliamentary Bureau, particularly when it is making significant decisions regarding committees' ability to respond flexibly to issues and to establish time-limited committees in Session 7.
66. **The CG welcomes the SPPA Committee's recommendations to address the workloads and capacity of committees. The CG recommends that its successor formalise its working relationship with the Parliamentary Bureau and the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to establish how the bodies will work together to address committee workloads and support committee effectiveness in Session 7. This should include consideration of how the CG can contribute to strategic planning discussions.**
67. **The CG notes that lengthy Stage 2 proceedings have added to the pressures on committee work programmes, particularly in the latter part of the session. The CG therefore welcomes the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's decision to upgrade console facilities in committee rooms using a phased approach in Session 7, which will enable digital voting to be rolled out to committee rooms. The CG considers this will help manage Stage 2 proceedings as efficiently as possible.**

## **SPCB written agreement (parliamentary funded officeholders)**

68. A recurring issue in Session 6 has been the scrutiny, function and funding of Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) supported officeholders. This has been the subject of an inquiry by the Finance and Public Administration Committee and an ad hoc committee was established to examine this issue further, the SPCB Supported Landscape Review Committee.
69. The CG concluded a written agreement with the SPCB at its meeting on 25 January 2023. The purpose of the written agreement is to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of the SPCB and relevant committees in the oversight of Parliament-funded officeholders.
70. The written agreement sets out a robust governance role for the SPCB and promotes effective scrutiny by committees of how Officeholders carry out their functions. As well as encouraging effective scrutiny, the agreement also makes clear that information can be shared between committees and the SPCB where

## Conveners Group

Legacy Report, 2026 (Session 6)

appropriate. It is intended that the written agreement be kept under review to ensure it remains up to date with any changes in the officeholder landscape.

**71. The Group invites its successor to keep the written agreement under review in Session 7.**

## Meetings with Scottish Ministers and local government representatives

### Meetings with the First Minister

72. Over the course of the session, the CG held bi-annual meetings with the First Minister to discuss policy issues relevant to committees. Questions were grouped together under common themes where possible, typically directly related to the remit of one or more committees. These meetings were scheduled for 90 minutes.

73. Towards the end of the session, at the suggestion of the Finance and Public Administration Committee, it was agreed that a new format for these meetings be trialled. The CG agreed to split its meetings with the First Minister in half, with 50% of conveners each attending a 60-minute meeting.

74. It was challenging to group Members into common themes when split between two sessions. Nonetheless, this new format enabled a more engaging discussion and overall the CG found this to be a better format. If using this new format again, it would be helpful to have a significant lead in time to the meetings to ensure the availability of Members aligns with the themes proposed for each session.

**75. The CG recommends that its successor continues to hold bi-annual meetings with the First Minister in Session 7 but considers new ways to make these meetings as engaging as possible.**

### Meetings with the Minister for Parliamentary Business

76. The CG held a meeting with the Minister for Parliamentary Business each year, usually following the announcement of the Programme for Government in the autumn. As with its sessions with the First Minister, questions were grouped together under common themes relevant to the Minister's responsibilities.

77. Recurring issues that the CG explored with the Minister included the timetabling and co-ordination of legislation, including Legislative Consent Memorandums (LCMs), and other documents subject to parliamentary consultation or control. Significant concerns were expressed throughout the session by various conveners at the timetabling of LCMs, which impacted on the effectiveness of committees' scrutiny role. By way of illustration, this was highlighted in a letter from the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee to the Conveners Group dated [11 November 2025](#).

78. Some committees also experienced issues when key details of the relevant policy being implemented using primary or secondary legislation were not known

## Conveners Group

Legacy Report, 2026 (Session 6)

when committees were considering them. This made it very challenging for committees to scrutinise the legislation effectively.

79. The opportunity to meet with the Minister for Parliamentary Business on an annual basis provided a forum for committee conveners to identify common issues such as these and raise them with the Minister.
80. **The CG recommends that its successor continue holding annual meetings with the Minister for Parliamentary Business in Session 7. It also recommends that its successor keep under review how the timetabling and co-ordination of legislation, along with other relevant policies and documents subject to parliamentary control, affect the effectiveness of committee scrutiny.**

## Meetings with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance

81. Each year time is set aside in the Chamber to debate committee pre-budget reports prior to the Stage 1 debate on the general principles of the Budget Bill. The Finance and Public Administration Committee experimented with different formats for this debate in Session 6, but the CG considers that more could be done to find ways to enhance cross-committee budget scrutiny.
82. **The CG therefore recommends that its successor holds meetings with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance as part of the Parliament's budget scrutiny approach. The timings of these meetings would be for its successor to agree, but may include after the publication of the Budget Bill and at the time of the main budget revision in the autumn. These meetings should ideally be held in public.**

## Engagement with COSLA

83. As part of its engagement with key external stakeholders, the CG held an informal event with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) on 29 January 2025. This engagement provided an opportunity to discuss issues of shared interest and ways to enhance committees' engagement with COSLA going forward.
84. **The CG recommends that its successor identify opportunities to engage with COSLA in Session 7.**

## **Annexe: updates on the delivery of the Conveners Group's strategic priorities**

This annexe provides information on when updates on the Conveners Group's strategic priorities were considered:

[Conveners Group, 2nd Meeting, 2022 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 23 February 2022](#)

[Conveners Group, 3rd Meeting, 2022 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 30 March 2022](#)

[Conveners Group, 4th Meeting, 2022 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 27 April 2022](#)

[Conveners Group, 5th Meeting, 2022 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 25 May 2022](#)

[Conveners Group, 6th Meeting, 2022 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 22 June 2022](#)

[Conveners Group, 9th Meeting, 2022 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 30 November 2022](#)

[Conveners Group, 1st Meeting, 2023 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 25 January 2023](#)

[Conveners Group, 2nd Meeting, 2023 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 22 February 2023](#)

[Conveners Group, 4th Meeting, 2023 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 26 April 2023](#)

[Conveners Group, 5th meeting, 2023 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 31 May 2023](#)

[Conveners Group 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2023 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 21 June 2023](#)

[Conveners Group, 7th Meeting, 2023 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 20 September 2023](#)

[Conveners Group, 8th Meeting, 2023 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 25 October 2023](#)

[Conveners Group, 1st Meeting, 2024 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 31 January 2024](#)

[Conveners Group, 2nd Meeting, 2024 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 20 March 2024](#)

[Conveners Group, 3rd Meeting, 2024 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 24 April 2024](#)

[Conveners Group, 4th Meeting, 2024 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 29 May 2024](#)

[Conveners Group, 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 2024 \(Session 6\) 26 June 2024](#)

[Conveners Group, 6th Meeting, 2024 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 25 September 2024](#)

[Conveners Group, 7th Meeting, 2024 \(Session 6\), Wednesday 27 November 2024](#)

[Conveners Group 1st Meeting, 2025 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 26 February 2025](#)

[Conveners Group, 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2025 \(Session 6\) Wednesday 24 September 2025](#)

