



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

**Thursday 26 April 2018**

**Session 5**



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



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**Thursday 26 April 2018**

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**STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE**  
**7<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2018, Session 5**

**CONVENER**

\*Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)

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

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab)

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

\*David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

\*attended

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Douglas Wands

**LOCATION**

The James Clerk Maxwell Room (CR4)



## Scottish Parliament

### Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 26 April 2018

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]*

#### Interests

**The Convener (Clare Haughey):** Good morning and welcome to the seventh meeting in 2018 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. Item 1 is an opportunity for David Torrance to declare any relevant interests. David is joining us to replace Kate Forbes MSP, and I welcome him to the committee.

**David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** Thank you, convener. I have no relevant interests to declare.

**The Convener:** Thank you very much. I would also like to note that Elaine Smith MSP has submitted her apologies.

## Cross-party Group

10:00

**The Convener:** Item 2 is consideration of an application for recognition from the proposed cross-party group on music. I welcome Tom Arthur MSP to the meeting. Tom is the convener of the proposed group, and I invite him to make an opening statement about the purpose of the group.

**Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP):** I am delighted to be here to seek the committee's approval for the proposed cross-party group on music. I refer members to my membership of the Musicians Union, which is listed in my entry in the register of members' interests. The Musicians Union is a listed organisation in the proposed cross-party group.

Before addressing some of the specific points, I would like to give members some background information. Prior to being elected to the Scottish Parliament, I was employed in the music industry as a professional musician. I was a freelance piano tutor and I performed with function bands, which I had a stake in as a shareholder and as a director, performing all around Scotland. I also have a background of education in music. I am a graduate of the University of Glasgow, with a BMus and an MMus, and my intention would have been to pursue a PhD had I not been elected.

I state that because I am conscious that there is a danger that cross-party groups can become the hobby-horse of a particular MSP rather than reflecting the public interest, which is clearly a requirement. Much of the genesis of this cross-party group is reflected in a period of informal consultation that I conducted at the tail end of last year. I spoke to a range of individuals, organisations and stakeholders, many of whom are now members of the proposed cross-party group. That consultation played a significant role in informing what the purpose, aims and aspirations of the cross-party group are, as set out in the registration form.

Clearly, music as a title encompasses a huge range of incredibly diverse areas and trying to capture that has certainly been a challenge. In previous sessions of the Scottish Parliament, there was a cross-party group on contemporary Scottish music industries, if I recall correctly. The analogues of cross-party groups at Westminster are all-party parliamentary groups, and there are several on music, covering different areas. For example, there are groups on classical music, jazz, and music education and indeed there is one on music itself.

However, given that Westminster can draw on close to 1,000 members if you combine the Lords

and the Commons, it has the capacity to have that number of groups. In this Parliament, we have little over 100 MSPs who are not either a member of the Government or a Presiding Officer, so the fundamental question that I faced when seeking to set up this group was whether to draw up a narrow remit and focus on a particular sector or to make it as inclusive as possible. From the informal consultation that I conducted, it was clear that there was a desire for such a group, should it be established, to be as inclusive and diverse as possible. Certainly, what emerged out of that consultation were common themes and the wish for an opportunity for dialogue between different actors in Scotland's musical community who might not normally have an opportunity to engage with each other.

I would like to address some of the specific points. The registration form states:

"The purpose of the group is to provide a diverse forum to discuss matters relating to the world of music including music education, the music industries and their contribution to the wider economy, creative arts and cultural policy and"

—crucially—

"to take action to advance matters of interest to the group."

One thing that emerged from the conversations that I had with many stakeholders was that, although people would appreciate an opportunity to engage in dialogue and to network, they did not want—and I do not mean to use the term pejoratively—a talking shop. They wanted a group that would not just comment on content but generate content and take action, as some of the other cross-party groups in the Parliament have been successful in doing, for example by generating strategies and policy proposals. That is a clear desire of the members of the proposed cross-party group and, as I understand it, the wider musical community in Scotland.

The cross-party group is in the public interest, as is demonstrated by the strength of interest that has been expressed by stakeholders, which is reflected in the list of organisations. Many of the matters that it would seek to cover and engage on, such as music education, are clearly very topical, with members from multiple parties in the Parliament raising them in the chamber.

On the specific issue of overlap, there is an existing cross-party group on culture in the Scottish Parliament, and I envisage that, if it is approved by the committee, the proposed cross-party group on music could work collaboratively with it. However, I argue that there is justification for a cross-party group exclusively on music, rather than music being covered as part of culture, because, by definition, culture takes in a very broad range of areas. With quarterly meetings, there would be limited opportunity, over the course

of a parliamentary session, for music to be discussed and drilled down to in the detail that is required. As far as tone is concerned, in its purpose, the cross-party group on culture sets itself out more as an opportunity for engagement and for bringing cultural discussions to the Parliament. The cross-party group on music would seek to be much more goal oriented and to be a campaigning cross-party group.

However, there would be many opportunities for the cross-party group on music to collaborate with multiple cross-party groups. I had a short look at some of the other cross-party groups before I came here. For example, there is a cross-party group on the armed forces and veterans community; clearly, there is a strong tradition of music in that community. There is a cross-party group on Brexit, which is an area of concern for many musicians and, indeed, was raised at the meeting to establish this group. There is one on beer and pubs; music making is essential for the survival of many pubs and distilleries. There are many cross-party groups on countries, in relation to which, clearly, there would be opportunities, and there are many other groups. For example, there is a group on carers. A couple of years ago, in my constituency of Renfrewshire South, I attended a concert by the fantastic Renfrewshire carers centre choir. Music has a strong role in many third sector organisations in bringing people together, and there are cross-party groups on some of them, such as those on children and young people, colleges and universities, dementia, digital participation and disability—and that is going up only to letter D in the list. There are many cross-party groups with which a cross-party group on music would have potential to engage. However, such engagement would have to be a decision for the cross-party group to take and, of course, any formal approach would be made only if the cross-party group is established and such a decision is taken.

I will elaborate on some of the topics that the proposed group might discuss, as covered at point 4 of the registration form. It is now rare that a week goes by without an issue being raised to do with music education. There are clearly many concerns about the level of provision of instrumental tuition by local authorities and what impact that might have in the future. We are very fortunate to have as members of the proposed group the Music Education Partnership Group, under the sterling leadership of John Wallace; Heads of Instrumental Teaching Scotland; and the Educational Institute of Scotland. Therefore a range of stakeholders are involved. I have also had a huge volume of correspondence, both online—through social media and email—and via letters, from people who work and practise in music education and who are very keen to

become involved with the proposed cross-party group and want to follow its work closely.

Music industry infrastructure and music venues are clearly topical areas. Recently, the Scottish Government announced that it intends to implement the agent of change principle, which would be strongly welcomed by the cross-party group on music. It would be keen to follow up on how that principle would be implemented, but there are clearly a range of other issues that are pertinent to music venues and infrastructure.

I want to touch on the impact of Brexit on musicians and the music industries, on which I led a members' business debate last year. It is an area of almost universal concern among musicians. It would be my intention not to take a position on the merits or otherwise of the Brexit process as such but to see the group as an opportunity for musicians and the wider music sector to have their voices heard on the concerns that they have and for it to inform the discussions and deliberations that we have in this place and in the wider public sphere.

Fair work is another area that is very important in relation to music. It is becoming more topical, with the rise of the gig economy, which, of course, is a term that owes its origins to the working life of most musicians, whose essential means of making an income always depends on securing their next gig. It is the definition of precarious work.

Unpaid trials have been topical. There was a recent members' business debate on them, and there was an attempt to get a private member's bill on the issue through the House of Commons. The reality for many musicians is that unpaid trial shifts are seen as standard. They are expected to perform numerous times in venues without pay and with no guarantee that they will have a regular slot at the end. Again, something that relates specifically to music can intersect with and complement larger debates.

The role of local government in relation to music is, of course, highly significant for both. There is the provision of music education and aspects such as licensing.

I want to highlight a few areas in which we have a solid basis for having to do further work. Those areas would be priorities for the group, if it is established.

From looking at the proposed group's membership, I see that we will need to become more diverse. I would want to ensure that the music and the musicians of Scotland's minority communities are properly represented. We will have to work on gender balance in the group—we want to encourage that. We also have to think about disabled people, particularly with the

pertinent issue of music therapy and the work of organisations such as Drake Music Scotland.

There is also the issue of geography and ensuring that the group represents all communities in all parts of Scotland. We would certainly want to consider ways in which we could make that a reality through meetings outwith the Parliament and the use of digital technology for people to dial in. We also want a much broader representation of genres. We have no representation from anyone in the jazz community, for example. We would look to address that issue and many others.

It is clear that I could say much more, but I hope that that has given members a flavour of the group's intentions, aims and aspirations. I would be happy to take any questions.

**The Convener:** Thank you, Mr Arthur. Do members have any questions?

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

**(Con):** You have given us a very good overview of how music can and does have an impact on people's lives—there is no question about that. You touched on trying to develop policy. Do you have any goals or aspirations relating to areas that you might want to develop? Are there any specific areas in which there are gaps that should be addressed to try to come forward with a policy? There is no question but that the group could do a lot of good in ensuring that we get more of the message out to the industry and to education about what we are trying to achieve. If you are spearheading that, what areas do you want to tackle first?

**Tom Arthur:** Music education is the first topic that is listed in our fourth paragraph in the registration form. That is a clear area of concern.

We would look at a number of areas, and I would not want to prejudge the outcomes. Bodies of work are under way by different organisations, and it is clear that we would not want to overlap or duplicate. There will be areas in which we would complement other work, areas in which we would seek to identify gaps, and areas in which there are unknown unknowns and in which we would hope to introduce new ideas. For example, we might seek to consider formulating ways to address the postcode lottery in the instrumental tuition that local authorities provide. The youth music initiative, for example, is a fantastic scheme, but it provides for only one year of music tuition. If that leads to someone getting a taste of music, enjoying it and wishing to pursue it, how can they follow that up?

There is also a policy-making aspect of making members more aware. The need to establish parity of esteem between music education and other subjects has been consistently raised among stakeholders. For example, Sistema Scotland's big

noise programme is well known, and its outstanding results are rightly celebrated, but many results and outcomes are achieved by instrumental tuition and teaching departments in local authorities. I hope that, if we can highlight and raise the profile of such work and work towards creating parity of esteem, that will help to inform the choices that policy makers in local government make and give them confidence to give music the backing, funding and support that we all recognise that it deserves.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Thank you very much for that in-depth look at the workings of the proposed group.

I represent the Highlands and Islands. Anybody who represents that area recognises the difficulties that there sometimes are in engaging with the Parliament through physically coming down to it. However, the region has a hugely diverse music tradition. There is the Gaelic tradition in the west and the fiddle music in the northern isles, for example. How can we ensure that people from remoter parts of Scotland will have access to the group and that their voice will be heard in it?

**Tom Arthur:** That is an excellent point, which we discussed in our initial meeting. I hope that there will be opportunities for the cross-party group to meet outwith Parliament and to go on the road. You made the excellent point that the roots of much of Scotland's musical identity are to be found in remote Highland and Island communities.

One approach would be to take the group's meetings outwith Parliament. Equally, we want it to have a comprehensive programme of engaging with stakeholders in those communities. If the group is established, I will certainly contact MSPs who represent those communities in order to use any contacts that they have and to ensure that everyone who should be aware of the group is aware of it. Methods such as Skype, teleconferencing and dialling in would certainly be used to allow people to participate. I do not want the cross-party group to be a central-belt dominated one that just addresses central-belt concerns. That will be a key priority for the group.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** That is great. Thank you.

**The Convener:** Thank you very much, Mr Arthur. We will consider your proposed cross-party group under the next agenda item. Thank you for coming.

**Tom Arthur:** Thank you very much.

**The Convener:** Under item 3, I invite comments from members on the proposed cross-party group on music.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I am happy to support its creation.

**Alexander Stewart:** I am happy to do so, too.

**David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** Yes.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** Yes.

**The Convener:** The committee approves the cross-party group on music. That ends the public part of the meeting. As previously agreed, we will now move into private session.

10:16

*Meeting continued in private until 11:10.*



This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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