

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Tuesday 22 February 2005

Session 2

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STANDARDS COMMITTEE

2nd Meeting 2005, Session 2

CONVENER

*Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)

*Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)

*Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD)

*Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con)

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Jennifer Smart

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Sarah Robertson

LOCATION

Committee Room 5

Scottish Parliament

Standards Committee

Tuesday 22 February 2005

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 11:01*]

Cross-party Group

The Convener (Brian Adam): Welcome to the second meeting of the Standards Committee in 2005. I remind members to switch off their mobile phones.

We have received apologies from Donald Gorrie, who is attending a funeral today. We have also received apologies from John Home Robertson, who is unable to be with us for item 1, which is on the proposed cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on the civil nuclear industry.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): I am listed as a member of the cross-party group, which is fine, as I expressed my support for the group, although I did not think that I had got as far as joining. John Home Robertson sends his apologies and was unable to get one of his deputies to stand in for him. Although I do not think that I can answer any of the committee's inquiries, because I was not at the inaugural meeting of the group, I said that I would pass on any information or questions to John Home Robertson.

The Convener: Do members have any questions on the application, which clearly meets the criteria? If there are no questions, I take it that we approve the application to set up the cross-party group.

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: We will write to Mr Home Robertson formally approving the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on the civil nuclear industry.

I hope that we can deal with the rest of the business as expeditiously.

Code of Conduct

11:03

The Convener: Item 2 is the review of the code of conduct for MSPs, which will take us a step further than the Scotland Act 1998 (Transitory and Transitional Provisions) (Members' Interests) Order 1999. We have already agreed that we will start the review by getting input from MSPs and from former members of the consultative steering group code of conduct working group.

In case we confuse members by bringing out a consultation on the code of conduct just as we are about to debate the report on replacing the members' interests order, maybe we can delay sending the letter to MSPs for a short time. However, we can send the letter to former members of the working group. Members have a copy of that letter. I take it that members approve of that course of action. If members have any suggestions for what should be in the letter or have any comments, now is the time to state them.

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): The letter is admirable, comprehensive and easily understood. We should proceed in the way that you indicate, by delaying the letter to MSPs so as not to confuse them.

The Convener: We could leave it for a month or so, if that meets with the approval of the committee. Would members also be content to delegate the detail of the letter to the clerks and me, so that we do not have to return to the issue?

Members indicated agreement.

Commissioner for Public Appointments

The Convener: In that case, I draw the meeting to a close.

Meeting closed at 11:07.

11:05

The Convener: We have already had before us proposals for a change in our remit. Indeed, Iain Smith, the convener of the Procedures Committee, spoke to us at our last meeting. The Procedures Committee is still fine tuning the details of the procedures for laying the draft code of practice and for reporting breaches of the code, as he reported to us at our last meeting. The issues are likely to be addressed in a report to Parliament, which we are advised is likely to be made early in March. Although we cannot anticipate the business programme of the Parliament, we can assume that a debate on the report will take place soon after.

At our last meeting, Kenneth Macintosh asked whether reports by the commissioner for public appointments on non-compliance should be considered in private by the committee. We were advised by the convener of the Procedures Committee that that is still being considered by the commissioner's office and the Parliament's legal advisers. Today, we have an update on the matter. As members will see, it will not be mandatory for us to consider such reports in private, but we would be able to do so if we wished. Today, we are simply being asked to note that position. We will be sent copies of the report to Parliament by the Procedures Committee as soon as it is published. Are members content with the update?

Members *indicated agreement.*

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