



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 7 December 2017

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
21st Meeting 2017, Session 5

CONVENER

*Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)

*Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

*Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)

*Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

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

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Joanna Hardy

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament
Standards, Procedures and
Public Appointments Committee

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[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Interests

The Convener (Clare Haughey): Good morning, everyone and welcome to the 21st meeting in 2017 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. Agenda item 1 is a declaration of interests. I welcome our new member, Claire Baker, and invite her to declare any interests.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I do not have any registered interests that are relevant to the committee.

The Convener: Claire Baker joins the committee in place of Daniel Johnson.

Decision on Taking Business in
Private

10:00

The Convener: Agenda item 2 is for the committee to agree to take item 4 in private. Item 4 is consideration of a draft call for evidence and further briefing regarding the committee's inquiry into sexual harassment and inappropriate conduct. Are members agreed to take that item in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Cross-party Groups

10:00

The Convener: Agenda item 3 is for the committee to consider an annual update on cross-party groups' compliance with the code of conduct. There are currently 94 cross-party groups, and members will see from the report that compliance with the code is very high. I invite members to comment on the report.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Ninety-four is a tremendous number of cross-party groups and shows that we engage with organisations and individuals. The report says that a number of cross-party groups are making slight infringements, but nothing too dramatic. Therefore, they should be commended on their achievement. We now have the opportunity to provide a bit more support and advice to the groups that need assistance on what they should and should not be doing.

This is a very good story. I am delighted that the majority of groups are complying with the code, fulfilling their roles and engaging with communities, individuals and organisations. That is vital when we have a CPG organisation such as we have in this Parliament.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I agree that no serious action is required. On a number of occasions, the committee has looked at the amount of external membership that some CPGs have. There is not a hard-and-fast rule about it, but we have been encouraging cross-party groups to cast their nets reasonably wide. I suggest that we write to those groups that still have a very low level of external membership and ask whether that is something that they are looking to address, and what actions they are taking.

Claire Baker: I appreciate that the annual report is public as it is part of the papers for this meeting, but it might be helpful to share the report with the cross-party groups themselves. If they see the areas in which they are not performing as well as others, they might take action.

Having looked at some of the groups, I know that some have more members attending meetings than they are registering as external. It might be helpful to highlight that they could be more accurate and encourage those people who come to meetings to become formal members.

The Convener: Does the committee agree, as Patrick Harvie suggests, to write to the conveners of cross-party groups about their external membership and encourage certain groups to increase that membership? Does the committee also agree to share the report with the conveners

of cross-party groups, to highlight areas of better practice?

Members *indicated agreement.*

10:04

Meeting continued in private until 10:45.

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