



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## **Minute of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) meeting held on Thursday 16 December 2021 at 09.00, (virtual)**

### **Present:**

- Alison Johnstone MSP (Chair)
- Claire Baker MSP
- Jackson Carlaw MSP
- Maggie Chapman MSP
- Christine Grahame MSP

### **In attendance:**

- David McGill
- Michelle Hegarty
- Lynsey Hamill
- Judith Morrison
- Cristine Livingstone
- Tommy Lynch
- Sara Glass
- Mairi Pearson
- Susan Duffy
- Roy Devon
- Lorna Foreman
- Neil Mackie
- Jane McEwan
- Mark Brough
- Eric MacLeod
- Lisa Creamer
- Huw Williams, Acting Secretary

### **Previous minutes**

1. The SPCB agreed the minute of the meeting held on 2 December 2021.

### **Matters arising**

2. The SPCB had dealt with the following items by correspondence since the previous meeting:
  - 2.1. Noted information about the security and childcare surveys.

2.2. Noted a Covid update and agreed, subject to further public health updates:

- Committees to meet virtually by default from 13 December 2021 until w/c 17 January 2022 and that witnesses participate remotely in so far as is practicable.
- Only essential services that cannot be delivered remotely to be delivered onsite until w/c 17 January.
- MSP events/ exhibitions and tours to be rescheduled until after mid-January;
- Members to be advised to prioritise home working for those staff who normally attend Holyrood and to reassess the practicality of home working for local office staff until w/c 17 January.
- Services to start to resume week commencing 17 January, subject to the public health situation at that time.

2.3. Agreed that the SPCB would meet virtually on 16 December in line with the guidance.

2.4. Agreed a request from the Finance and Public Administration Committee to meet in person on 14 December and, in principle, on 21 December subject to further consideration of the public health guidance nearer the time.

## **Covid-19 Update - discussion**

3. The SPCB received an update on analysis of the implications of the First Minister's Statement earlier in the week and the draft regulations. The SPCB has a legal duty to take all practical measures to minimise the spread of the virus and is required to use the guidance published to meet that duty.
4. The main changes were in relation to face covering and social distancing regulations which now required 2m distancing instead of the current 1m. The working from home message had also been strengthened. It was agreed that the Bureau would be advised about the necessary changes to distancing in the Chamber and it was noted that the infrastructure remained in place from the earlier measures. The 2m distancing would also impact the number of staff in Members' offices within Holyrood and at local offices. With the risk of more self-isolation, the SPCB was advised that this could impact on the levels of staff available to provide services, although mitigations were in place to try and cover this.
5. In light of developments, the SPCB agreed, as a temporary measure, that because of limited numbers in the Parliament the Queensberry House Lounge should be closed until mid-January; the Holyrood Room would stay open over lunch and close in the evening; and that Members should be encouraged to reschedule any business meetings they had planned in the Parliament during the coming weeks until mid January. The SPCB also agreed that the Finance and Public Administration Committee should meet virtually on 21 December.

## **Chief Executive's Report**

6. The Chief Executive presented his regular Report. The SPCB welcomed, in particular, the progress that had been made on the BSL broadcasting on the BBC for FMQs and

Covid statements and asked that plans for further increasing coverage should be kept under review. The roll out of mobile devices was also considered to be helpful to Members.

7. In noting the report, the SPCB also discussed the temporary off-site provision of the switchboard service because of the change in covid management until mid-January and the recent pilot event in the Garden Lobby for the Public Services Awards.

## **Office Cost Provision - discussion**

8. Following on from the discussion at the previous meeting, the SPCB further discussed the arrangements in place around the built-in flexibility already available within the Members' Expenses Scheme between the Engagement Provision and the Office Cost Provision and agreed that no additional changes were required to the Scheme.

## **Disability Provision – SPCB(2021)Paper 78**

9. The SPCB agreed the application from a Member for the cost of an annual subscription to the Welcome App to be met from the Disability Provision of the Members' Expenses Scheme. The SPCB also agreed this should be a pilot pending further investigation of assistance app options available to local offices for consideration by the SPCB.
10. It was also agreed that details of the services provided to Members by using the Welcome App would be circulated to the SPCB.

## **Code of Conduct for Scottish Parliamentary Service Staff – Register of Interests – SPCB(2021)Paper 79**

11. The SPCB approved, in principle, subject to discussions with the TUS, to the publication of the declared interests of members of the Leadership Group. This would provide an assurance that staff's external interests were being managed appropriately and in line with the behavioural standards set out in the staff code of conduct.

## **Festival of Politics 2021 - SPCB(2021)Paper 80**

12. The SPCB noted the review of the Festival of Politics held in October. While the feedback from all the events was good it was noted that the overall numbers attending had fallen, although some links to events would have been from multiple users. It was agreed that more detailed statistics would be provided to the SPCB.
13. There were some advantages to having a virtual festival in terms of accessibility and more opportunities for initiatives following the event given the digital recordings and the longevity of these. In looking forward to the next Festival, the SPCB asked for further work to be undertaken on the timing of the Festival and to look at the optimum time of year for audiences. Work would also be undertaken to consider how best to promote the Festival and the possibility of having fewer but more focussed sessions.

## **Parliamentary Communications Office - Presentation**

14. The SPCB received an oversight of the structure and roles of the Parliament Communications Office and the work it does on promoting awareness and understanding of the Parliament's work. Following the presentation, the SPCB discussed ways it could be more proactive around communications.

## **Date of next meeting**

15. The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 20 January 2022.

**SPCB secretariat**

December 2021