



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 30 May 2024

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
15th Meeting 2024, Session 6

CONVENER

*Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)

*Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Catherine Fergusson

LOCATION

The David Livingstone Room (CR6)

Scottish Parliament

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 30 May 2024

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Martin Whitfield): Good morning, and welcome to the 15th meeting in 2024 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. I have received apologies from Annie Wells. I welcome other members to the meeting.

Our first agenda item is a decision on taking business in private. Does the committee agree to take in private item 6, which is consideration of a complaint that the committee has received in relation to the cross-party group on commercial sexual exploitation?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Cross-Party Group

09:01

The Convener: Our second agenda item is consideration of an application for recognition of a proposed cross-party group on brain tumours. I welcome Beatrice Wishart to the meeting. Beatrice is the proposed convener of the proposed group on brain tumours, and she joins us online this morning. Good morning, Beatrice. I will hand over to you for an introduction on the CPG's intentions.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): Thank you, convener. I apologise for not being with you in person. I was attending the opening ceremony of the spaceport in Shetland yesterday, and logistics would not allow me to get to you in person. I suspect that it will be the only spaceport opening that I will be at in my lifetime.

I have a personal interest in brain tumours, as my daughter lives with a brain tumour. It is often only because they are affected by family or friends having a brain tumour that people become more interested in the illness. As the application suggests, we have cross-party support for the group, and I think that everybody who has put their name to the application will have a similar personal interest in it.

Although we have a cross-party group on cancer, the point of the proposed group is to be more specific about brain tumours. Around 1,000 people in Scotland are diagnosed with a brain tumour or brain cancer each year, and a huge number of those people are under 40. It appears that not much progress has been made in the past two or three decades. The intention of the cross-party group is to focus a bit more on what we can do to bring the clinical side and patients together and make some progress on achieving better outcomes.

The Convener: Thank you very much, Beatrice. I am jealous that you made it to a spaceport opening. That is quite unique, but let us hope that it is not the last time.

Do the members of the committee have any questions for the proposed convener?

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): In her opening remarks, Beatrice Wishart referenced the cross-party group on cancer and the potential for some crossover. If this group gets approved, will there be a chance in the future for the groups to work together from time to time?

Beatrice Wishart: Absolutely—I think that it will be very important that we do so, given that there is crossover. Although they are slightly distinct areas, I think that there will be opportunities for crossover.

The Convener: This committee and other members have expressed concerns about the number of CPGs that exist. I note that there is significant cross-party support in the documentation, but when I look at the non-MSP members of the group, I note that you have individuals and Brain Tumour Research, which will act as the secretariat. If it is afforded accreditation, do you think that there will be significant interest among other non-MSPs who might wish to become members of the group?

Beatrice Wishart: Yes, I think that there will be. The House of Commons all-party parliamentary group on brain tumours demonstrates that there will be more interest. I also reference the number of people who came to the parliamentary event that we held earlier this year. We heard from Theo Burrell, who is one of the patrons of Brain Tumour Research, who spoke very passionately about the situation with regard to brain tumours. There is interest out there.

I absolutely take your point about there being a lot of cross-party groups. I understand that.

The Convener: I am grateful for that. Thank you for attending the committee, Beatrice—there was no problem with your attendance being remote. The committee will consider whether to approve the application for recognition under our third agenda item, and the clerks will inform you of the committee's decision thereafter.

Beatrice Wishart: Thank you, convener, and thank you, committee.

The Convener: Our third agenda item is consideration of whether we are minded to recognise the proposed CPG. Do members have any comments?

As there are no comments from members, I will formally put the question. Is the committee happy to accord recognition to the proposed cross-party group on brain tumours?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Our fourth agenda item is an application to approve a name change. A request has been received from the CPG on drug and alcohol misuse to change its name to the CPG on substance use. Clarification has been sought from the conveners of the CPG about whether any changes to the purpose of the group are also proposed, reflecting the change of name. You will see in the annex to paper 2 that a new purpose has been set out. The change that is proposed is a move from "drug and alcohol misuse in Scotland" to "substance use in Scotland".

A number of options are open to us. We can agree to the name change if we feel that the application that was originally made for the CPG on drug and alcohol misuse is encompassed in the

new name. If we feel that there seems to be a broadening of or change in that, we can ask the convener to attend the committee to explain it. Alternatively, we could suggest that a new formal application for a different CPG be made. I am happy to take thoughts and ideas.

Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I do not see any reason not to accede to the request for a change to the name, which might be simpler than the other options.

The Convener: Fine. Are we in agreement on approving the name change?

Members indicated agreement.

Annual Report

09:07

The Convener: Our fifth agenda item is the annual report. As is required by standing orders, each committee publishes an annual report. The committee has before it our draft report from 2023 through to 2024.

The report deals with membership changes; meetings; the work that we have done by way of legislation, inquiries and case studies; evidence that we have taken from the Minister for Parliamentary Business; the code of conduct; complaints that have been received; post-legislative scrutiny; and the parliamentary corporation-supported bodies—namely, the commissioners who have been before us—along with other groups. Details of the petition that is with us are contained in it, along with our equal opportunities work and, as we have just done in this meeting, our cross-party group work, which certainly fills a substantial amount of the clerks' time as well as ours on occasion.

I see that members do not have any comments to make on the draft annual report. I understand that a tiny amendment will be made to paragraph 26 before the report is published, and it will then be formatted in the usual annual report style. Is the committee happy for it to be finalised and published?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Excellent. I am grateful.

09:09

Meeting continued in private until 09:59.

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