



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

The Presiding Officer

Martin Whitfield MSP
Convener
Standards, Procedures and Public
Appointments Committee (SPPA)
By email

5 November 2025

Dear Convener,

At the most recent meeting of the Gender Sensitive Parliament Advisory Group, the Group considered your Committee's report on Strengthening Committees' Effectiveness.

The Advisory Group welcomes the Committee's work and the attention it brings to the importance of a Parliament where equal representation and participation is embedded in our structures and procedures. Members particularly valued the report's recognition of gender balance as a core measure of institutional effectiveness and discussed ways in which this could be further established across the Parliament's work.

The Group welcomed the Committee's recommendation that Standing Orders should be amended so that there should be no single sex committees. While recognising that party balance must always be respected, the Group agreed that there should also be a clear minimum expectation to ensure that the gender composition of committees broadly reflects that of the Parliament as a whole. The Group agreed that every effort should be made to maintain, and, where possible, strengthen, women's representation across committees and parliamentary roles.

The Parliament should continue to lead by example, and transparency is key to achieving this. In that regard, the Group welcomed the existing publication of data on the gender balance of committees and conveners and agreed that this practice be maintained and promoted to support ongoing scrutiny and progress.

In relation to the recommendations at paragraphs 199 and 200 in the Committee's report, the Group recommends that the statements envisaged by paragraph 200 should be made formally to the Chamber when decisions on committee membership are proposed.

The Group considers that it is essential to have clear rules on how these statements are made and by whom. That will help embed these recommendations within

parliamentary processes, and ensure that their implementation will be communicated both to the Chamber and to the wider public.

On behalf of the Group, I look forward to engaging further with the Committee as this work progresses.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Alison Johnstone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Alison" is written in a slightly larger, more prominent script than the surname "Johnstone". The signature is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP

Presiding Officer

on behalf of the Gender Sensitive Advisory Group