Jenny Minto MSP
Convenor
Standards Procedures and Public Appointments Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
(via email)

23 November 2026

Dear Jenny

Inquiry into temporary changes to Chamber business

Thank you for your invitation of 30 October 2026 to submit written evidence to the Standards Procedures and Public Appointments Committee inquiry into temporary changes to Chamber business.

Prospect represents professional and managerial staff across the Scottish Parliamentary Service (SPS). All branch members were asked for their views on the temporary changes to Chamber business. Key issues raised by members fall into two broad categories, procedural and personal, which are briefly outlined below.

Procedural: Prospect, and the other recognised trade unions, have effective, long-standing partnership arrangements in place with Parliament management for the co-creation, refinement, and implementation of policies and procedures that affect SPS staff. The temporary changes to Chamber business were made without recourse to these arrangements, or any other consultation with Parliament trade unions.

It is unclear whether an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was undertaken prior to implementing the temporary changes to Chamber business. The importance of an EQIA in managing such change is highlighted on Parliament's intranet, which states:

> "In carrying out the EQIA we can demonstrate how we are ensuring diversity and inclusion in our decision making and in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)."

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Prospect members always strive to provide a high-quality service to elected members and are mindful of the need for flexibility and adaptability. However, members consider the partnership arrangements and EQIA processes to be powerful tools which, when used effectively, drive service improvement while addressing any potentially negative impacts on staff, particularly those groups with protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010, and others less able to cope with changes to working arrangements, such as carers and single parents. The failure to use these tools on this occasion has resulted in changes which negatively impact on many staff, as outlined below.

Personal: Significant negative impacts arising from the changes to Chamber business, experienced by Prospect members, can be summarised as follows:

- Longer business days mean some staff must work later into the evening. The demands of business mean people cannot simply choose to start later in the morning to offset this; they must work longer hours on those days. This has a significant negative impact on staff with caring responsibilities, many of whom must get home by a certain time.
- Business now regularly overruns. In addition to further extending the working day, this introduces significant uncertainty – with staff unsure when they will get home. Again, a significant issue for those with caring responsibilities or other commitments outside of work.
- There are concerns about staff burnout. The start of a parliamentary session has typically been a relatively “quiet” time, e.g. there are no Stage 3 debates, as legislation has yet to work its way through Committees. However, the changes to Chamber business mean staff are already working longer than expected days and this will only increase as business ramps up. This is likely to prove unsustainable in the medium to longer term.
- The longer working days resulting from the changes to Chamber business run counter to the reduction in the working week to 35 hours, and the careful planning undertaken to manage this change. Some staff are already accruing significant flexi balances that they will find difficult to use as leave, given the ongoing work pressures.

These issues could have been addressed prior to the introduction of the temporary changes to Chamber business had they been considered through the regular partnership working arrangements. Given this experience, Prospect considers that any change to Chamber business arrangements after 31 January 2027 must first be the subject of a full consultation with trade unions through these established arrangements.

I hope this is of use. Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Kind regards

Alan Rehfisch
Branch Secretary, Prospect Scottish Parliament Branch