



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Kate Forbes MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Finance
Scottish Government
By email

Room CG.07
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Tel (Clerk): 0131 348 5239
e-mail: sppacommittee@parliament.scot

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Dear Cabinet Secretary

The remit of the SPPA Committee includes matters relating to public appointments in Scotland.

It is in that context that I am writing to you about the recent appointment of Willie Watt as the Chair of the Scottish National Investment Bank.

The then Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work, [wrote to the Convener of the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee](#) on 8 January 2020 on this subject. He wrote—

“I can confirm that the process for the recent appointment of Willie Watt as Chair-designate of the Scottish National Investment Bank followed the Ethical Standards Commissioner’s Code of Practice for Ministerial and Public Appointments in Scotland as outlined in my letter of 16 May. I can also confirm that, as part of that process, the required ‘Fit and Proper Person’ tests were completed satisfactorily for all candidates.”

The then Cabinet Secretary also stated in his letter—

“All the applicants for the role signed a declaration which required them to read and understand the Principles of Public Life. They were also asked to declare that they have not committed any offence or performed an act incompatible with the role and that there is nothing in their history relating to tax which could be seen as tax avoidance or embarrass Scottish Ministers or the Bank or the Scottish Government. The Principles of Public Life were contained within the application pack for the appointment which was advertised on the Appointed for Scotland website.”

The Committee has noted, from the then Cabinet Secretary's letter, that Mr Watt completed satisfactorily the required 'Fit and Proper Person' tests in advance of his appointment.

Section E6 of the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland requires the appointing minister to "take steps to confirm that the applicant is a fit and proper person for the position to which they are to be appointed". The Code states that this will require "confirmation that the applicant's conduct to date has been compatible with the public appointment".

I am writing to request further information about the steps taken by the appointing minister to confirm that Mr Watt was a fit and proper person for the position, as required by the Code of Practice, including how it was confirmed that his conduct to date had been compatible with the public appointment. The Committee would wish to understand what this confirmation process involves in practice.

The Committee would also be grateful if you could indicate where the details of the announcement decision specified in section G2 of the Code of Practice can be found.

Thank you for your assistance. It would be helpful to receive an early response in order to assist the Committee's consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Kidd MSP". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

Bill Kidd MSP
Convener
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee