



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

AGENDA

15th Meeting, 2015 (Session 4)

Thursday 1 October 2015

The Committee will meet at 9.30 am in the James Clerk Maxwell Room (CR4).

1. **Decision on taking business in private:** The Committee will decide whether to take item 4 in private.
2. **Cross-Party Group:** The Committee will consider an application for recognition from the proposed Cross-Party Group on Religious Freedom, and take evidence from—

Dave Thompson, Convener of the proposed Cross-Party Group on Religious Freedom.
3. **Cross-Party Group - approval:** The Committee will decide whether to accord recognition to the proposed Cross-Party Group on Religious Freedom.
4. **Cross-Party Group - complaint:** The Committee will consider a complaint against a Cross-Party Group.
5. **Complaint (in private):** The Committee will continue its consideration of a report from the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland.
6. **Complaint:** The Committee will announce its decision at Stage 3 on a report from the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland.
7. **Complaint (in private):** The Committee will consider its draft report.
8. **Consolidation Bills (in private):** The Committee will consider a note by the Clerk.
9. **Scotland Act 2012 (in private):** The Committee will consider a note by the Clerk.

Gillian Baxendine / Alison Walker
Clerks to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee
Room TG.01
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
Tel: 0131 348 5239
Email: gillian.baxendine@scottish.parliament.uk

The papers for this meeting are as follows—

Agenda item 2

CPG Application

SPPA/S4/15/15/1

Agenda item 4

PRIVATE PAPER

SPPA/S4/15/15/2 (P)

Agenda item 5

PRIVATE PAPER

SPPA/S4/15/15/3 (P)

PRIVATE PAPER

SPPA/S4/15/15/4 (P)

Agenda item 7

PRIVATE PAPER

SPPA/S4/15/15/5 (P)

Agenda item 8

PRIVATE PAPER

SPPA/S4/15/15/6 (P)

Agenda item 9

PRIVATE PAPER

SPPA/S4/15/15/7 (P)

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

15th Meeting 2015 (Session 4), Thursday 2015

Cross-Party Group Application

Introduction

1. In accordance with the provisions on Cross-Party Groups (CPGs) set out in section 6 of the Code of Conduct (the Code), proposals for the establishment of CPGs in the Scottish Parliament must be submitted to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee for its approval.
2. The provisions referred to in this note relate to Volume 2, Section 6, of the Code of Conduct.
3. There is one proposed Group for the Committee's consideration.

Proposed CPG on Religious Freedom

4. The registration form submitted by the proposed CPG on Religious Freedom is attached as an annexe to this note.

Context

5. In its report on its Review of Cross-Party Groups the Committee agreed that the Cross-Party Group system forms an important part of the work of MSPs providing them with information that aids them in scrutinising the Scottish Government in committees, in the chamber and through written questions.

Consideration by the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

6. 6.3.10 of the Code states "...As part of its consideration, the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee will invite one of the proposed Group's MSP office bearers (usually the Convener) to attend a meeting to explain the justification for the proposed Group." Dave Thompson MSP has been invited to discuss the registration of the proposed Group.

7. **Members may wish to ask Dave Thompson why he chose to form a CPG so late in the session, and at a time when the Committee is about to consider the rules for re-registration.**

Purpose

8. 6.3.11 of the Code states "the Committee will pay particular attention to a proposed Group's purpose. If the Committee considers that a Group is being proposed not in the public interest but, for example, to further particular commercial interests, the Group will not be accorded recognition. The Committee will also consider whether the purpose of a proposed Group overlaps the remit of an existing Group. The proposed Group has been asked to provide justification as to why its aim could not effectively be achieved within the existing Group".

9. The stated purpose of the proposed Cross-Party Group on Religious Freedom is—

- “The group will provide a forum for MSPs, enabling discussion and the widest possible engagement with the multi-faith community, locally, nationally, and internationally.”

Membership

10. 6.4.1 requires group membership to include at least five MSPs, with at least one MSP from each of the parties or groups represented on the Parliamentary Bureau. The Committee has previously agreed that there should be a general waiver of this Rule in the current Session in relation to groups having a Liberal Democrat member or a member of the Green/Independents Group. The proposed Group meets this requirement.

11. The MSP membership (by party) of the proposed Group is as follows—

- 1 Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party
- 2 Scottish Labour Party
- 2 Scottish National Party

12. 6.4.2 entitles groups to contain members from outwith the Parliament, but states that the overall membership of the CPG should be Parliamentary in nature. The proposed Group has listed 9 non-MSP members in the individual category and 18 in non-MSP member organisations.

Office Bearers

13. 6.4.3 requires one MSP to be Convener of the Group and there to be at least one other MSP office bearer. The proposed Group meets this requirement: Dave Thompson MSP is the Convener and Murdo Fraser MSP and Anne McTaggart MSP are the Deputy-Conveners.

Financial Benefits and Subscription

14. The registration form indicates the proposed Group will receive support in kind from Aid to the Church in Need UK who will be the secretariat to the proposed Group.

15. The registration form also indicates that members will not be charged a subscription.

Compliance with the Code of Conduct

16. 6.2.2 requires that the “initial meeting must be notified to the Standards clerks at least 10 calendar days in advance of the meeting taking place”. The proposed Group met in 15 September 2015 but no notification of this meeting was given to Standard clerks. **Members may wish to ask the Convener of the proposed group why this notification was not given.**

Next Steps

17. At agenda item 1 the Committee is invited to discuss any aspects of the application for recognition of the proposed Cross-Party Group on Religious Freedom with Dave Thompson MSP then at agenda item 2 the Committee will discuss whether to accord recognition to the proposed Groups.

**Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee
October 2015**

CROSS-PARTY GROUP REGISTRATION FORM

NAME OF CROSS-PARTY GROUP
Cross-Party Group on Religious Freedom.
PURPOSE OF THE GROUP AND PROPOSED DISCUSSION TOPICS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please state the purpose of the Group. 2. Please also provide a brief explanation of the purpose of the Group and why the purpose is in the public interest. 3. Please also provide details of any overlaps with the purpose of existing Cross-Party Groups and an explanation of why, regardless of any such overlap, the Group should be established. 4. Please also provide an indication of the topics which the Group anticipates discussing in the forthcoming 12 months.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The group will provide a forum for MSPs, enabling discussion and the widest possible engagement with the multi-faith community, locally, nationally, and internationally. 2. The group will provide a platform for MSPs to consider religious freedom in the knowledge that belief and freedom to express that belief is the hallmark of a democratic society, and fosters respect, and tolerance in our communities in the Public Interest. 3. There is currently no equivalent group in the Scottish Parliament. 4. Possible discussion topics arising from the initial meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious Tolerance in a multi-faith world. • Funding Issues • Awareness Campaigns on issues such as religious intolerance. • Global matters e.g. Syrian refugee crisis. Exodus of religious people's fleeing wars. • Article 18 on United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights: <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><i>“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or</i></p>

private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance”.

- Article 19 on United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”.

- Case studies from similar groups in other countries.

MSP MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

Please provide names and party designation of all MSP members of the Group.

Dave Thompson (SNP).

Murdo Fraser (Conservatives).

Anne McTaggart (Labour).

John Mason (SNP).

Michael McMahon (Labour).

NON-MSP MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

For organisational members please provide only the name of the organisation, it is not necessary to provide the name(s) of individuals who may represent the organisation at meetings of the Group.

Individuals

Iain G Mitchell QC.

Fiona Brown.

Alastair H Reid.

Rob Whiteman.

Rev Maud Robinson.

Brian Miller.

David Bradwell.

Sally Fulton.

Douglas Proudfoot.

Organisations

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities.

Scottish Council of Muslims.

	<p>Church of Scotland. Church of Scotland World Mission. Free Church of Scotland. Quakers. Christian Solidarity Worldwide. SOLAS Release International. Aid to the church in need UK. Iona Community. Tear Fund. Steadfast Global. CARE UK. Inter-faith Scotland. SCIAF. Churches Parliamentary Office. Evangelical Alliance.</p>
--	--

GROUP OFFICE BEARERS

Please provide names for all office bearers. The minimum requirement is that two of the office bearers are MSPs and one of these is Convener – beyond this it is a matter for the Group to decide upon the office bearers it wishes to have. It is permissible to have more than one individual elected to each office, for example, co-conveners or multiple deputy conveners.

Convener	Dave Thompson.
Deputy Convener	Murdo Fraser and Anne McTaggart.
Secretary	Michael Robinson of Aid to the Church in Need UK.
Treasurer	N/A.

FINANCIAL BENEFITS OR OTHER BENEFITS

Please provide details of any financial or material benefit(s) the Group anticipates receiving from a single source in a calendar year which has a value, either singly or cumulatively, of more than £500. This includes donations, gifts, hospitality or visits and material assistance such as secretariat support.

Michael Robinson of Aid to the Church in need - £800 in kind.

SUBSCRIPTION CHARGED BY THE GROUP

Please provide details of the amount to be charged and the purpose for which the subscription is intended to be used.

None.

CONVENER CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Dave Thompson.
Parliamentary address	Room M3.11 The Scottish Parliament EH 99 1SP.
Telephone number	0131 348 5325.

STATEMENT ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

I declare that the Cross-Party Group on <SUBJECT> is constituted and will comply with the terms of Section 6 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament.

Signed

Date

17/09/2015.