

# **STANDARDS AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 19 December 2006

Session 2

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### STANDARDS AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2006, Session 2

#### CONVENER

\*Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP)

#### DEPUTY CONVENER

\*Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
\*Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD)  
\*Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab)  
Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

#### COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con)  
Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP)

\*attended

#### THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP)

#### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Jennifer Smart

#### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Sarah Robertson

#### LOCATION

Committee Room 4



## Scottish Parliament

### Standards and Public Appointments Committee

*Tuesday 19 December 2006*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 11:00*]

### Cross-party Group

**The Convener (Brian Adam):** Welcome to the 12<sup>th</sup>—and last—meeting of the committee in 2006. I remind members and visitors to switch off their mobile phones. We have had apologies from Alex Fergusson and Karen Whitefield.

I welcome John Swinney for agenda item 1, on a proposed cross-party group on carers. Under section 8 of the code of conduct for MSPs, a cross-party group is entitled to use that title only if it is accorded recognition by this committee. Members have a copy of the application as well as a cover note. The application has been submitted by Cathy Peattie, the convener of the proposed group. The vice-convener is John Swinney, whom I invite to comment in advance of questions from the committee.

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** Thank you, convener. It is interesting to be at this end of the table for the first time in my political life. It is quite a fascinating experience. I am here on behalf of the proposed cross-party group on carers, and on behalf of Cathy Peattie, who cannot be here but would have liked to be here to make the comments that I am about to make.

In the past few months, a number of us have had various discussions with representatives of the organisations that advocate on behalf of carers in Scotland. It would be fair to say that the impetus for forming a cross-party group has come essentially from the carers organisations, which are now coming together much more cohesively to articulate a set of objectives that they wish to achieve on behalf of those for whom they speak. The application lists a number of organisations that are involved: Carers Scotland, the Princess Royal Trust for Carers, ShareCare Scotland and Crossroads. There is also a national umbrella alliance of carers organisations. Out of our discussions has come the proposal to establish a cross-party group.

We think that such a group would be useful. Members will be familiar with the debate about support for carers in Scotland. The Executive has commissioned extensive research through the care 21 group, which has considered the particular requirements of carers in a variety of different

areas. The Government is assessing how best to advance the recommendations of the group, particularly prior to the spending review in the autumn of next year. The purpose of the cross-party group is essentially to advance a number of the issues that have been raised by the care 21 agenda and by the carers organisations.

All MSPs will be aware of the vigorous representations that we receive from carers organisations and of the clear unmet demand in Scotland. The aspiration of the group is to give some vent to those issues and to make as much progress as we can on behalf of carers and their organisations in Scotland. I shall leave it at that. I am happy to answer any questions.

**Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab):** I do not have a question. As members will see from the papers, I am a member of the group. I support what John Swinney said. In common, probably, with most members in the room, I am associated with my local carers organisations and have been for a number of years, particularly in respect of young carers, but also in relation to carers as part of the wider voluntary sector. I hope that the committee will agree to the establishment of the group, because this is an area of work that does not have another ideal home and which deserves our support.

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** I am, quite correctly, in the humble position of bottom of the list of members of the proposed group. I am an enthusiastic supporter of the group, but I should declare an interest in the subject. It is a suitable subject for a cross-party group.

**The Convener:** There was a cross-party group on carers in the first session of the Parliament. Why has it taken until four months before dissolution to reintroduce it? What do you hope to achieve in the next four months?

**Mr Swinney:** I cannot shed a lot of light on the history of the previous cross-party group on carers, but in recent months there has been a great deal of dialogue involving carers organisations and MSPs. In those discussions, which have been much more structured than previously, we have considered the priorities being identified by the carers organisations and how those priorities can be advanced within Parliament. Although dissolution is not terribly far away, a number of the cross-party group's priorities are focused almost entirely on decisions that will be taken in the spending review, on which a lot of preparatory work is under way. The spending review will be influenced by discussions in the Scottish Executive—at civil service level and not just at ministerial level—and it is hoped that we can advance the position of carers as far as possible prior to dissolution.

I imagine that the group will be reconstituted after dissolution, to continue the work that has been started. However, the focus of the cross-party group would be on trying to ensure that the issues that have been raised in the Parliament by the care 21 group can be prioritised within the spending review, whatever the outcome of the election. We would take steps in the remainder of this session to influence that debate, and would continue where we left off once the Parliament has been reconstituted next year.

**The Convener:** The proposed membership of the cross-party group complies with rule 2 in section 8.3 of the code of conduct. I take it that members are content to approve the group.

*Members indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** I will write to the convener of the group, giving our approval. I thank John Swinney for his attendance.

## Members' Interests

11:08

**The Convener:** We now move to item 2, which is effectively in two parts. We are being asked, first, to finalise the draft determinations that spring from the Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Act 2006 and, secondly, to approve four draft reports to the Parliament, one for each determination.

We issued a consultation document on 24 November. We have received no responses, so the recommendation to the Parliament lies with us. Three of the determinations were reasonably straightforward, but the written statement looks slightly more daunting due to its size. We have not reached a final decision. We put out for consultation what we were minded to do. No views have been expressed by others. We now have the responsibility to decide the information that we should leave out of and put into the statement.

Members may have noticed that there have been a few minor technical changes in the drafts. If members want to go through them, we can do so, but I assume that they are content with them.

*Members indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Do members have any comments on the reports or the determinations?

**Christine May:** No.

**The Convener:** Then I will draw members' attention to pages 2 and 3 of document ST/S2/06/12/2. You will note that action is required on the following headings: "Election Expenses", "Sponsorship", "Gifts", "Overseas Visits", and "Interests in Shares".

We sought views on whether it would be appropriate to request a donor's principal business address and nature of business. We need to make a decision on that. Having seen it summarised in the document, I was struck that it might be appropriate to require the nature of the business each time it is mentioned and to ask for the principal business address, to provide consistency—it does not appear under "Sponsorship" or "Overseas Visits" at the moment.

Do members have a view on that?

**Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I think that that is sensible, for consistency. When I read the document, I felt that the requirement made sense.

**Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab):** I agree with Linda Fabiani and the convener that we need consistency. Other than that, the documents seem fine to me.

**The Convener:** Are members content to include all of the above matters with the adjustments that we have agreed in the written statement and to agree the draft reports to go to the Parliament?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**Linda Fabiani:** When will they go?

**The Convener:** We hope that they will go early in the new year. You will note that the procedure for determinations is up for decision by the Parliament on Thursday afternoon. Assuming Parliament agrees with our proposals, the intention is that we will publish them on Friday and they will go to the Parliament for debate and decision in January.

Are members content to leave it to the clerks and me to tweak the proposals in light of any decision the Parliament may reach on Thursday, rather than have another meeting of the committee?

**Linda Fabiani:** Could you define "tweak"?

**Christine May:** It depends on what Parliament says.

**The Convener:** I mean any minor adjustments based on any decision Parliament makes on Thursday. If there is anything major, we will have to look at it. Are members content with that?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** I think that we have agreed everything. Unless anyone has any other matters to raise, I will draw the meeting to a close.

I hope that everyone will enjoy the mince pies and other goodies at the conclusion of our meeting. I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year, when I will see you back here to finish off our business, which will be to deal with the code of conduct.

**Christine May:** Merry Christmas to our officials as well.

**Linda Fabiani:** To each and every one.

**Members:** Ho, ho, ho.

*Meeting closed at 11:14.*





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