



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Thursday 26 November 2015

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CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1
CROSS-PARTY GROUPS	2

STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
20th Meeting 2015, Session 4

CONVENER

*Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con)

*Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)

*Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)

*Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Gillian Baxendine

Alison Walker

LOCATION

The David Livingstone Room (CR6)

Scottish Parliament

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 26 November 2015

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:02]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Stewart Stevenson): I welcome members to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 20th meeting in 2015. I remind everyone to switch off mobile phones because they can affect the broadcasting system. We have received apologies from Dave Thompson.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on whether to take in private items 3 and 4. Item 3 is consideration of changes to rules on cross-party groups and item 4 is consideration of correspondence that has been received from the Public Petitions Committee. Do members agree to take those items in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Cross-party Groups

09:03

The Convener: Item 2 is on cross-party groups. We have in front of us a considerable amount of material on cross-party groups. We might want to focus on action that we may or should take on the cross-party groups on Japan, on park homes and on video games technology. I invite comments from colleagues.

Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I read the extensive report, and I thank the clerk for going through everything for us. The cross-party groups on Japan, on park homes and on video games technology have all been given more than one opportunity to come into line with the rules that cover cross-party groups. Given that they still have not, I suggest that they should be disbanded.

The Convener: I understand that the cross-party group on drug and alcohol misuse has attempted twice to have an annual general meeting, but on both occasions it turned out to be inquorate. It does have another AGM scheduled, so we might consider at least recognising that it is making some effort. We can decide that that is not sufficient, but there is a slight difference between that group and the groups on Japan, on park homes and on video games technology that we may wish to think about.

Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con): The report says that that means that there are not enough MSPs who are interested in going to the groups. We should not differentiate.

The Convener: I am not trying to lead us to a particular conclusion; I am merely pointing out—

Cameron Buchanan: There have been two attempts to have an AGM. If it had been only one attempt, that would be fair enough, but there having been two attempts shows that there are just not enough MSPs who are interested in the subject. We have so many cross-party groups.

The Convener: I am in members' hands.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): I am inclined to agree. The rules on cross-party groups are explicit, and it is easy for groups to get assistance if they require it. They know when they are meant to meet and they know the standards that they are meant to maintain.

Cameron Buchanan: We have all been geed up to attend a cross-party group in order to avoid there not enough being enough MSPs; we have all been encouraged to attend, even if not for the whole meeting. We should not differentiate between groups.

The Convener: I sense from the discussion that we are minded to deregister the groups that have been referred to: the groups on Japan, on park homes, on video games technology and on drug and alcohol misuse. Is anyone otherwise minded?

Members *indicated disagreement.*

The Convener: In that case, the committee is quite clear that we wish to deregister those groups, which are without question in default of the rules.

That said, we have a full set of reports. Do members wish to record any other matters in relation to the reports that we have before us?

Fiona McLeod: I would like to consider the cross-party group on co-operatives.

Cameron Buchanan: Did we get a report on that group? I did not see that in the papers.

Fiona McLeod: I do not remember, to be honest. My thoughts on the cross-party group on co-operatives are based on the summary that we have. The group had meetings scheduled in order to meet the requirement for two meetings per year, but both were inquorate. I would not say that we should deregister the group, but we should give it a reminder that if its meetings cannot be quorate, the group will be considered to be not functioning.

The Convener: That is appropriate. I understand that there may have been slight confusion about some of the communication, so that would be an appropriate interim decision for us to take. I stress the word “interim”.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): I agree with Fiona McLeod. That action would help MSPs who are trying to attend or who are actively pursuing issues. It would give them a stick—if you like—with which to hit colleagues. From that point of view, it would probably not be unhelpful.

Cameron Buchanan: I may have been a bit of a meanie earlier.

Patricia Ferguson: We are in agreement.

Cameron Buchanan: Yes, we are: 100 per cent.

The Convener: I sense that there is nothing more to discuss in respect of the report on cross-party groups. That ends agenda item 2 and the public part of the meeting.

09:08

Meeting continued in private until 11:02.

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