

STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Tuesday 27 January 2009

Session 3

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STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

2nd Meeting 2009, Session 3

CONVENER

*Gil Paterson (West of Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)

*Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP)

*Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)

Peter Peacock (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

*Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP)

*Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab)

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)

Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab)

CLERKS TO THE COMMITTEE

Gillian Baxendine

Alison Walker

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERKS

Mary Dinsdale

Jane Williams

ASSISTANT CLERK

Catherine Fergusson

LOCATION

Committee Room 5

Scottish Parliament

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Tuesday 27 January 2009

[THE CONVENER opened the meeting at 14:15]

Interests

The Convener (Gil Paterson): I welcome everyone to the second meeting in 2009 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. We are sorry that Peter Peacock is not able to be here—he is attending a family funeral and has sent his apologies. I welcome Mary Mulligan, who is here in his place, and invite her to declare any relevant interests.

Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): Thank you, convener. I am pleased to join the committee this afternoon, although I hope that my doing so will not become a regular event. I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests. I do not think that I have any interests that are particularly relevant to this committee.

Decision on Taking Business in Private

14:16

The Convener: We must decide whether to take items 4 and 5 on the agenda in private. Item 4 relates to the committee's work programme. Such items are usually taken in private, because they involve discussions about the relative merits of different aspects of our work. Under item 5, we will consider draft guidance that might not reflect the committee's final view. Do members agree to take those items in private?

Members indicated agreement.

Cross-party Group

14:16

The Convener: The committee's approval is sought for the registration of the proposed cross-party group on beer and the brewing industry. I welcome Hugh Henry. Do members have questions for him about the group?

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): This is a general point that has nothing to do with the group that we are considering. There is a large number of cross-party groups in the Parliament, and some of us find it difficult to balance their different needs. Is Hugh Henry confident that the proposed group will enjoy the on-going support and attendance that will be needed if it is to sustain itself?

Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab): It appears that it will do so. There has been a degree of interest in the group. An exceptionally high number of MSPs attended the recent event that the Scottish Beer and Pub Association organised. Some of the issues to do with employment, not just in the brewing industry but in the licensed trade throughout Scotland, affect us all.

I cannot anticipate the future and say that the proposed group will be more successful than other cross-party groups are, but the level of interest that has been expressed is sufficiently high to enable me to hope that the group will make a valuable contribution to parliamentary life.

The Convener: According to the registration form, the secretariat for the group will be provided by the Scottish Beer and Pub Association. However, the value of that support is not given. When are we likely to receive that information?

Hugh Henry: As soon as the group convenes we will attempt to put a monetary value on the support and notify you accordingly.

The Convener: Thank you.

On the basis of the information on the registration form and the information that Hugh Henry has provided, are members content to approve the proposed cross-party group on beer and the brewing industry?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: I thank Hugh Henry for attending.

Code of Conduct

14:19

The Convener: Item 3 relates to changes to the code of conduct for members of the Scottish Parliament as a result of the Parliament's approval of the reimbursement of members' expenses scheme. We have received a letter from the Presiding Officer, a copy of which is in the annex to paper SPPA/S3/09/2/2. The Presiding Officer has identified three paragraphs in the code of conduct that the committee might want to change.

If there are no comments, are members content to recommend to the Parliament that the code of conduct be updated accordingly?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: The committee will need to consider its report to the Parliament, which will be subject to a parliamentary debate before the recommended changes can be made. Do members agree to consider the draft report in private at future meetings?

Robert Brown: That seems an awful footie process and a lot of paperwork just to make technical amendments to the code. Do we need to go through such a process, for the sake of textual changes that raise no issue of principle?

The Convener: Perhaps the clerk will say whether there is a particular reason for the process.

Gillian Baxendine (Clerk): There is no mechanism for changing the code of conduct other than by reporting to the Parliament. However, we can wrap up the debate in the Parliament with another more substantial issue, so that the matter does not take up much parliamentary time.

Robert Brown: Okay. I was worrying about the paper and trees that would be used up for a relatively minor matter.

The Convener: We must decide whether to discuss the draft report in private. The issue is fairly straightforward, but we have discussed draft reports on other matters in private, because such discussions can involve much to-ing and fro-ing. Although it might be okay to consider our report on changes to the code in public, we should stick to the protocol that has worked fine during the previous two parliamentary sessions. Although the issue is not important, I recommend that we take the item in private. Are members happy to do so?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Thank you. That concludes the public part of the meeting.

14:21

Meeting continued in private until 15:26.

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