



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Information Management and Governance
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

foi.officer@parliament.scot

15 December 2022

Dear Requester,

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: 2022-681892

We acknowledge your request for the following information:

1. All correspondence between parliament officials and all parliament employees/MSPs/members of the public regarding the removal of a woman from a committee on Tuesday 15 November for wearing suffragette colours? 2. Is the incident being investigated? 3. Who made the final decision to remove the woman from the committee and who was involved in the decision? If you can't name names then job titles will do. 4. How many complaints have been made to the Scottish Parliament due to the incident?

Your request was received on 18 November 2022 and has been handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOI(S)A).

In order to reply to your request, we have provided the information on each part of the request in turn.

1. All correspondence between parliament officials and all parliament employees/MSPs/members of the public regarding the removal of a woman from a committee on Tuesday 15 November for wearing suffragette colours?

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (FOI(S)A) provides a right to ask for information, not documents. You can access further information about this in the briefing document on the website of the Scottish Information Commissioner at the following link:

<https://www.itspublicknowledge.info/briefings-and-guidance>

The information that we hold in response to this part of the request is set out in the following paragraphs which explains the background circumstances and

the reason for the decision to ask a visitor to leave the public gallery at the meeting on 15 November 2022.

The Scottish Parliament is an open, accessible, and participative parliament which recognises the importance of peaceful protest in a democratic society. We facilitate peaceful protest outside the Parliament building. We do not allow protest inside the Parliament as this can interfere with the ability of the Parliament to fulfil its essential democratic role.

We welcome members of the public to view parliamentary proceedings. To ensure the effective and safe delivery of parliamentary business, we ask visitors to adhere to our Visitor Code of Conduct. This states that the “display of banners, flags, or political slogans, including on clothing or accessories is forbidden.”

The security team at the Parliament uphold both the [protest policy](#) and the [Visitor Code of Conduct](#).

The security management team are responsible for researching and understanding the potential for disruption to parliamentary business. On the morning of the committee meeting, three visitors entered the meeting wearing scarves with the suffragette colours. They sat apart. Their presence and scarves were noted by the security officers, who raised it with their senior management team. Whilst the senior team was aware that a particular lobby group had adopted the suffragette colours they initially decided, with reference to both the protest policy and the Visitor Code of Conduct, that there was not an immediate concern as the visitors were not sat together.

Later in the committee meeting, the three visitors all wearing the same suffragette scarves moved seats. They sat down behind the witness giving evidence, in front of the broadcasting cameras. At this point, the security management team discussed the visuals, and decided that a political protest was being made and that contravened the protest policy and the Visitor Code of Conduct. The visitors were asked to remove their scarves. Two did so. One visitor declined, was asked to leave the public gallery and offered an alternative space from which to watch proceedings which she subsequently did.

Subsequent action taken by the Parliament

The Presiding Officer made a statement to the Parliament that afternoon, in which she said that the action taken was an error and made it clear that the colours associated with the suffrage movement are not, and never have been, banned at the Scottish Parliament.

Upholding the protest policy and Visitor Code of Conduct is a dynamic assessment based on circumstances as they unfold. The security team who made the decision to ask the individuals wearing the suffragette scarves to leave believed they were appropriately applying the policy and code, to

ensure protest was not taking place inside the Parliament and that a political symbol was not worn on an accessory.

In light of the experience on 15 November, we are now reviewing both the protest policy and Visitor Code of Conduct to ensure the policies are clearer to those who have to uphold them.

2. *Is the incident being investigated?*

The incident is not being investigated.

3. *Who made the final decision to remove the woman from the committee and who was involved in the decision? If you can't name names then job titles will do.*

The decision was taken by the security management team.

4. *How many complaints have been made to the Scottish Parliament due to the incident?*

We have received 10 items of correspondence (9 emails and 1 letter) from members of the public who are unhappy with the decision to remove a visitor from the public gallery at the meeting on 15 November 2022.

In keeping with our FOI procedures, this information may also be posted on the Parliament's disclosure log (usually within 24 hours). For further details on the Parliament's Disclosure Log and the information released under FOI, visit: [FOI Request Disclosure Log | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

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<https://www.parliament.scot/about/copyright>

We would welcome feedback or comment on how we handled your request. Please feel free to contact the Head of Information Governance at foi.officer@parliament.scot

Please find below Annex A, which explains how we handle FOI requests and reviews.

We are currently working remotely and so would ask you to contact us by email at foi.officer@parliament.scot

Yours sincerely,

Robin Davidson
Head of Information Governance

REQUESTS MADE UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002

How we handle FOI requests

Information on how we handle FOI requests is available on the Parliament's website at:

[Privacy notice: Information rights: Freedom of Information request handling | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

Alternatively, please contact the Public Information & Resources Team to request a copy.

<https://www.parliament.scot/contact-us>

Review

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which we have dealt with your request for information, you can ask us to review our decision and actions. You must do this in writing (or other permanent form) within 40 working days of the date of this letter, stating the reasons for your dissatisfaction, and we will respond within 20 working days of receipt. A request for a review should be made to the Head of Information Governance:

Post: Head of Information Governance
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Telephone: 0131 348 5281

We welcome calls using the Text Relay service or in British Sign Language through [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#).

E-mail: foi.officer@parliament.scot

Application to the Scottish Information Commissioner

If, on the outcome of any review, you are still dissatisfied, or if we are unable to resolve any other complaint, then you can contact the Scottish Information Commissioner:

Post: The Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner
Kinburn Castle
Doubledykes Road
St Andrews
Fife
KY16 9DS

Email: www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal

Telephone: 01334 464610

Fax: 01334 464611

Website: www.itspublicknowledge.info

A decision by the Scottish Information Commissioner may be appealed on a point of law to the Court of Session.

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Feedback or comment

We would welcome feedback or comment on how we handled your request. Please contact the Head of Information Governance.

Data Protection

If you wish to find out more about how we use your personal data then you can access our Privacy Notice at the following link:

[Privacy notice: Information rights: Freedom of Information request handling | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

Complaints

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which we dealt with your enquiry, then you may wish to raise the matter with Public Information and Resources.

How to contact us

Post: The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
0800 092 7500 (Public Enquiries)
0131 348 5395 (Gàidhlig)

We also welcome calls using the Text Relay service or in British Sign Language through [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#).

E-mail: info@parliament.scot