



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Tuesday 22 May 2012

Tuesday 22 May 2012

CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	407
CROSS-PARTY GROUPS	408
DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT	414

STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
7th 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)

*John Lamont (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)

*Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Gillian Baxendine

Alison Walker

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Tuesday 22 May 2012

[The Convener opened the meeting at 14:30]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Dave Thompson): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the seventh meeting of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee in 2012. I ask members and others to turn off their mobile phones and BlackBerrys, please.

We have received apologies from our deputy convener, Helen Eadie, who is unable to be with us.

Agenda item 1 is to decide whether to take in private items 4, 5 and 6. Under agenda item 4, the committee will consider possible standing order rule changes following the passing of the Scotland Act 2012, and under agenda item 5, it will consider how section 7 of the “Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament” should be amended. Under agenda item 6, the committee will decide the next steps in its review of cross-party groups. Do members agree to take those items in private?

Members indicated agreement.

Cross-party Groups

14:31

The Convener: Under agenda item 2, the committee will consider applications for recognition of two cross-party groups, the first of which is the proposed cross-party group on Pakistan. Michael McMahon MSP has been invited to the meeting to provide more information about the proposed group. I welcome him to the meeting. As members are aware, the committee approved the cross-party group on the middle east and south Asia earlier this year. The convener of that group—Hanzala Malik MSP—has raised concerns about how the proposed cross-party group on Pakistan and the cross-party group on the middle east and south Asia would work together, given the potential for overlap.

My name is down as a member of the proposed cross-party group on Pakistan, but I have no recollection of agreeing to be a member of it. [*Laughter.*] In fact, last year, I was divesting myself of responsibilities on cross-party groups so that I would have responsibilities only on half a dozen rather than a dozen, and I was not looking for any more. There may have been a misunderstanding. Back in September, I think, I attended a celebration of Eid meeting, and it is possible that someone thought that I was putting my name forward for the proposed cross-party group on Pakistan. For clarity, my name should be deleted from the application.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank Michael McMahon for coming to the meeting. I will make a couple of observations.

We have been given details about the proposed cross-party group, the route to its being established and the cross-party group that Hanzala Malik has led on. I will not ask about the sequence of events, which I find almost irrelevant. Both groups are valid for consideration to be ratified by the committee. My remarks and questions relate to the committee’s review of cross-party groups.

Have you considered how you could work more closely with the cross-party group on the middle east and south Asia, given that there are clear cross-cutting aspects? The committee has concerns not about the two groups, but about the proliferation of cross-party groups.

Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab): I am also convener of the cross-party group on palliative care and the cross-party group on disability: there is potentially a lot of duplication between those groups. The cross-party group on palliative care has had, with the cross-party group on international development, joint meetings in

which we have considered development of palliation in third world countries. Wherever there has been an opportunity to meet, we have done so in order to cut down on duplication. Recently, because of cross-cutting issues, there was a joint meeting of the cross-party group on disability and the cross-party group on human rights. I have experience of looking at the work that other cross-party groups do in order to avoid duplication.

I passionately believe that a cross-party group on Pakistan would have a full workload and would be of a lot of interest to a variety of groups in the third sector and in the public sector, and to organisations that are based in the Pakistani community and which have links to Pakistan.

I am not saying that the issues would be diluted if they had to be covered purely by the cross-party group on the middle east and south Asia, but I question why only the issues that a cross-party group on Pakistan would consider would fall into that category, given that we have a cross-party group on Palestine—which was in the middle east the last time I checked—and a cross-party group on Tibet, whose capital, Lhasa, is further south in Asia than Lahore and Islamabad are. If those two cross-party groups can cover parts of the area that the cross-party group on the middle east and south Asia covers, our cross-party group could work in that environment, if it was given permission to exist.

The Convener: One reason why we had concerns about your proposed cross-party group is that, when Hanzala Malik proposed the cross-party group on the middle east and south Asia, we raised such issues with him. Before we knew about your group, we realised that his group's work might conflict with that of other groups. When we got your application, we thought it only reasonable to discuss the matter.

Michael McMahon: When I originally notified people of a meeting of the proposed cross-party group on Pakistan, Hanzala Malik told me that he wanted to set up a cross-party group on the middle east and south Asia. We discussed what he was trying to do and what I was trying to do. We did not see the two as being incompatible, but thought that we would work together whenever we could. He understood that at the outset. I agreed to be a member of his cross-party group, should it be established, and he agreed to support the cross-party group on Pakistan on the same basis.

Margaret Burgess (Cunninghame South) (SNP): It has been suggested somewhere that your group is not all-inclusive. Would any Pakistani groups or communities not get access to your group?

Michael McMahon: Absolutely none of them would not get access. We want to reach out to as

many as we can. The group's secretariat will be provided by the Scottish Asian Pakistan Foundation. That organisation is based in Edinburgh but, just yesterday morning, I met representatives of the Pakistani community in Lanarkshire to talk about the role that they might have in supporting the CPG's work. The secretariat has an Edinburgh bias, but we have already had support from Pakistani groups in Dundee and Stirling.

We want to reach out to people across genders. At the group's first meeting, women representatives wanted to get on the agenda cultural issues and matters that relate to women in the Pakistani community in Scotland. We want to reach out to as many sectors of the Pakistani community as we can.

Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome Michael McMahon to the committee. I want confirmation and clarification of a couple of points, just for information. In his representations to the committee, Hanzala Malik has said that Mr Malik Masood has been a driving force behind the proposed group. The registration form says that Mr Muhammed Imran will be the treasurer. Do they represent organisations? Should the committee be aware of anything in relation to them?

Michael McMahon: Those people are members of the Scottish Asian Pakistan Foundation, which is based in Edinburgh. It is community based and receives support from the Pakistani business community, with which resources the foundation works with Pakistani community organisations in the Edinburgh area to support their work.

In discussions with the Co-operative movement about how the SAPF could raise the profile of what it does through the Scottish Parliament, a cross-party group was suggested. The foundation has links to commercial groups in Lahore—particularly Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry—and to the Pakistani Parliament, including its Senate, which has set up the friends of Scotland organisation to facilitate work between the Pakistani and Scottish Parliaments.

The secretariat of the CPG will be Edinburgh based, but will try to reach out as wide as possible.

Paul Wheelhouse: The section in the registration form on financial or other benefits received says

"None received so far"

and the "amount" box is blank. Is that likely to remain the case?

Michael McMahon: That is how we would like to move forward. The organisations that have signed up are all willing to participate in order to

engage with the Pakistani community. We do not think it appropriate—unless it becomes necessary—to ask them to subscribe to the group when we hope that the secretariat will be managed through the SAPF, which gets financial support from the same organisations.

Bob Doris: I will ask a question to which I think I know the answer. You may recall that when I established the cross-party group on racial equality in Scotland, representatives of the Irish community were not invited to the initial meeting. Sometimes it can be quite difficult, even though there is no intention to omit any groups. It is therefore important to keep under constant review how to reach out to the various strands within society that would want to be involved in the cross-party groups. I know that I am leading you towards an answer, but I think that it is important to get your response on the record. Will you keep the non-MSP membership of the group under review in order to widen, and create the greatest possible access to, interested stakeholder groups and the Pakistani diaspora in Scotland to ensure appropriate engagement?

Michael McMahon: That is exactly what this is about. The group will build on what already exists and develop cultural, commercial and political links wherever it can—in Scotland and between Scotland and Pakistan. That will ensure that groups within the Pakistani community—the Pakistani community is the largest visible ethnic minority in Scotland—get the opportunity to take advantage of the cross-party group, should it be allowed to exist.

The Convener: Following Michael McMahon's answers and his views on co-operating with Hanzala Malik's cross-party group, do members agree to accord recognition to the cross-party group on Pakistan?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I thank you very much for coming along, and I wish you the very best of luck in developing the group and in working co-operatively with the cross-party group on the middle east and south Asia.

Michael McMahon: I thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to speak.

The Convener: I welcome Jenny Marra MSP, who has joined us to discuss the proposed cross-party group on human trafficking.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): Thank you, convener.

Paul Wheelhouse: Welcome to the committee. We have just had a discussion on the need for collaboration between two cross-party groups. Have you rationalised your position with other cross-party groups that might have an interest in

human trafficking, and are you happy that your proposed group can co-exist with them without duplicating effort?

Jenny Marra: Yes—I thought about that when you were discussing the cross-party group on Pakistan. We have had long and involved initial cross-party discussions about setting up a cross-party group on human trafficking, and about how it might cross-cut with the cross-party group on human rights. The Labour Party, the Scottish National Party and the other parties have decided that a cross-party group on human trafficking is merited for a number of reasons. The cross-party group on human rights has found that it does not have enough time to devote to the large and complex subject of human trafficking. That group has moved from monthly to bi-monthly meetings, so it has been deemed that it has insufficient time to scrutinise human trafficking in as much detail as we feel is merited. We therefore decided to go ahead with the proposal to set up the human trafficking group.

Paul Wheelhouse: Will you keep in touch with that group on issues of mutual interest?

Jenny Marra: We will absolutely do that. The convener of the cross-party group on human rights, John Finnie MSP, has signed up to be a member of the cross-party group on human trafficking, so there is a good link there. There are also links with a couple of stakeholders, including Amnesty International.

14:45

The Convener: No other members have questions, in which case, I will ask about your purpose, which is

"To take forward the Human Trafficking agenda in Scotland".

That is one of the most concise purposes that we have seen; there is nothing wrong with that. Will you elaborate a wee bit on how you will do that? What sort of activities and speakers will be involved?

Jenny Marra: I am glad that you asked me that question, convener, because I feel that the group has had a purpose right from the start.

In November, Baroness Helena Kennedy published a report on her inquiry into human trafficking in Scotland, which was produced with the Equality and Human Rights Commission. I feel that the report provides a blueprint and a work programme for our cross-party group.

We discussed that a few weeks ago when we had a visit from Baroness Butler-Sloss, who chairs the Westminster cross-party group on human trafficking, although I think it has a different title there. She spoke about the work that her group is

doing and about the report, and we discussed ways in which the Scottish Parliament cross-party group could find synergies with the Westminster group to push the trafficking agenda forward.

Trafficking is a complex problem that involves policing and social work. It has so many different facets, and although many human trafficking issues are devolved, others are reserved to the UK Border Agency. Our group will look at the devolved issues, and work with the other cross-party groups in the devolved parliaments and assemblies of the UK—I think that our Parliament is the last to set up a group on human trafficking. It will work well, and we will use Baroness Helena Kennedy's report as a kind of work programme.

The Convener: Does the committee agree, therefore, to accord recognition to the cross-party group on human trafficking?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I wish Jenny Marra the best of luck with her cross-party group.

Jenny Marra: Thank you, convener.

Draft Annual Report

14:47

The Convener: Item 3 is our annual report. We are required under rule 12.9 of standing orders, as all committees are, to produce an annual report. Do members have any comments?

Paul Wheelhouse: I wish to highlight paragraph 3, on reform of parliamentary business. I do not disagree with anything in it, but I suggest that we reflect on the fact that, regardless of our constitutional future, additional powers are coming to us either via the Scotland Act 2012 or via a referendum. That was one of the driving forces behind the need to look at how Parliament works, so it might be helpful to remind members that we had to take it into account.

The Convener: Do you want a wee reference inserted in paragraph 3? Have you a form of words to put in?

Paul Wheelhouse: I apologise, but I have not come to the committee with a form of words; I was just reading the report on the way to the meeting.

The Convener: If the committee agrees that the matter needs to be mentioned, would you be content—

Paul Wheelhouse: I am happy for the clerks to do it.

The Convener: Before I make my suggestion, we should hear the views of other committee members.

Bob Doris: Paul Wheelhouse's suggestion is reasonable, as long as the insertion is factual and politically neutral.

The Convener: Are members happy with that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Is the committee content to delegate that to me and the clerks?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: We will find a form of words that reflects what Paul Wheelhouse said and add it to paragraph 3. I assure members that what is inserted will be factual and politically neutral.

14:49

Meeting continued in private until 15:44.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice to SPICe.

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by APS Group Scotland:

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

For details of documents available to
order in hard copy format, please contact:
APS Scottish Parliament Publications on 0131 629 9941.

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

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

e-format first available
ISBN 978-1-4061-8953-7

Revised e-format available
ISBN 978-1-4061-8965-0

Printed in Scotland by APS Group Scotland
