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Convener
Social Justice and Social Security Committee

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Dear Convener,

Thank you for your letter of 27 September 2023 advising of the level of scrutiny the Committee wishes to adopt for the new round of public appointments to the Poverty and Inequality Commission (the Commission) and seeking further details on the short-term appointments.

New round of Public Appointments

I note that the Committee has decided to meet with the Chair of the Selection Panel and the nominated appointees at a private meeting. Thereafter the Committee will discuss its views in public to inform a report to Parliament.

As I outlined in my letter to you of 14 September, the Ethical Standards Commissioner's [Code of Practice](#), Section C (page 11) outlines a requirement that –

“When an appointment requires parliamentary approval, the selection panel will consult the relevant subject committee with a view to agreeing that the [appointment] plan will deliver against parliamentary and ministerial requirements.”

In addition, the Ethical Standards Commissioner's [Guidance](#) on the Code, at section 5.10 (page 13) outlines that -

“Where parliamentary approval for an appointment is required, the selection panel must consult the relevant subject committee with a view to agreeing that the plan will deliver against both parliamentary and ministerial requirements. That consultation must be meaningful and must offer the committee in question an opportunity to provide views on any and all aspects of the draft appointment plan, including, in particular, the draft role description and draft person specification.”

I would be grateful if the Committee can advise as to their preferred approach to meet the above requirements, for example whether they wish to see and/or comment on the appointment plan before it is finalised and the advert goes live.

Short-term appointments

In response to your questions on the timescales for, and Committee's involvement in, the proposed short-term appointments to the Commission; the Ethical Standards Commissioner has confirmed on 28 September that, subject to Parliamentary approval, he is content for me to appoint a Chair and up to two Commissioners on a short-term, emergency, basis without a fair and open recruitment process.

I therefore propose that we appoint the following candidates to the Commission to ensure it remains quorate up until such time that we can recruit a substantive Chair and up to eight Commissioners:

- **Short-term Chair:**

- **Professor Stephen Sinclair.** A Professor of Social Policy and a researcher in the Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health at Glasgow Caledonian University. His principal research interests are in poverty, welfare reform and social innovation. He is co-Director of the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, and Glasgow School for Business and Society Theme Leader for Social Innovation research. He is also Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a member of the Child Poverty Action Group's UK Policy Committee and its Scottish Advisory Body since 2015. He is a long-standing member of the Poverty Alliance with whom he has collaborated on several research projects including the 'Stick Your Labels' campaign which helped promote a more positive discussion around poverty in Scotland. Stephen is former civil servant and familiar with the needs of policy makers and the urgent demands and political considerations under which they often operate and recognises the importance of working effectively with policy makers to provide timely, practical and clear analyses of evidence. Stephen is a recognised authority on social innovation, as shown by being commissioned to edit the forthcoming *International Handbook on Social Policy and Social Innovation*. His work on both Social Impact Bonds and financial exclusion are internationally esteemed and highly cited. Stephen is the Chair of the Editorial Board for the *Journal of Poverty & Social Justice*, an elected member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Social Policy*, a former member of Executive Committee of the Social Policy Association, a member of the Economic and Social Research Council's Peer Review College, and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He is a Visiting Professor at the University of Parma and an international expert fellow at the Polish National Science Centre. Stephen has expressed an interest in applying to become a substantive Commissioner through the forthcoming new public appointments recruitment round.

- **Short-term Commissioners:**

- **Tressa Burke** was a founder member of Glasgow Disability Alliance (GDA) in 2001, and five years later, was appointed CEO. She has taken the organisation from strength to strength over the past two decades. She is a member of the First Minister's National Advisory Council for Women and Girls, the Minimum Income Guarantee Expert Group and the Social Isolation and Loneliness Advisory Group. Until recently she was Depute Convenor of the Disability and Carers' Benefits Expert Advisory Group & is Co-Chair of Glasgow City's Disability Workstream. She has an MA (Hons) in Music and Philosophy and a Masters in Social Work from the University of Glasgow, specialising in community development. She was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Open University in June 2022 in recognition of her commitment to

Public Services including her exceptional contribution as a campaigner for equality and human rights and her tireless efforts to improve the lives of thousands of disabled people.

- **Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick** is the Director of the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot Watt University. She is a leading international scholar on homelessness. She was principal investigator on the highly respected Crisis-funded “Homelessness Monitor” series for over a decade and leads a major programme of work on "Destitution in the UK" for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. She co-led the influential 'Hard Edges Scotland' report on severe and multiple disadvantage for the Lankelly-Chase Foundation/Robertson Trust. She was homelessness theme lead in the Economic and Social Research Council (ESCR)/JRF-funded ‘UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence’, and previously led/co-led the housing and homelessness strands in a five-year ESRC funded study of “Welfare Conditionality”, as well as an earlier ESRC-funded project on “Multiple Exclusion Homelessness”. Suzanne is currently managing a multi-year research and capacity-building programme on "Homelessness and Black and Minoritised Communities in the UK" and played a significant role in the recent evaluation of the "Social Innovation Partnership" for the Scottish Government/Hunter Foundation. She was lead researcher on a recent international evaluation of an "A Place to Call Home" initiative to end street homelessness in 13 cities ranged across all six continents for the Chicago-based Institute of Global Homelessness and funded by the Oak Foundation. Suzanne has expressed an interest in applying to become a substantive Commissioner through the forthcoming new public appointments recruitment.

These short-term appointments will require Parliamentary approval and would have to be made prior to the expiration of the notice periods of the resigning Chair and three Commissioners, which are 11 November 2023 and 10 November 2023 respectively, to ensure that the Commission remains quorate.

I would be grateful if you could advise what level of scrutiny the Committee wishes to adopt for these appointments and whether your current work programme enables you to undertake your preferred level of scrutiny, including gaining full Parliamentary approval, before 10 November 2023?

Please note for information that in regard to your scrutiny of Professor Fitzpatrick she has limited availability during October 2023 for scrutiny activities due to her academic commitments.

In making any appointments, the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, stipulates that Scottish Ministers must have regard to the desirability of:

- (a) securing that the Commission (taken as a whole) has experience in and knowledge of—
 - (i) the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policy relating to poverty and inequality,
 - (ii) research in connection with poverty and inequality,
 - (iii) working with persons experiencing poverty or inequality (or both), and
- (b) the Commission's membership including persons who have experienced poverty or inequality (or both).”

I consider that the remaining three Commissioners along with the short-term Chair and Commissioners proposed above collectively have all of the necessary experience and knowledge required to ensure robust governance of the Commission, which will enable it to meet its statutory duties and deliver its workplan.

Finally, as requested I will ensure that the Committee is kept informed of the outcomes of both the review of circumstances that led to the resignations and the review of the Framework Agreement.

Yours sincerely,

SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE