



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Tuesday 28 June 2011

Session 4

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**Tuesday 28 June 2011**

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Col.</b>
<b>DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>SCOTLAND BILL .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>CROSS-PARTY GROUPS .....</b>	<b>19</b>

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**STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting 2011, Session 4**

**CONVENER**

\*Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Helen Eadie (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Margaret Burgess (Cunninghame South) (SNP)

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP)

\*Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab)

\*Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)

\*Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP)

\*attended

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Gillian Baxendine

Alison Walker

**LOCATION**

Committee Room 4



## Scottish Parliament

### Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

*Tuesday 28 June 2011*

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 15:45*]

#### Decision on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (Dave Thompson):** Good afternoon, everybody. It is 3.45, so we will start the meeting. First, I intimate that Bob Doris has sent his apologies.

I welcome everybody to the second meeting of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee in the fourth session of the Scottish Parliament. I remind members to turn off their mobiles and BlackBerrys as they interfere with the sound system.

Under agenda item 1, I ask members whether they agree to take item 4, which is a discussion of our work programme, in private.

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Scotland Bill

15:46

**The Convener:** Agenda item 2 is the Scotland Bill. Members have paper SPPA/S4/11/2/1, which takes us through the progress of the bill. Do members have any comments on the paper before we make our decision on what to do?

**Helen Eadie (Cowdenbeath) (Lab):** It is helpful to have the Scottish Parliament information centre briefing that is attached to the paper. The briefing is hugely helpful, because it updates us on exactly where we have reached and it complements what we read in the daily newspapers. I thank the clerks for going to the extent of giving us all this information. I see from the paper that it is recommended that we simply note the information for the moment, but it is good to have it. I put our appreciation on the record.

**The Convener:** Thank you, Helen. I support your comments.

Are we agreed that we should include consideration of the Scotland Bill—probably early in 2012—in our work programme? We will deal with consideration of the Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Act 2006 at the same time. Are members happy that we consider that and come back with it formally fitted into our work programme for a meeting in September?

**Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab):** I note that the paper states:

“The Bill needs to complete all its stages by spring 2012.”

If we are to consider it only in early 2012, will there be enough time for us to feed in?

**The Convener:** The clerks can correct me if I am wrong, but we will not deal with the bill until it has finished its progress through both Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. We will come in after that, because our work is to deal with any changes that are required in consequence of the bill, so we will need to wait until its progress has finished.

**Margaret McDougall:** So it will be afterwards.

**The Convener:** Yes.

**Margaret McDougall:** Okay.

**The Convener:** Are we happy to include that in discussions on our work programme?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Thank you.

## Cross-party Groups

15:48

**The Convener:** Members also have a paper that deals with cross-party groups, which is fairly straightforward. The problem is that the rules on cross-party groups state that they must contain at least one member from each party that is represented on the Parliamentary Bureau, which obviously includes the Liberal Democrats. Given that they have only five MSPs and there are more than 60 cross-party groups, they are struggling to have representation on all the groups.

The rules do allow for a waiver, and in previous sessions of Parliament when a number of smaller parties were represented on the bureau, it was agreed that cross-party groups should only need to get MSPs from the four largest parties. The suggestion is that we should require them to have members from the three largest parties, and allow them to function on that basis. Do members have any comments?

**Margaret Burgess (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** I agree with the proposal. I attended a meeting about setting up a cross-party group on credit unions, so I declare an interest. I think that we would all support such a group in the Parliament, but we had to disband at that time because we did not have a representative from the Liberal party. We have to appreciate that there are only five of them, and they cannot spread themselves that widely. The recommendation is sensible, as it will allow cross-party groups to be registered without putting too much pressure on small parties whose members cannot possibly attend all the groups.

**Helen Eadie:** I whole-heartedly agree. I have nothing to add except that I, too, attended a meeting about a cross-party group the other week and it was extremely difficult to get the membership along. We did it in the end, but it was difficult to achieve. I welcome the suggestion.

**Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** I echo those comments. I was at the inaugural meeting of the diabetes group at lunchtime today, and the same situation arose. I had forgotten that the matter was on the agenda for this meeting—in fact, I had not seen the papers, because somehow they did not get to me until lunch time. We took a provisional decision that we would go ahead without the Lib Dem group, in the hope that what has been proposed would actually happen.

**Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP):** I record my agreement with the proposal. It is an entirely sensible move.

**Margaret McDougall:** I record my agreement as well.

**The Convener:** So we are agreed that we will only require cross-party groups to have members from the three largest parties. Thank you.

That ends the public part of the meeting. I thank any members of the public and the media for their attendance.

15:51

*Meeting continued in private until 16:07.*

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