Official Report
Aithisg Oifigeil

Criminal Justice Committee

Comataidh a' Cheartais Eucoirich

Wednesday 17 June 2026

Session 7

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website—
www.parliament.scot or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

Wednesday 17 June 2026

CONTENTS

	Col.
INTERESTS	1
DEPUTY CONVENER	3
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	5

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE
1st Meeting 2026, Session 7

CONVENER

*Alyn Smith (Stirling) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*David Linden (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Amanda Bland (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
*Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green)
*Stephen Kerr (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
*Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
*Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab)

*attended

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Criminal Justice Committee

Wednesday 17 June 2026

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Interests

The Convener (Alyn Smith): Good morning, colleagues. You are all very welcome to this first meeting of the Criminal Justice Committee in session 7. I am delighted to see colleagues from outwith the committee with us as well today—you are all very welcome.

I am Alyn Smith, and I am delighted to be your convener for this parliamentary session. There are a lot of familiar faces around the table, and some new ones as well. I am really looking forward to working with you over the piece. This is one of the pivotal committees of the Parliament; there are a lot of issues that are of critical relevance to the people of Scotland who have sent us here, so we will have a job to do.

Today's meeting will be largely procedural and we will make a decision on having a more wide-ranging discussion in private about the committee's future work plan. Although it is not our usual way of doing business, I am proposing that because, to achieve a free and frank discussion at this stage of proceedings while we are working out what we want to do, it is a useful way to proceed.

We will start with declarations of interests. I invite each of us, going round the table, to declare any relevant interests. We have all been briefed about how to do that if there is a particular interest under discussion in a particular meeting, but, for the moment, this is a general declaration of interests. I refer members to paper 1.

I will start. I have no relevant interests to declare.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): Prior to my election in 2021, I worked for a rape crisis centre.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): I have no relevant interests to declare.

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): I have no relevant interests to declare, either.

Stephen Kerr (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It is the same for me. I have no relevant interests to declare.

Amanda Bland (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform): I used to be a police officer, and I have a police pension.

David Linden (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP): My constituency includes HMP Barlinnie, which is Scotland's largest prison, so there will be occasions when I will ask questions in my capacity as a member of the committee and also as the constituency MSP for Riddrie.

The Convener: That is great. Members' declarations of interests have all been duly noted.

There are no members attending remotely today, which allows me to stress my expectation for members to attend in person, because I think that that is important to the dignity of Parliament and to our work. The purpose of a Parliament is to parley, and we cannot do that when phoning it in in our jammies. Where there are exceptional circumstances, we can by all means be flexible, but the expectation is that we will all be here on a Wednesday morning, which fits well with the parliamentary schedule.

Deputy Convener

10:02

The Convener: We move to the election of the deputy convener. It has been agreed that that will be a Scottish National Party position, and the SNP has proposed David Linden as the deputy convener. Do we agree that he is duly appointed to that post?

David Linden was chosen as deputy convener.

The Convener: David, I congratulate you on your election. I look forward to working with you again. I shudder to think how far back we go as colleagues and pals. Would you like to say some words in your new position?

The Deputy Convener (David Linden): I am very grateful, convener. As I was making my way to the Parliament this morning, I was conscious that this is now the third Parliament in which you and I have worked, with my having started out as an intern for you in Europe at the end of the late noughties and then our serving at Westminster together.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the committee as deputy convener. We know that there are a number of challenges in front of us in relation to the criminal justice system, some of which we will get on to later in our discussion today. It is important that, as we come to this committee, we do so to support our public servants, to protect the integrity of our institutions and to ensure that the public can have confidence in those institutions. As a committee, we should follow the evidence and perhaps leave the dogma of party politics at the door to ensure that we interrogate not just ministers but policy without fear or favour. If we do that, we will get on very well as a committee. It is certainly my intention to serve in that capacity.

The Convener: Brilliant—thanks very much, David. I can attest to your work rate. It is going to be formidable.

For my part, as convener, it is worth my stressing to each member—I have had a conversation with each of you privately before this meeting—that my role as convener is to make sure that all members get to speak, and, equally, to ensure that all members are heard. There are party-to-party relationships and there is the Government-to-Parliament relationship, but then there are individual MSPs and their relationships. I truly believe that this committee will work best if we are all getting something out of it and we all contribute something to it. We will have different perspectives, but that is the point. If we need to look into something to make the system work better, I am game for that. I will be keen to hear all your ideas, and I look forward to getting the committee out and about, meeting people in all the airts and pairts of Scotland and getting expertise into the committee to tell us how things are going. There will of course be a lot of legislation, but, in the meantime, there is an opportunity for some short, sharp inquiries into particular issues, and I am keen to hear what we will do about that in the next couple of weeks.

Decision on Taking Business in Private

10:05

The Convener: We move to a decision on whether to take agenda item 4 in private. Do we agree to take that item in private?

Members *indicated agreement*.

The Convener: I close the public part of this meeting, and we now move into private session.

10:05

Meeting continued in private until 11:37.

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.

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Textphone: 0800 092 7100
Email: sp.info@parliament.scot



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba