



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

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19 January 2024

Cross-Party Group on Drug and Alcohol Misuse Complaint

Dear Conveners,

I write to you today further to my letter of 13 December 2023. At its meeting yesterday, the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee discussed the complaint received in relation to the Cross-Party Group on Drug and Alcohol Misuse.

The Committee's role in relation to CPGs relates to the rules set out in the [Code of Conduct](#) Code of Conduct. The complaint addressed several issues some of which sit out with the responsibility of the Committee and fall for the CPG to consider. Within the code two matters fall within the Committee's remit. The accurate recording of the attendees at a meeting subsequently reflected in the minutes and the formation of a subgroup. These matters were considered by the Committee.

The Committee has concluded its consideration and found that the Group has not complied with the requirements of the Code in relation to the accurate recording of attendees at meetings. In your letter of 10 January 2024, you indicated that discussions had been had with the secretariat and that 'they have been reminded of their obligations under the Code of Conduct'.

The Committee would strongly emphasise that primary responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Code of Conduct rests with the Convenor(s) of a Group. It is your responsibility to ensure that minutes accurately reflect the meeting that you convened. I refer you to [Section 6, paragraph 44 of the Code of Conduct](#) which specifically states:

The Convener of a Group is primarily responsible for ensuring that the Group complies with the Code. However, all other MSP members, and any secretariat, should also ensure that they are aware of the requirements in order to assist with the efficient operation of the Group.

In relation to the formation of a sub group, the Committee was assured with the explanation given in your letter that the sub group had not yet met and was therefore not formed and so no breach of the code of conduct was found.

The Committee has agreed not to impose sanctions on this occasion. However, it should be noted that the Committee takes compliance with the Code of Conduct by Cross-Party Groups very seriously. It recognises the important role that CPGs play in connecting MSPs with the stakeholders who have interest in and experience of issues considered by the Group.

Should any further instances of non-compliance with the Code of Conduct occur, this may result in the Committee withdrawing recognition for this CPG.

A copy of this letter and your response has been sent to the complainant. The Committee has also agreed that it will publish this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Whitfield', written in a cursive style.

Martin Whitfield MSP
Convener
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee