

**Written submission from Michelle Thomson MSP**  
**4 April 2024**

**Consultation on Elected Conveners 2024**

I refer to your letter of 21 February 2024 regarding the possible introduction of a system of elected conveners for committees. I have added my comments below for your attention:

**General views**

Would you be in favour of introducing the election of Committee Conveners by the Parliament?

Yes. I strongly support this as it clearly establishes the principle of committee conveners having the authority of parliament behind them. I would also favour the election of deputy conveners.

What do you consider would be the advantages or disadvantages of the election of Conveners?

At present, conveners are the product of their respective parties, rather than parliament as a whole. Elections would positively assist in strengthening the role of parliamentary democracy. A further advantage is it would lesson the power of strong whips to control parliamentary scrutiny.

As someone who wants to see a strengthened Scottish Parliament, I can see no disadvantages to the election of conveners when viewed through this lens.

**Nomination of candidates**

It is proposed that nomination should take place once the Parliament has agreed the party to which convenorship 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 Convenorship has been allocated?

To strengthen the legitimacy of conveners, I am in favour of the nomination process being open to all elected members.

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?

Yes, I support the requirement for a seconder.

Should there be an opportunity for candidates to provide a short statement (oral or written) in support of their election?

I think it should be a requirement, not simply an opportunity, for nominees to provide a written statement.

**Election process**

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

I would favour the single transferable vote conducted 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?

If conveners are to be elected by parliament, they should only be removed by a vote of parliament.

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?

Yes.

## **Other issues**

Do you have any other comments regarding the election of Committee Conveners?  
I think conveners should be elected for the session.

I think that change is needed to strengthen the authority of our Scottish Parliament over that of party machines.

Elected convenors by the Parliament could also start to re-assert the role and importance of Stage 2 in good quality legislation. At the inception of the parliament, it was believed that Members could act as parliamentarians at Stage 2 rather than political parties. It is to all our detriment and for quality legislation that this happens too infrequently.

Should an elected convener choose to change parties, or leave a party to become an independent, the post of convener should be re-elected unless it falls with three months of the regularly scheduled election.