



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

**Thursday 12 May 2022**

**Session 6**



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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**STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE**  
**12<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2022, Session 6**

**CONVENER**

\*Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

\*Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP)

\*Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

George Adam (Minister for Parliamentary Business)

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Katy Orr

**LOCATION**

The Sir Alexander Fleming Room (CR3)



## Scottish Parliament

### Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 12 May 2022

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:30]*

#### Decision on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (Martin Whitfield):** Good morning, and welcome to the 12th meeting in 2022 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. I remind members who are joining us virtually to place an R in the BlueJeans chat function if they want to raise any issues.

Our first agenda item is a decision on taking in private item 5, which is the on-going consideration of evidence heard in our inquiry into future parliamentary procedures and practices. Do members agree to take item 5 in private?

**Members indicated agreement.**

## Cross-Party Group

09:30

**The Convener:** Our second item is consideration of an application for recognition from the proposed cross-party group on heart and circulatory diseases. I welcome to the meeting Colin Smyth, who is one of the co-conveners of the proposed group.

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** I thank the committee for the opportunity to outline the group's application. A CPG on heart disease and stroke existed in previous parliamentary sessions, and I had the privilege of being a co-convener during session 5. I am proud of the groundbreaking work that the group undertook, which included two major inquiries—one on atrial fibrillation and one on hypertension. Many of the group's recommendations are now being taken forward.

We took some time to consider the focus of any such CPG in this parliamentary session and how we could best build on the achievements of the previous group, which is why the request to establish the group comes slightly later than the start of the new session. After discussion with colleagues, we decided to propose a cross-party group that focuses on heart and circulatory diseases, given the scale of those issues, instead of trying to cover two major conditions. Although there has been a considerable decline in mortality rates due to advances in the treatment of acute cardiac disease, it is sad that coronary heart disease remains Scotland's biggest killer.

Being conscious that there are many cross-party groups, we want to focus in this parliamentary session on heart disease and specific work on issues such as out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. We also want to carry out more joint working with other CPGs. One major issue that we want to consider is sex-based inequality in the detection, diagnosis and treatment of heart disease and how we monitor the Government's women's health plan in relation to heart disease. That is an area that would lend itself to joint working with, for example, the cross-party group on women's health.

There has been considerable interest from members in the proposed new group, and we have three co-conveners from three different parties. If the group is given the go-ahead, the next step will be for us and stakeholders to circulate details of the group. We anticipate significant interest, particularly from individuals who live with heart conditions. They were an important stakeholder group in previous CPGs and influenced our work considerably.

I will leave it at that, convener. I am open to the committee's questions.

**The Convener:** That is kind of you. Do members have any questions?

**Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Colin, you mentioned working across other cross-party groups. Do you foresee that as being by correspondence only or do you foresee having joint meetings on certain areas so that people can share and build on the experiences that they bring to those meetings?

**Colin Smyth:** We are very keen to have joint meetings and even joint pieces of work. I mentioned that the previous group held two major inquiries. We are clear that the issues that we face lend themselves to working with other cross-party groups. Those issues include air pollution, active travel and, as I mentioned earlier, women's health issues—there is a specific problem with the detection rates for heart disease in women. We want to consider having joint meetings with other cross-party groups, at the very least, but, ideally, we want to do some joint work on particular issues. That would obviously require discussion with those groups.

**Edward Mountain:** I am heartened to hear that, because, although cross-party groups can work independently, there are areas of ground on which they can work together. I am glad that one of the conveners is working towards that.

**Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP):** It is welcome to hear that you are resurrecting the cross-party group. I recently visited a business in my constituency that makes LoSalt, and it is targeting how to reduce our salt intake in the United Kingdom and Scotland. We often talk about doing so with sugar. Would you consider that? The guidelines on salt intake have changed; we need to be down to 5g but, at the moment, most people's intake is 9g, I think.

**Colin Smyth:** I have learned something new today.

One of the important things about the cross-party group is that we ask for and circulate ideas for work that we can carry out, particularly from people who live with relevant conditions. You raise an important issue and I will take a note of it. We know that heart disease impacts on all our constituents—sadly, it is the biggest killer in Scotland—so we want to hear people's ideas of what work we need to carry out. There are a lot of important issues that lend themselves to being addressed by the group.

**The Convener:** It is fascinating how often members of the committee suggest ideas for CPGs that come before us. Perhaps that is the privilege of overseeing them.

**Edward Mountain:** I assume that Collette is not making it a requirement of approval that the CPG acts on her idea.

**The Convener:** We will see whether she notes an interest in a moment.

**Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** Thank you, Mr Smyth, for applying for recognition for the cross-party group.

My blushes have just been spared. The initial papers that I had did not list any individuals or organisations as members of the group and I was going to ask why that was the case. However, the clerking team has just furnished me with an outstandingly impressive list of stakeholders. I am pleased to see that you are reaching out to all the relevant individuals and groups.

**Colin Smyth:** The next step would be to circulate details more widely. We anticipate that a lot of individuals will be interested in joining us. We are keen that people living with relevant conditions are at our meetings and support our work. They are an important group.

**Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con):** How do you propose to act as a channel of communication between people who are affected by heart disease, health professionals and the research community? Each of those groups is quite a distinct stakeholder.

**Colin Smyth:** We will have representation of all those stakeholders on the group. That was certainly the case with the previous cross-party groups. People who were involved in research, health professionals and, importantly, people who lived with relevant conditions all attended our groups. We carried out inquiries on atrial fibrillation and hypertension in the previous session of the Parliament. We did extensive round-table work involving those groups and invited them to give evidence so that we could learn from them. That will be an important factor. If you look at the extensive list of organisations, as Bob Doris called it, you will see that they represent many of the stakeholders that you highlighted.

**The Convener:** Thank you very much for attending, Colin. The committee will consider whether to approve the application for recognition at the next agenda item, and the clerks will inform you of the committee's decision in due course.

Item 3 is consideration of whether we wish to approve the application for the cross-party group on heart and circulatory diseases. If members have no comments, do we agree to accord recognition to the group?

**Members indicated agreement.**

## Scottish Local Government Elections (Candidacy Rights of Foreign Nationals) Bill: Stage 2

09:38

**The Convener:** Item 4 is stage 2 proceedings on the Scottish Local Government Elections (Candidacy Rights of Foreign Nationals) Bill. I welcome George Adam, the Minister for Parliamentary Business, who joins us remotely along with his officials. I highlight the fact that officials are not to speak on the record during these proceedings.

No amendments have been lodged for this stage, so the only requirement is to agree the four sections of the bill and its long title. Before we do so, I thank the minister for attending and ask him whether he wishes to make any comments or whether he is happy for the letter that he sent us and the earlier evidence given to the committee to stand as the official record of the Government's position.

**George Adam (Minister for Parliamentary Business):** Thank you, convener. If you will indulge me, I will make a brief statement on the bill. As members will recall, it is a limited, single-purpose bill. It seeks to ensure compliance with treaties that the United Kingdom Government has agreed in relation to candidacy rights in local government elections.

I welcome the Scottish Parliament's unanimous support of the bill at stage 1 and the committee's continuing scrutiny of it. As no amendments have been lodged for consideration at stage 2, I have nothing further to add.

**The Convener:** I am grateful for that, George.

Before we move on to formal consideration of the bill, do committee members have any questions on the procedure?

**Edward Mountain:** I do not have a question on the procedure, but can I ask a question of the minister?

**The Convener:** I am more than happy for you to ask a question, and then I will invite the minister to respond.

**Edward Mountain:** When we took evidence from the minister at stage 1, he said that he would lodge an appropriate amendment at stage 2, which he has not done. I would like to understand his rationale for not doing what he said he was going to do. I am sure that there is a perfectly good reason, but I would like him to explain it to us.

**The Convener:** The minister has written to the committee, and that letter stands as evidence and explains the position. However, I am more than happy to give him the opportunity to explain the anomaly—let me call it that—if he would like to.

**George Adam:** There is nothing to add to the letter, apart from to say that it was our intention to lodge an amendment but, in discussions with the UK Government, we found that it would create problems and difficulties on the UK side as opposed to ours and that the UK Government did not consider the matter to be a problem. Rather than have an argument with it about something that neither of us considered to be a serious problem, we decided that it would be best not to lodge an amendment. That is a simple summary of the position.

**The Convener:** Are you content, Edward?

**Edward Mountain:** I am content for that to be on the record and that no argument was required.

*Sections 1 to 4 agreed to.*

*Long title agreed to.*

**The Convener:** That ends stage 2 consideration of the bill. I thank the minister and his officials for attending.

I move the meeting into private for consideration of item 5.

09:42

*Meeting continued in private until 11:02.*



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