



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Minute of the Leadership Group (LG) meeting held on Monday 25 January 2021 at 09.30, via Teams

Present:

- David McGill (Chair)
- Michelle Hegarty
- Alan Balharrie
- Sara Glass
- Lynsey Hamill
- Judith Morrison
- Callum Thomson
- Tracey white

Apologies:

- Susan Duffy

In attendance:

- Joanne McNaughton (items 3, 4 and 11)
- Tommy Lynch (items 3 and 10)
- John McArthur, Allan Campbell and Katy Orr (item 5)
- Lorna Foreman and Vicky McSherry (item 6)
- Sally Coyne (item 7)
- Dorothy Sneddon, Mark Sproul and Shona Skakle (item 8)
- Emma Armstrong (item 9)
- Huw Williams
- Lisa Creamer
- Judith Proudfoot, Secretary

Previous minutes

1. The LG agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2020.

Matters arising

2. The following papers had been circulated and noted by correspondence since the last meeting:

- LG(2020)paper096: Gaelic Language Plan report 2019-20; and
- LG(2020)Paper097: Period 8 finance report

Covid-19: update – (oral)

3. Parliamentary business continued to be programmed on the basis of 2 hybrid days and one virtual day each week. The SPCB had agreed to extend the arrangements for committees to meet virtually until the end of February. Any committee wishing to meet in person or in a hybrid format would be required to undertake a risk assessment and demonstrate the need to do so and the measures to be put in place to mitigate the risk of transmission of the virus. Discussions continued in relation to mitigations for business in the chamber including advice on wearing face masks.
4. It was noted that a reminder would be issued encouraging anyone who tests positive for the virus to report it to HR or management so that the appropriate steps can be taken.

Brexit: update – (oral)

5. The Chief Executive agreed to circulate a brief update to LG. The Constitutional Issues Board was due to meet later in the week and Group Heads were reminded of the request to provide information on any Brexit-related impacts for their business areas to help inform the work of the Board.

Action: David McGill, Group Heads

Severe weather – LG(2021)Paper 04

6. LG agreed temporary changes to the Severe Weather procedures to ensure they were compatible with how the Parliament was operating under Covid restrictions. LG also agreed to review the roles required at Holyrood during severe weather with the aim of reducing these as far as possible. Group Heads were asked to consider a volunteer-based staffing model to support hybrid business and provide responses to Tommy Lynch by 8 February for further consideration.

Action: Group Heads

Election planning – (oral)

7. LG discussed the timing of the election. While a delay could not be ruled out, planning was progressing on the basis of the election taking place as scheduled in May. LG also discussed the latest polling information and the possible impacts on supporting new and returning MSPs.
8. A paper on parliamentary business during the run up to the election was due to be considered by the Bureau. This would feed in to the next iteration of the Election Guidance for MSPs.

Excess annual leave and flexi balances – LG(2021)Paper01

9. LG had previously undertaken to review the arrangements for handling excess annual leave and flexi balances. This paper provided an outline of the current position and recommendations on actions to address excess balances.
10. Discussion continued to emphasise the responsibility to ensure staff welfare and the need for staff to take leave in addition to supporting parliamentary business. It was noted that while school holidays would go ahead in February, there would be no corresponding parliamentary recess. Other aspects covered included the financial impact of buying-out significant levels of flexi and the consistent application of the policy across the organisation.
11. LG agreed that there would be no buy-out of annual leave on the basis that the period available to use the leave was extended to the end of August 2022. Group Heads were to work with their managers to ensure plans were in place to reduce annual leave balances by that date.

Action: Group Heads

12. The situation with flexi balances was more complex. Further data would be provided to Group Heads the next day based on system balances as at 15 January 2021 to enable them to investigate individual cases with HR. Following that, communications would be issued to all staff to advise on the way forward. LG agreed in principle that staff whose balances subsequently fell in the 'red' category would be able to apply for buy-out of hours.

Action: Group Heads, HR

13. The exercise had also highlighted some issues with the use of the time recording system and it was agreed that information on this and special leave would be provided by HR as part of the monthly management reports.

Action: HR

Children and young people safeguarding and protection – (oral)

14. LG noted an update on work looking at risk management measures to help reduce the risk of children, young people and adults being harmed when engaging with the Parliament. The current focus was on establishing roles and responsibilities for 'protection officers' which would be brought back to LG for consideration, and liaising with relevant Group Heads to identify and train staff to take on those roles. Awareness would be raised with MSPs and their staff as part of the post-election induction process. This would be taken forward with HR through the Election Planning Board. The Web and social Media team would also be consulted about making information available through the web.

Action: Sally Coyne, Callum Thomson, HR

Web and online project: update – LG(2021)Paper 02

15. LG discussed the work of the project team in addressing how core parliamentary information would be made available to the wide range of internal and external users of the Parliament's website, and in particular how to manage and archive content over time.
16. A policy decision was still to be taken on the frequency of archiving information but the team was currently looking at pre-session 5 data.
17. This was considered a significant step-change for the organisation and had highlighted the importance of the proper use of its records management system and the declaration of records.
18. LG agreed the recommended approach of integrating the Parliament's web site with the National Records of Scotland (NRS) archive, however further and ongoing liaison with NRS was required to ensure it could provide the level of search ability required. In the meantime the team should look at retaining access to the existing web for a period of time after moving over to the new site.
19. The team was also asked to continue its discussions with individual Group Heads to address any concerns and to ensure those internal users who most frequently require to search the web for information are provided with the necessary level of support and training.

Action: Dorothy Sneddon, Mark Sproul

Web accessibility project – LG(2021)Paper03

20. The aim of the Project was to audit the existing Parliament web sites to assess any accessibility issues under the 2018 Accessibility Regulations; address any 'quick wins'; and develop accessibility statements as required. One of the actions arising out of the project was the recently added captions to on-demand videos of parliamentary business.
21. The Closure Report included a number of commitments to improvements and these would continue to be monitored. LG endorsed the recommended approach to how web accessibility would be managed going forward.
22. LG thanked Emma and the team for their work in completing the project on time and within budget and also welcomed the intention to undertake a post-implementation review by the end of March 2021.
23. LG noted the Closure Report and agreed the recommendations.

Action: Emma Armstrong

LG and SPCB forward look – LG(2021)Paper05 and LG(2021)Paper06

24. LG noted the items scheduled for future LG and SPCB meetings up to the end of March 2021.

Date of next meeting

25. The next meeting of the LG was scheduled for 8 February 2021.

LG secretariat
January 2021