



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Information Management and Governance  
Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

foi.officer@parliament.scot

24 May 2022

Dear Requester

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: 2022-674563**

We acknowledge your request for the following information:

*Please publish guidance given to Committee Conveners and clerks about the circumstances in which public sessions of Committee meetings should be held virtually or in person.*

*Please confirm whether the decision to invite witnesses to participate virtually or in person is discretionary or mandated by guidance from the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body.*

*Please publish guidance produced and disseminated by the SPCB or any other parliamentary body regarding access to the public galleries during Committee meetings.*

*Timeframe for these queries: from 1 January 2022.*

Your request was received on 28 April 2022 and has been handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOI(S)A).

There is no published guidance for Committee Office for Committee conveners or clerks about the circumstances in which public sessions of Committee meetings should be held virtually or in person.

However, the internal guidance for clerks states:

“9. Unless otherwise restricted by the SPCB, it is a matter for the committee’s convener - taking into account the views of other Members and the advice of the clerk - to decide what is the best form of committee meeting to hold.

10. Decisions on the type of meeting to hold will need to take into account a number of factors:

- Is the building open to passholders/visitors?
- How many Members wish to attend physically and remotely?
- How many Parliamentary staff are needed to facilitate the meeting?
- What is the nature of the business to be conducted and would it benefit from being taken in a hybrid or all physically present form?
- How many witnesses should attend physically and how many can attend virtually?"

Decisions on whether to invite a witness to appear virtually or in-person are first decided upon by what the overall guidance from the SPCB is, i.e. is the building open to non-passholders such as a witness. If it is, then such decisions are matters for the convener, taking into account the factors set out above. We would also try to consider the views of the witness themselves, including whether they had any health conditions that meant they could not travel.

The Committee Office does not have published guidance "regarding access to the public galleries during Committee meetings". Information about visiting the Parliament and attending parliamentary business such as First Minister's Questions (FMQs), meetings in the Debating Chamber and Committee meetings is publicly available on the Scottish Parliament website and can be accessed here:

<https://www.parliament.scot/visit/tickets-for-parliamentary-business>

In line with the technical requirements of FOI(S)A we have provided a notice advising that the information you have requested, in relation to published guidance about the circumstances in which public sessions of Committee meetings should be held virtually or in person and access to public galleries during committee meetings is not held by the Scottish Parliament.

In keeping with our FOI procedures, this information may also be posted on the Parliament's disclosure log (usually within 24 hours). For further details on the Parliament's Disclosure Log and the information released under FOI, visit: <https://archive2021.parliament.scot/abouttheparliament/17700.aspx>

The supply of information under FOI does not constitute permission for its use in a way that would infringe copyright  
<https://www.parliament.scot/about/copyright>

We would welcome feedback or comment on how we handled your request. Please feel free to contact the Head of Information Governance at [foi.officer@parliament.scot](mailto:foi.officer@parliament.scot)

Please find below Annex A, which explains how we handle FOI requests and reviews.

**We are currently working remotely and so would ask you to contact us by email at [foi.officer@parliament.scot](mailto:foi.officer@parliament.scot)**

Yours sincerely,

Robin Davidson  
Head of Information Governance

## REQUESTS MADE UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002

### How we handle FOI requests

Information on how we handle FOI requests is available on the Parliament's website at:

[Privacy notice: Information rights: Freedom of Information request handling | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

Alternatively, please contact the Public Information & Resources Team to request a copy.

<https://www.parliament.scot/contact-us>

### Review

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which we have dealt with your request for information, you can ask us to review our decision and actions. You must do this in writing (or other permanent form) within 40 working days of the date of this letter, stating the reasons for your dissatisfaction, and we will respond within 20 working days of receipt. A request for a review should be made to the Head of Information Governance:

Post: Head of Information Governance  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP  
Telephone: 0131 348 5281

We welcome calls using the Text Relay service or in British Sign Language through [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#).

E-mail: [foi.officer@parliament.scot](mailto:foi.officer@parliament.scot)

### Application to the Scottish Information Commissioner

If, on the outcome of any review, you are still dissatisfied, or if we are unable to resolve any other complaint, then you can contact the Scottish Information Commissioner:

Post: The Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner  
Kinburn Castle  
Doubledykes Road  
St Andrews  
Fife  
KY16 9DS

Email: [www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal)

Telephone: 01334 464610

Fax: 01334 464611

Website: [www.itspublicknowledge.info](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info)

A decision by the Scottish Information Commissioner may be appealed on a point of law to the Court of Session.

### **Copyright in relation to information provided**

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### **Feedback or comment**

We would welcome feedback or comment on how we handled your request. Please contact the Head of Information Governance.

### **Data Protection**

If you wish to find out more about how we use your personal data then you can access our Privacy Notice at the following link:

[Privacy notice: Information rights: Freedom of Information request handling | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

### **Complaints**

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which we dealt with your enquiry, then you may wish to raise the matter with Public Information and Resources.

### **How to contact us**

Post: The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Telephone: 0131 348 5000  
0800 092 7500 (Public Enquiries)  
0131 348 5395 (Gàidhlig)

We also welcome calls using the Text Relay service or in British Sign Language through [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#).

E-mail: [info@parliament.scot](mailto:info@parliament.scot)