



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLICING

Thursday 21 March 2013

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JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLICING

1st Meeting 2013, Session 4

CONVENER

*Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
*Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)
*Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)
*Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab)
*Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Irene Fleming

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Thursday 21 March 2013

[Christine Grahame *opened the meeting at 13:42*]

Interests

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): Welcome to the first meeting of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing in 2013. As the oldest member present—something in which I take no joy—I am required to chair the first meeting until a convener is chosen. Please switch off mobile phones and other electronic devices completely, as they interfere with the broadcasting system, even when switched to silent.

Under the first item on the agenda, I invite members to declare any interests that are relevant to the remit of the sub-committee. I remind members that a declaration should be brief but sufficiently detailed to make clear the nature of the interest.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): I have a list that I will read out. I am a former police officer; I am a former full-time official of the Scottish Police Federation; I am the recipient of a police pension; I am a former member of a police appeals tribunal; and I am a member of the Highlands and Islands branch of the Retired Police Officers Association.

Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab): I am a former police officer, a former member of the Scottish Police Federation and a former member of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, and I advise the private sector from time to time on the handling of information and intelligence.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): As everybody is declaring former interests, I should declare that I am a former member of Grampian joint police board—the longest-serving member in that board's history.

Christine Grahame: As you have said several times before.

John Finnie: I should perhaps add that I am a former member of the northern joint police board.

Convener

13:43

Christine Grahame: Can I have nominations for convener?

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): I nominate you, as the chair of the Justice Committee, to chair this sub-committee.

John Finnie: I second that.

Christine Grahame was chosen as convener.

The Convener (Christine Grahame): Thank you, colleagues.

We can, if we wish, choose a deputy convener. There is no obligation to do so and an alternative might be just to appoint a temporary convener if the convener is unavailable. Do we need a deputy convener?

Alison McInnes: I do not think so.

The Convener: I see wrinkled noses around the table, which I assume means no. Everyone is happy not to have a deputy convener.

Working Practices

13:44

The Convener: I remind members that we must be finished by 2 pm, when business begins in the chamber—1.55 would be preferable. There is time to have an initial discussion of our working practices and our work programme now and, if we need more time, we can return to the issue at our next meeting.

Members have before them a paper—paper 3—which outlines suggestions for our working practices. It would be useful to get a steer from members about when they would like to meet. At a basic level, who is free when? Does anyone have a clash on a Wednesday morning?

Members: Yes.

The Convener: That leaves us with little room for manoeuvre. We are left with Monday afternoon, evenings and lunch times.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): We should choose evenings or lunch times because, with the new parliamentary sitting pattern, constituency work is already suffering on Mondays and Fridays.

The Convener: I absolutely agree. Mondays and Fridays are constituency days for everybody and, particularly for members who travel a long distance, meeting then would take up the whole of the day.

We could meet at lunch times, which would be more convenient for members. Are there any group meetings at a lunch time?

Margaret Mitchell: There is one on a Tuesday lunch time.

Kevin Stewart: There are group meetings on Wednesday lunch time as well, convener.

The Convener: Oh, that is ours, yes. I forgot about that.

Graeme Pearson: What about Thursday?

The Convener: Thursday lunch time after First Minister's questions?

Margaret Mitchell: Yes.

Graeme Pearson: That seems fine.

The Convener: I thank Kevin Stewart for reminding me about the group meeting and showing up that I do not always go.

A Thursday lunchtime meeting would necessarily have to be after members' business, but we can be more flexible, if somebody is not in members' business—[*Interruption.*] We cannot.

We have to fix it. It has to be after members' business on Thursdays.

Alison McInnes: How much time does that leave us for any particular meeting? Is it just a little more than an hour?

Kevin Stewart: We would normally have an hour and 15 minutes then because the Parliament would normally start at 2.30 on a Thursday afternoon.

Alison McInnes: We might just have to be flexible, but I am concerned that, when we are taking evidence from external witnesses, that might not give us very long.

The Convener: Yes, it is really a case of suck it and see. There might be occasions when it is easy to finish within an hour and there might be others on which something comes out of the woodwork and we want to go on. I appreciate that members may have commitments in the chamber, so we will have to see how we do.

John Finnie: I presume that the fixing of a time does not preclude you from advancing the start time as long as there is notification.

The Convener: It is like the Justice Committee. We usually start at 10 o'clock but we advanced it to 9.30. However, we will try to have some kind of structure. We will start at 1.15 on Thursday lunch times. [*Interruption.*] It is all right, I am taking my time.

Graeme Pearson: Who is driving this bus?

The Convener: The clerk is.

The next matter is the frequency of meetings. We have to take a view about how frequently we want to meet.

Kevin Stewart: Again, it is a case of suck it and see. The sub-committee may have to meet regularly to begin with and may then ease off. I am happy to be flexible about that. We just have to wait and see.

The Convener: Are members agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I ask members to note the relationship that the sub-committee will have with other committees, which is set out in paper 3. We are invited to follow the Justice Committee's suggested approach regarding working in a consensual and non-partisan manner.

Members who have come from other committees, such as the Local Government and Regeneration Committee and the Equal Opportunities Committee, bring information and experience from those committees to the sub-committee and will, I hope, report back—that is the aim, if it is agreeable. Three of us, of course, have

come directly from the Justice Committee, but Margaret Mitchell, Kevin Stewart and John Finnie have come from other committee pools.

Margaret Mitchell: I am a parliamentary representative. Kevin Stewart is representing the Local Government and Regeneration Committee and I am the political representation to ensure that there is an equal balance. That is my understanding.

The Convener: We will be flexible about it. I was thinking about the expertise that you all have from your different committees. You do not have anything like a badge on. It is just that you have other things to contribute. As he is on both the Justice Committee and the Equal Opportunities Committee, John Finnie can bring other issues to the discussion that we might otherwise miss. Is that all right?

Margaret Mitchell: Absolutely.

The Convener: Do members agree to discuss other issues on the working practices at our next meeting, given that we are just constituting ourselves today?

Members indicated agreement.

Work Programme

13:49

The Convener: Item 4 is our approach to developing a work programme. At our next meeting, when we have more time, it would be useful to go around the table and have a proper discussion about what we would like the sub-committee to focus on.

I seek members' views on how soon the sub-committee would like to meet and what it would like to consider at that meeting. For example, do members wish to meet before 1 April, perhaps to seek a progress update from the Scottish Police Authority and the chief constable? That would be soon—like, next week.

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: We will have our first proper meeting at 1.15 on Thursday next week.

Graeme Pearson: I am all for flexibility, but could we perhaps meet fortnightly initially? If we decide that we are killing the goose, we can relax back.

The Convener: I ask members to ensure that that time is free in their diaries in forthcoming fortnights, but we will see how the meeting next week goes and we can then firm it up.

Graeme Pearson: Sure. It is just so that I can be looking at the diary fortnightly.

The Convener: It is a good idea to mark that space and block it throughout.

That is fine. Our next meeting will be held next Thursday at 1.15 at a place to be arranged. I thank members very much for attending.

Meeting closed at 13:50.

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