



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Martin Whitfield MSP Convener,
SPPA Committee The Scottish
Parliament

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Dear Martin,

Thank you for your letter seeking my party's views on the proxy voting trial that has been running throughout this year.

I will set out my party's response to each of the areas you listed in your letter below.

[Eligibility Criteria](#)

As the committee may have been informed, my party originally requested the criteria be strictly limited to parental leave, due to the efficiency of the existing informal pairing system operated by ourselves and the Scottish Government.

However, we do sympathise with the view that this pairing system will not be available to all parties in any given session and therefore are content with the additional criteria, such as bereavement (or attending to someone who is expected to pass soon) and illness, though we believe this should be restricted to long-term or serious illness.

We do not believe there are any other criteria that should be considered but are always open to hearing new perspectives on this front.

[Process of applying for a proxy vote](#)

We wholeheartedly support the current process of application. The Presiding Officer alone must be the final judge of granting or denying a proxy vote and this should remain confidential to the Presiding Officer and affected Member alone.

We agree that the Presiding Officer should have license to vary the scheme as they see fit.

The administrative aspects of the application process all look to be in good order, including the provision which limits the number of MSPs for which any one Member may cast a proxy vote at once.

We also believe proxy votes should appear on the Official Report in the exact same manner as normal votes do. There should be no way of differentiating between the two, and therefore agree with the provision that recognises the proxy vote as having equal standing to a normal vote.

Exercising the vote in the Chamber

While we have yet to see the digital proxy system in action, we support any measures which seek to return voting to a swifter format, ideally as fast as the process that existed before digital voting was introduced.

Variation or withdrawal of a proxy vote

No views on top of aforementioned agreement with the Presiding Officer being empowered to vary the scheme as they see necessary.

Other circumstances

As mentioned earlier, the "illness" criteria should be limited to either long-term or serious illness. Anything less may encourage Members to take part less and less, which is already a concern with the hybrid system.

All the best, Alex

Alexander Burnett
MSP for Aberdeenshire West