



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 23 March 2017

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Thursday 23 March 2017

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CROSS-PARTY GROUP	1

STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
8th Meeting 2017, Session 5

CONVENER

*Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)

*Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP)

*Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)

*John Scott (Ayr) (Con)

*Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Douglas Wands

LOCATION

The James Clerk Maxwell Room (CR4)

Scottish Parliament

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 23 March 2017

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Cross-party Group

The Convener (Clare Adamson): Good morning and welcome to the eighth meeting in 2017 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. I remind members to switch all electronic devices to silent.

I express condolences to the families and friends of everyone who was affected by the atrocious events in London yesterday. I am sure that I speak on behalf of all members of the committee.

I believe that this will be Clare Haughey's final meeting as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, because a motion has been lodged on changes in committee membership. I pay tribute to Clare and thank her for her service to the committee.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): Thank you very much, convener.

The Convener: Agenda item 1 is consideration of a cross-party group. The committee will take evidence on a proposed cross-party group on social science.

I welcome Daniel Johnson MSP to the other side of the table this morning and invite him, as the proposed convener of the CPG, to make an opening statement.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): It is a pleasure to be sitting on this side of the committee table, albeit slightly intimidating.

I do not propose to make a lengthy statement but will give you my elevator pitch on why I think that the cross-party group is worth having.

First, we all recognise the importance of academia and universities to Scottish public life. The social sciences within academia are particularly important. They are useful to us as policy makers because social sciences are about applying scientific methods to social phenomena. The proposed group could be of particular use to our work in this place.

We are also helped by having a lot of interest from key figures and groups within the social sciences in Scotland. That is reflected by a healthy listing of external members. We also have an

enthusiastic secretariat in the form of the campaign for social science, and Nick Bibby in particular.

We propose a varied and interesting set of topics. We will take an evidence-based scientific approach to social phenomena and policy issues, which I think will be of interest. We will discuss such things as the nature of productivity and how to understand it, the impact of automation, a rights-based approach to policy, how sustainability can be better embedded in policy and an understanding of what the workforce looks like and what jobs people are doing in Scotland.

In short, this is a CPG that should make a useful and interesting contribution to our work in this place. Importantly, we seek to hold meetings and events that will draw in a broad interest from members across the chamber, whether or not they are members of the CPG.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): You are taking a very laudable approach to the cross-party group. In the information that you have given us, you have talked about policy areas and topics. That is the right way to provide challenge and take matters forward.

There is so much that the group could deal with that you may have to try to manage how to take topics on board. If you start to look at an area, it may extend the agenda so that you end up going down one channel for a few meetings to try to manage that.

I am interested in how you will work with other CPGs that are doing similar things and liaise with them to ensure that you get a broad base. I am delighted with the number of individuals and organisations that you have taken on board already. That shows that there is a meaningful opportunity for things to progress. I am more interested in the relationship with other groups.

Daniel Johnson: That is absolutely right. First, this is about an interface between policy makers and social scientists. That is valuable, but by definition will always be broad. In our initial meeting, we discussed the topic of homelessness and the possibility of holding a joint meeting with the CPG on homelessness. That is a good example.

We are very interested in where such overlaps exist and, more importantly, the work that other CPGs are doing. We would perhaps offer them the ability that social sciences may bring to provide alternative, refreshed and new perspectives on the topics that they are considering.

Clare Haughey: On a point of clarification, you noted that Nick Bibby from the campaign for social science will provide the secretariat. I do not see that group among the organisations that are listed

as members of the CPG. Is that just a clerical error?

Daniel Johnson: Yes, it is. I apologise for that and will get the list amended.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): You acknowledge in the briefing paper that you will be overlapping with the remits of other cross-party groups. Will you be seeking to be involved actively in their remits, or will you be seeking to avoid duplication with what they are discussing, in terms of sustainability and demand on speakers?

Daniel Johnson: The key is being mindful of what other CPGs are looking at and what their interests are. We should neither actively seek out nor avoid such topics. The key thing is to be driven by that discussion between policy makers and academics in the field of social science, seeing where the key areas of interest are and perhaps highlighting areas where social science can provide perspective. We should be mindful of when topics overlap and approach CPGs in those cases. It is about being mindful of what we are looking at and who else might be looking at those issues.

The Convener: If there are no further questions, I thank Mr Johnson for his attendance. The committee will consider whether to approve the application at the next agenda item, and Mr Johnson will be informed of our decision as soon as possible after that.

10:07

Meeting suspended.

10:07

On resuming—

The Convener: Under agenda item 2, the committee will consider whether to accord recognition to the proposed cross-party group on social science. Is the committee agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Mr Johnson will be informed of that decision as soon as possible.

10:07

Meeting continued in private until 10:52.

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Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

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