



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Tuesday 27 March 2012

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STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
4th Meeting 2012, Session 4

CONVENER

*Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Helen Eadie (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Margaret Burgess (Cunninghame South) (SNP)

*Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP)

*Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)

*Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP)

CLERKS TO THE COMMITTEE

Gillian Baxendine

Alison Walker

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Tuesday 27 March 2012

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 14:15*]

Cross-party Groups

The Convener (Dave Thompson): Good afternoon and welcome to the fourth meeting in 2012 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. I remind everyone to switch off mobile phones and BlackBerrys if they still have them on.

Agenda item 1 is consideration of two cross-party groups, both of which were active in previous sessions. The first is the proposed cross-party group on dementia, and we have invited the group's convener, Mark McDonald MSP, to provide information on its purpose and membership. Do members have any questions?

Helen Eadie (Cowdenbeath) (Lab): In considering applications for cross-party groups, we usually look at whether the membership has a good cross-section of not just parties but people who are not MSPs, because we think that the groups are all about the public coming to Parliament and informing members about the issues in question. What are your group's thoughts on that matter?

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP): I realise that the form lists only one organisation—Alzheimer Scotland, which will provide secretarial support to the cross-party group. However, a number of other organisations will contribute to the group, and I am more than happy to provide the committee with a full list after the meeting.

The Convener: Have you already contacted those groups and bodies?

Mark McDonald: Yes. They have been contacted and have indicated their willingness to get involved. I do not have the full list in front of me, but it covers a range of organisations, including the Royal College of Nursing. As I said, I can provide a full list after the meeting.

Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab): What were the group's aims and objectives in the previous session? Did it achieve them?

Mark McDonald: The group played a significant role in developing what is now the national dementia strategy and I put on record my appreciation of the group's efforts and particularly those of its previous convener, Irene Oldfather. I

know that she was not re-elected, but most people will accept that she did a very good job of pushing the case of Alzheimer's and dementia, through the group.

Given my very strong personal and political interest in dementia and in view of the fact that the group's previous convener was not re-elected, I wanted to re-establish the group. Although it achieved a significant milestone by getting the dementia strategy put in place, there is still work to be done in looking at new innovations, hearing about examples of best practice and examining the priorities in the national dementia strategy. That is how I see the group moving forward.

Margaret McCulloch: That is lovely.

Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP): Can you clarify the group's role in relation to the intention to "assess progress" that is set out in the group's purpose?

Mark McDonald: This is where I have to play the "new boy" card. I freely admit that I have not done this before and might not have worded the group's purpose as well as I might have done.

I do not know how the committee feels, but I am perfectly happy to resubmit a form in which the purpose is slightly better worded and which lists the groups that will form part of the membership. If that is not in order, I can give members some detail of the group's purpose here and now, but it might be better for formal purposes if I resubmitted the application form. I will take the committee's guidance.

Paul Wheelhouse: It might be helpful if you gave us a rough idea of the group's purpose.

Mark McDonald: Sure. First, as with all cross-party groups, the group provides a forum for MSPs and stakeholders to engage in dialogue in order to inform policy developments that impact on the health and wellbeing of people with dementia and their carers. I realise that there is already a cross-party group on carers and another on old people and age—I do not remember that group's exact title—and that their remits are closely linked with that of this cross-party group on dementia. Having spoken to the conveners of both those groups, I think that our groups could carry out a lot of collaborative work, which does not always happen between cross-party groups with significantly similar interests.

The group provides the opportunity to share evidence from a range of perspectives and from across the country about what is being done well in some areas and about other areas where there might be a need for focused improvement with regard to the national dementia strategy's priorities. Of course, it also provides an opportunity to brief MSPs who have a particular

interest in the field and allows for a more focused approach than might be taken by a committee or a cross-party group with a wider remit.

Paul Wheelhouse: That was very helpful.

The Convener: There is a general concern that the reference in the group's purpose to assessing "progress against dementia strategy" might be more appropriate for a parliamentary committee than a cross-party group. On the other hand, if we take out that phrase, what is left will probably be too short.

It would be helpful if you resubmitted the group's purpose; you could discuss appropriate wording with the clerks to ensure that we do not face similar problems when the application comes back to us in a month's time. I do not think that we can give formal approval until we receive the revised form. *[Interruption.]* Actually, I am being told that there is nothing in the code of conduct to prevent us from giving approval. If members are happy to do so, we could approve the group, subject to the revised purpose being discussed with the clerks and coming back to the committee in a month's time.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): I want to ask Mr McDonald a question wearing my deputy convener of the Health and Sport Committee hat. I am very interested in the cross-party group on dementia and think that it could serve quite a useful purpose for the Parliament. The Health and Sport Committee will be considering the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Bill, the integration of health and social care and the older people's change fund, all of which are of direct interest in respect of people with dementia. Our Health and Sport Committee does not always have the scope to hear from wider stakeholder groups—indeed, we sometimes get what might be called the usual suspects at our formal evidence sessions—and I am keen to have a more informal approach in which, say, the cross-party group on dementia could consider such issues. Would you consider that?

Mark McDonald: Absolutely. Those are key issues. I referred earlier to policy developments that impact on people with dementia and their carers, and you have highlighted three very important upcoming issues that are absolutely at the forefront in that respect. As you noted, there is a crossover between such issues and issues that the CPGs on carers and older people are considering. I am aware of those issues and will certainly speak to the conveners of those groups to ensure that we work together rather than separately on the matter.

Helen Eadie: I am very happy to give formal recognition to the CPG on dementia today, because its work will be vital. In fact, just this

week, the BBC and other news media have been talking about an explosion of the disease and the number of people affected by it. I say, "Well done," to those who want to carry on this work.

On behalf of the Labour Party, I thank Mark McDonald for his kind words about Irene Oldfather. We all recognise the contribution that she made in her time here and I think that she did great work on Alzheimer's.

The Convener: Thank you very much. Are members content to approve the group? We will ask Mark McDonald to provide revised wording for the group's purpose.

Members indicated agreement.

Mark McDonald: Thank you very much, convener.

The Convener: The next group for approval is the proposed cross-party group on Tibet, which was active in the previous session and meets all the criteria. If members have no questions, does the committee agree to accord recognition to the group?

Members indicated agreement.

European Strategy (Correspondence)

14:24

The Convener: Item 2 is consideration of a letter from the Parliamentary Bureau about the committee's report on European strategy rules. As members will recall, the committee reported on the matter last October and the bureau has been considering our request for time in the chamber to debate the issue.

Before it agrees to schedule that time, the bureau has asked the committee to consider some changes, which are set out in paper SPPA/S4/12/4/2 and provide for the Presiding Officer rather than the lead committee to convey the lead committee's views to the United Kingdom Parliament. That would happen only if it were not possible for the whole Parliament to debate the proposal—for example, during recess or if there was simply no time to secure a parliamentary debate. If members have no comments, are they happy with the contents of the paper and do they wish to amend the draft rules as suggested by the bureau?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I think that the more work that is transferred to the Presiding Officer, the better—now. [*Laughter.*]

The Convener: Thank you very much.

Meeting closed at 14:26.

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