



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee**

Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP  
Presiding Officer  
The Scottish Parliament  
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15 November 2023

Dear Presiding Officer,

**Proxy Voting Pilot Evaluation Next Steps**

Thank you for your letter of 27 October 2023 providing your views and experiences as Presiding Officer on the temporary proxy voting pilot. It was very helpful to learn that you consider it has generally worked well.

At its meeting on the 9 November the Standards Procedures and Public Appointments Committee considered your response along with others it received to its consultation on the pilot.

I hope you will be pleased to learn that the Committee agreed at the meeting that it wishes to seek the agreement of the Parliament to make the provision of a proxy vote permanent.

One key change the Committee does wish to propose with a permanent proxy voting system is that the eligibility criteria be included in Standing Orders. We consider this inclusion will give the criteria a more permanent status. We note you highlighted that the eligibility criteria was varied to add a fourth circumstance during the course of the current pilot. We wish to propose to the Parliament that the current criteria be translated into the permanent system and to commit to this being reviewed at a future date. This will enable any future changes to the criteria to be given due consideration and additions agreed to where appropriate.

The Committee wishes to retain the current process with a proxy voting scheme being issued by you as Presiding Officer which contains the administrative

arrangements for the operation of proxy voting. During our deliberations we gave consideration to certain aspects of the current pilot scheme.

You drew attention in your response to the requirement on a Member to send all emails relating to the arrangement of a proxy vote. There is a balance to be struck between flexibility and accessibility of a proxy vote to Members and the importance afforded to a Member's right to vote. We agreed that the current approach that direct notification must come from the Member should remain.

Another aspect of the scheme the Committee considered was when during the week members can apply for a proxy vote. Only being able to apply for a proxy vote once a week, on a Tuesday may cause difficulties if an issue emerges at short notice on a Wednesday or a Thursday which may require a member to apply for a proxy vote. We believe that more flexibility should be provided so a Member can apply for a proxy vote on each day the Parliament is sitting and would like to see this reflected in the permanent scheme.

We are keen to seek your views on the proposals set out here, specifically those that propose changes to what is currently provided for in your pilot scheme with regards to eligibility criteria being placed in standing orders and proxy voting being able to be applied for on each sitting day.

As you are aware the temporary scheme is due to be operational until 31 December 2023. We wish to seek the Parliament's agreement to a permanent proxy voting system in advance of this date. We are keen to establish your views as promptly as possible to help meet this timetable it would therefore be much appreciated if a response could be provided by Monday 27 November 2023.

Yours sincerely

Martin Whitfield MSP  
Convener  
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee