



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Thursday 24 April 2014

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STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
6th Meeting 2014, Session 4

CONVENER

*Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)

*Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con)

*Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab)

*Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Gillian Baxendine

Alison Walker

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 24 April 2014

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:02*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Stewart Stevenson): Good morning and welcome to the sixth meeting in 2014 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. I start by reminding everybody to switch off their mobile phones, because they may interfere with the broadcasting system.

We have an innovation today, in that some committee members are using tablets to access meeting papers, which have been marked up in such a way as to assist that process. I remind members who are using electronic devices that it would be a courtesy to other members of the committee to use them only for that purpose, rather than for more general purposes.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): That will be me, then.

The Convener: If the cap fits, George, you wear it, but that is my recommendation to all members of the committee—including myself.

Item 1 is a decision on taking business in private. Does the committee agree to take items 4 and 5 in private? Item 4 is for the committee to consider a complaint about two cross-party groups, and item 5 is for the committee to consider its next steps in its inquiry into procedures for considering legislation. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

Cross-party Group

10:04

The Convener: Item 2 is evidence from James Dornan MSP on the proposed cross-party group on Turkey. Welcome to our meeting, Mr Dornan.

Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP): Members will note from the papers that I have signed up to be a member of that CPG. I wanted to highlight that.

The Convener: Thank you. That is helpful and good procedure.

Are there members who wish to ask questions of Mr Dornan?

Members indicated disagreement.

The Convener: Do you wish to make some remarks, Mr Dornan?

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): I would like to mention two things that I was made aware of about the secretariat. One is that we have to make it clear whether the role of secretary is paid or unpaid. The person who has put his name down as secretary, Sitki Nalci, has come back to me in an email—which I am happy to share with the committee—to say that he understands that he will be doing that in a personal capacity and that he will not be paid for the role.

The other thing to say is that he also works for the Dumfries and Galloway Multicultural Association, but he appreciates that when he attends the cross-party group he will be attending as secretary and nothing else.

The Convener: That is helpful. Thank you.

There is nothing else that members wish to ask you, Mr Dornan, which means that your appearance before our committee has been commendably brief. We will let you know the committee's decision on the application for recognition of your proposed group, which we will consider on 8 May.

“Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament” (Cross-party Groups)

10:06

The Convener: Item 3 is for the committee to agree an update to volume 3, section 6 of the “Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament”, to ensure that cross-party groups comply with the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body’s policies on filming and room bookings. The committee agreed at its previous meeting to incorporate those policies into volume 3. We have a paper that shows the updates in the annex to paper 2, which is before the committee. Do members wish to comment?

Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab):
Page 4 states, in relation to room bookings:

“For example, Cross-Party Group Conveners and Secretaries could refer to this section when planning future meeting dates to determine which dates and times would prevent any clashes”.

It was suggested that MSPs look at the website to see when other cross-party groups are meeting, so that they do not set dates that clash; some MSPs are members of three or four cross-party groups. I think that that would be cumbersome and practically impossible, because you would have to tie it in with when the room is available, and the groups may be meeting quarterly so it would be difficult to scroll through all the cross-party groups to see where the MSP members were going to be on that particular day to avoid a clash.

Alison Walker (Clerk): That is something that is currently in volume 3 of the code, not one of the additional pieces of the code that members are being asked about today, but if it is an issue that members wish to explore you can take it into account for the committee’s future work programme. For what it is worth, the clerks tend to use the meeting-room manager to scan upcoming business for cross-party groups, because that is one place to see all the meetings that are happening, so that may be more helpful than scanning through all the cross-party group pages.

Margaret McDougall: If it is already part of the code, it obviously does not work, because lots of people cannot attend cross-party groups because groups meet on the same nights. I do not know how you can make that any easier.

The Convener: We can return to the issue, but I suspect that we are looking at a matter of logistics and that it is up to individuals, when making arrangements, to consider all the circumstances around any proposed date for a meeting. There is

probably a limit to what we, as a committee, can contribute to good practice on the part of others.

If nobody else wishes to make any observations on the matter, we move into private session for item 4.

10:10

Meeting continued in private until 11:23.

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