

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 20 June 2007

Session 3

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AUDIT COMMITTEE

1st Meeting 2007, Session 3

OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER

*Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)

*Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)

*Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD)

*Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP)

*Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab)

*Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Tracey Hawe

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Joanna Hardy

ASSISTANT CLERK

Rebecca Lamb

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Audit Committee

Wednesday 20 June 2007

[THE OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER *opened the meeting at 10:30*]

Interests

Dr Richard Simpson (Oldest Committee Member): I call the committee to order and welcome everyone to the first meeting of the Audit Committee in the third session of Parliament. I remind members to ensure that their mobile phones and pagers are turned off.

We have received apologies from Murdo Fraser and Willie Coffey, who have been delayed. Clearly, the traffic and rain this morning have caused havoc.

However, we will not delay. Item 1 is the declaration of interests. In accordance with section 3 of the code of conduct, I invite members to declare their interests. Members should bear in mind that as their interests have not yet been published they might need to make a slightly fuller declaration instead of simply saying, "I refer members to my written declaration of interests."

I will begin. I am currently employed by NHS Lothian as a consultant psychiatrist in addictions. I also have a ceased interest with Schering-Plough Ltd, which is a pharmaceutical company, and an interest in shares in a public property company, Terrace Hill Ltd, that amounts to more than 50 per cent of salary.

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): I am a non-executive director of Hampden Park Ltd.

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): I have no registrable interests.

Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP): I have no registrable interests.

Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): I am not sure whether this will affect my membership of the Audit Committee, but I am a member of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers.

Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD): I am a councillor with Scottish Borders Council. I am also a past director of Scottish Enterprise Borders and the NFU Scotland.

Dr Simpson: It can be difficult for members of the Audit Committee to get their declaration of interests correct. In future, members might wish to refer to their written declaration of interests in connection with particular issues.

Convener

10:33

Dr Simpson: The next agenda item is the selection of committee convener. The Parliament has agreed that only members of the Scottish Labour Party are eligible for nomination as convener. That being the case, I seek nominations for the position.

Mary Mulligan: I nominate Charlie Gordon.

Andrew Welsh: I second that.

Charlie Gordon was chosen as convener.

Dr Simpson: At this point, I will hand over to Charlie Gordon. Do you want to swap chairs?

The Convener (Charlie Gordon): I do not think so. The clerk and I will be able to talk over you.

Colleagues, thank you very much for electing me convener of the Audit Committee. No matter what you might think you know about me or what you might have heard about me, I intend to be a collegiate convener. After all, we have plenty of opportunities to politick in the chamber and elsewhere. The focus of this committee is clearly on getting value for money from the public pound. We will set out our work programme in due course, but, as far as I, as convener, am concerned, the door is open if you want to influence the committee's direction.

Deputy Convener

10:34

The Convener: Agenda item 3 is selection of the deputy convener. Members have a note from the clerks that sets out the procedure for that, which is similar to the procedure for selecting the convener. The Parliament has agreed that members of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party are eligible to be chosen as deputy convener of the Audit Committee. I invite nominations for the position—traffic notwithstanding.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I nominate Murdo Fraser.

Murdo Fraser was chosen as deputy convener.

Work Programme

10:35

The Convener: Agenda item 4 is our approach to developing a work programme. At our next meeting, on 27 June, the Auditor General for Scotland will brief the committee on Audit Scotland's work programme and on his report, "Edinburgh transport projects review", which was published this morning.

I refer members to the clerk's note. We suggest that, to finalise our approach to developing a work programme, we hold an away day, which I suspect will be a not-very-far-away day—we will probably hold a session here at Holyrood. What are members' views?

Andrew Welsh: Could we have notice as soon as possible of the date of the away day? I presume that it will be towards the end of the recess.

The Convener: Yes. That is what we have in mind.

Tracey Hawe (Clerk): The date could be towards the end of the recess or, because the committee meets fortnightly, we could hold the session for a half day in the first committee slot after the recess.

Andrew Welsh: Will the clerk liaise with us?

Tracey Hawe: We will let members know as soon as possible.

The Convener: The clerk's second suggestion may be preferable.

Jim Hume: Will we be given options of dates that are free, from which the best date can be picked?

The Convener: Yes. We should try to give members options.

Dr Simpson: Perhaps members could let the clerks know their holiday dates, if they are going away. That would help clerks to determine dates that do not suit members.

The Convener: Yes—that would help. We all know that a recess is not a holiday, no matter what the perceptions in some places may be. *[Interruption.]* Here is the deputy convener.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): My apologies, convener. I was delayed by traffic.

The Convener: Do not worry—the democratic process delivered for you in your absence.

Murdo Fraser: That was the easiest election that I have ever fought.

The Convener: You are not the only one who has been delayed by the rain. We are on agenda item 4, so I will give you an opportunity to declare any interests in a moment.

I ask colleagues to e-mail the clerk details of any holiday plans for the summer and into September. We will circulate by e-mail to members options for an away day at which we would use the legacy paper and other information to finalise our work programme. Is that okay?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I give Murdo Fraser the opportunity to declare his interests.

Murdo Fraser: I apologise again for my tardy arrival, which was due entirely to the adverse weather conditions and traffic. I have two interests that may be relevant to the committee's work. First, I am a member of the Law Society of Scotland, although I am not currently a practising solicitor. Secondly, I am a member of the board of management of Dundee University Students Association.

The Convener: Thank you.

We have no more business, so that concludes the meeting. I remind members that the committee will meet next week, on 27 June. We have not intimated the start time, but I think that it is 10:30 again.

Tracey Hawe: We are looking at 10, although the time has to be confirmed.

The Convener: The clerk is already putting the squeeze on me, at arm's length. I ask members to note the start time. Thank you very much.

Meeting closed at 10:39.

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Wednesday 27 June 2007

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