



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## **Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee**

Kate Forbes MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Finance  
Scottish Government  
By email

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Dear Cabinet Secretary

### **Public Appointments**

Thank you for attending last week's Committee meeting to give evidence on Public Appointments. I would like to follow up on a number of matters which were raised during the discussion.

#### *Time taken to recruit*

The length of time it takes for the Government to complete recruitment rounds is a matter of concern to the Committee. In your evidence to the Committee, you indicated that timescales are protracted as a result of the regulation imposed on you by the Ethical Standards Commissioner.

We would be grateful for more information on how you envisage a more flexible approach would help to reduce the time it takes to fill posts without compromising on rigour or progress towards the achievement of diversity targets.

How do you intend to raise these matters with the Commissioner with a view to securing a mutually agreeable approach?

You spoke of your preference for creating a pool of pre-qualified people to be put forward for interviews for vacancies that come up. What specific barriers are preventing you from adopting such an approach now and how do you plan to overcome them?

#### *Socio-economic inequality*

The Committee would appreciate further information on the steps the Government is taking to address the under representation of applicants from lower income households.

### *Roll out of good practice*

The Committee were concerned that where good practice is demonstrated, this is not always rolled out to other recruitment rounds. You acknowledged that more needed to be done in this area. Can you provide more information on how you plan to ensure that good practice is embedded and cite some specific examples?

### *Diversity*

With regard to reaching certain groups, you stated that “I do not think that we can be content with just putting up adverts and waiting for people to apply. We need to be much more active in our engagement. We need to go out, demystify the process and promote appointments”. Can you provide more information on how you intend to go about this?

In addition, how do you plan to encourage the sense that “the public at large—the people of Scotland” own our public bodies and are therefore more inclined to get involved?

### *Time Commitment*

The Commissioner published findings from a survey of recent appointees to public boards, a majority of whom stated that the time commitment that is needed for the role is more than had been advertised. The Committee believes that this will have the effect of reducing diversity by excluding those with full time jobs and/or caring responsibilities. How do you plan to address the discrepancy between advertised time commitment and actual input?

The Committee would appreciate a response to this letter by Friday 5 March, which will allow us to discuss it at our meeting on 11 March with a view to informing our Legacy report. Please let me know if this timescale presents any difficulty.

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