



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 19 December 2019

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
24th Meeting 2019, Session 5

CONVENER

*Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab)

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

*Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

*Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Katy Orr

LOCATION

The James Clerk Maxwell Room (CR4)

Scottish Parliament

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 19 December 2019

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Bill Kidd): Welcome to the 24th meeting in 2019 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on whether to take agenda item 6, on potential revisions to the code of conduct for members, in private and to consider the revisions in private at future meetings. Do members agree to do so?

Members indicated agreement.

Cross-party Groups (Annual Report)

10:00

The Convener: Under agenda item 2, the committee will consider an annual update on cross-party groups' compliance with the code of conduct for members of the Scottish Parliament. There are currently 107 cross-party groups. Members will see from the report that compliance with the code is very high. Do members have any general comments?

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): There has been a tremendous improvement since we last discussed the issue, a year or so ago. That is down to the hard work on the part of our team here—the clerks and those who work for members—in making cross-party groups aware of the requirements. Our staff should be congratulated, as should the groups themselves.

There are 107 cross-party groups, which might not sound a lot to the public, but most of us sit on half a dozen of them. Everything is squeezed into a couple of hours, and members can be in only one place at a time. There are a lot of constraints. The rule that two MSPs must be in attendance might not sound onerous, but ensuring that that happens can be difficult. MSPs have to consider which CPGs to go to and which ones are most important. CPGs are a lot of work.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The main on-going concern is that CPGs must provide Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee clerks with 10 calendar days' notice of all meetings. I wonder whether we can ensure that CPGs are reminded that they must give that notification. That would be considerate to MSPs and outside bodies that come in.

The Convener: That has been noted.

I do not think that there is any necessity for action to be taken on this occasion in relation to non-compliant groups. A good piece of work has been produced for the year. I thank Sam Currie for her work on the report.

Sexual Harassment and Sexist Behaviour

10:03

The Convener: Agenda item 3 is consideration of revisions to the guidance on the code of conduct for MSPs in relation to sexual harassment and sexist behaviour. The proposed new text responds to the committee's request for definitions to inform the understanding of the revisions to the "Treatment of others" section of the code, which the Parliament agreed to last week. Are members content to approve the revised guidance?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: The guidance will come into effect at the same time as the revisions to the code, on 7 January 2020.

Agenda item 4 is also on sexual harassment and sexist behaviour. The committee will consider revisions to the directions to the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland. The changes implement the recommendations of the joint working group on sexual harassment and sexist behaviour. Are members content to approve the directions?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: The directions will come into effect at the same time as the revisions to the code of conduct for MSPs.

Subordinate Legislation

Representation of the People Act 1983 Remedial (Scotland) Revocation Order 2019 (SSI 2019/408)

10:04

The Convener: Agenda item 5 is subordinate legislation. The committee will consider the Representation of the People Act 1983 Remedial (Scotland) Revocation Order 2019.

As no members have any comments on the order, are we agreed that we do not want to make any recommendation in relation to it?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: That ends the public part of the meeting. I know that it was quick, but it was successful, and that is always good. I am sorry that those in the public gallery were here for only a short time, but there we go.

10:04

Meeting continued in private until 10:32.

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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