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Committee

26 November 2016

Parliamentary Liaison Officers

Thank you for your letter of 18 November 2016 regarding a suggested amendment to the Ministerial Code in respect of Parliamentary Liaison Officers (PLOs).

As I have previously indicated to Parliament, I believe it is essential that the public has full confidence in this Parliament and its ability to hold the Government of the day to account. Therefore, I am always willing to consider ways in which we can enhance the transparency of Parliamentary business.

As you know, the Ministerial Code was updated in August 2016, and that update included changes to not only reintroduce the requirement that PLOs should not serve on the Committee which is scrutinising the Cabinet Secretary to which they are attached, but also to recommend that PLOs should declare their role on the first occasion when they are participating in business related to the portfolio of their relevant Minister.

Having reflected upon your proposed amendment to paragraph 4.14 of that Code, I am content to make the suggested change so that the paragraph will now read:

*"At the beginning of each Parliamentary session, or when changes to PLO appointments are made, the Minister for Parliamentary Business will advise Parliament which MSPs have been appointed as PLOs. The Minister for Parliamentary Business will also ensure that PLO appointments are brought to the attention of Committee Conveners. **PLOs must declare their status as a PLO on each occasion they are participating in Parliamentary business related to the portfolio of their Cabinet Secretary.**"*

For those PLOs attached to my own office, this new obligation means that they should make such declarations when they are engaging with me directly in Parliament, for example at FMQs, in any parliamentary statement or debate where I am leading or when I appear before a Committee on which one of them sits.

I will instruct my officials to make the necessary change to the Ministerial Code, and you will be notified once it has been made.

I am copying this letter to the Presiding Officer and the Minister for Parliamentary Business.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Sturgeon', written in a cursive style.

NICOLA STURGEON