



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 5 October 2023

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - www.parliament.scot or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

Thursday 5 October 2023

CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1
CROSS-PARTY GROUP ON UKRAINE	2
CROSS-PARTY GROUPS (COMPLIANCE)	6

STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
16th Meeting 2023, Session 6

CONVENER

*Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con)

Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP)

*Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con)

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Katy Orr

LOCATION

The David Livingstone Room (CR6)

Scottish Parliament

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 5 October 2023

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Martin Whitfield): Good morning, and welcome to the 16th meeting in 2023 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. Today, unfortunately, the committee is without Evelyn Tweed, who is feeling unwell. I therefore welcome Alasdair Allan as her substitute, and I invite him to declare any registered interests of his that might affect the decisions of the committee.

Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I cannot see anything that is relevant, but I refer to my entry in the register of members' interests.

The Convener: That is excellent.

Our first item is a decision on taking in private agenda item 5, which is consideration of the committee's work programme. Do members agree to take that item in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Cross-Party Group on Ukraine

10:00

The Convener: Our second item is consideration of an application for the recognition of a proposed cross-party group on Ukraine. I welcome Colin Beattie MSP, Miles Briggs MSP and Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP, who are the potential convener and deputy conveners.

I turn to Colin Beattie first, for an explanation of the need and the reason for the proposed cross-party group.

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): Good morning, convener. I am grateful for the opportunity to say just a few words in support of the formation of the cross-party group on Ukraine. I do not believe that a cross-party group has ever been formed against such a sombre background of its subject state's being the victim of aggression and invasion by a foreign agent—in this case, Russia. For me, that has provided both the impetus and the drive behind the formation of the cross-party group.

The Parliament can do little in real terms to assist Ukraine in its struggle to retain its independence and to regain its occupied territories. However, we can offer comfort and support to the Ukrainian refugees who have sought sanctuary in Scotland. Many initial members of the CPG represent refugee groups across the country. More of those contact us all the time, seeking to reach out to other groups and to become part of a larger gathering such as the CPG would represent.

The purposes of the CPG are similar to those of other CPGs on nation states. We seek to strengthen political, economic and cultural ties. When it comes to political ties, contact has been made by members of the Ukrainian Parliament, which seeks to establish a Ukraine-Scotland friendship group and to create a closer relationship with the Scottish Parliament through the CPG. I very much welcome that development.

All MSPs will wish Ukraine well in its fight to retain its freedom and way of life. I say again that the situation is unprecedented. Through the establishment of the CPG, we have an opportunity to contribute in some small way to supporting Ukraine and its people in their hour of need. Ukraine needs friends, and now is the time to step up.

I will keep it brief by ending there, convener. I will be happy to answer any questions that you or committee members may have.

The Convener: Many thanks, Mr Beattie. Unusually, I invite the potential deputy convener, Miles Briggs, to add to that.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): Good morning, colleagues. For me especially, and probably for Alex Cole-Hamilton as well—as Edinburgh MSPs—when we had in Edinburgh the ship that housed Ukrainian refugees, we warmly welcomed them. As a society—especially in our schools—Edinburgh stepped up. During that period, I felt that it was key for our Parliament to establish something to discuss their concerns and issues. We did not have that. We could invite people into the Parliament for meetings, but formal arrangements for working with that community needed to be improved.

As Colin Beattie has outlined, for most of us, our support for Ukraine needs to be fully taken forward, and the group gives the Parliament an opportunity to do just that. I hope that the committee will consider our application so that we can build that formal opportunity for the Parliament to take forward long-lasting relationships with Ukraine.

The Convener: Thank you for that contribution. I ask Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP whether there is anything that he would like to add.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): Before I do so, I am required to draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests. First, I was a host through the homes for Ukraine scheme, and a Ukrainian refugee lived with our family for nine months. Secondly, I am under sanction by the Russian Federation for my work with the Ukrainian diaspora here.

On 22 February last year, our world turned on its axis when Russia brought war to continental Europe for the first time in a century. The men and women of Ukraine are fighting in the trenches of their homeland not just for their freedom and sovereignty but for the freedom and sovereignty of all of the free democracies of this world. We owe them a debt of gratitude that we will never repay and, in the formation of the cross-party group, it is important that we recognise that struggle not only for the people who are still fighting in Ukraine, but for the Ukrainian diaspora who are choosing to make Scotland their home. Much time in the chamber has been taken up with a recognition of their needs and interests and the fact that we still have some way to go in settling them in this country. For both of those reasons, the cross-party group deserves the support of this committee and its recognition in this Parliament. I hope that the cross-party group will be long standing and will outdate the war, when the Ukrainians win their freedom and victory over the Russian Federation.

The Convener: As members have no questions, I will inquire about something. There is clearly strong cross-party support in the documents that you filed. Along with five organisations, almost unusually, 23 non-MSP individuals have expressed an interest in being associated with the group. Can you explain the range of the individuals who are interested in the group? Obviously, cross-party groups are for people outside the Parliament to meet and talk with MSPs, so that MSPs can better understand the situation. Perhaps Colin Beattie could answer that question.

Colin Beattie: Most of those individuals represent refugee organisations locally. One or two of them are academics and people who will contribute in their own right to the strength of the cross-party group, but the vast majority represent very local refugee groups. Some of them are the ones that I mentioned, which are trying to reach out to other refugee groups to get support and help. The cross-party group is a good forum to accommodate and facilitate that, so I welcome their coming forward.

Alasdair Allan: I echo what the convener said about the group being welcome. You mentioned that Parliament-to-Parliament contact might be established. Is that part of the remit that you would like the group to develop? If so, how?

Colin Beattie: It is certainly part of what the group should be developing, given its remit to look at the political relationships. We have one Ukrainian MP who is prepared to put together a friendship group within the Ukrainian Parliament. We would like to develop that relationship further by inviting it to participate in CPG meetings—remotely, obviously—and doing the best that we can to continue to develop the relationship between Scotland and Ukraine. That is a really positive thing.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I am aware of a number of relationships that have sprung up organically between parliamentarians in this place and in the Rada, in Ukraine. The group is a great opportunity to formalise that and, as Colin Beattie said, establish a standing friendship committee that will further those ties.

The Convener: As there are no further questions, I thank you, gentlemen, for attending the committee this morning. The committee will formally consider whether to approve the application for recognition under agenda item 3, and the clerks will inform you of the committee's decision in due course.

We move to agenda item 3, which is consideration of approval of a proposed cross-party group on Ukraine. Would anyone like to make a comment or ask a question?

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): As Dr Allan—when he was in the room—and the convener said, the group is obviously a good idea and it is a way of expressing our collective solidarity with the people of Ukraine in their darkest hour.

The Convener: All three MSPs made very powerful contributions. Colin Beattie's explanation that the 23 individuals represent far more of the Ukrainian diaspora was powerfully made.

I put it to the committee that we formally recognise the proposed cross-party group.

Members indicated agreement.

Cross-Party Groups (Compliance)

10:10

The Convener: Under our next item, the committee will consider a paper on cross-party group compliance with the code of conduct for MSPs. I refer to paper 2. Would any member like to comment or ask a question?

Stephen Kerr: It is all very straightforward, and appropriate actions are being taken to encourage the required compliance with the code of conduct.

The Convener: Compliance is required, yes. I remind those who are watching that the committee has committed to considering in early 2024 a full report on compliance with the code.

Is the committee content for me to write to the CPGs on China, Japan and the future of football in Scotland, as is proposed in the paper?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Before closing our public session, I put on record my appreciation of the sterling work of our senior clerk, Dr Katy Orr, who, for more than five years, has brought a quiet wisdom, expertise and, I think, patience to all areas of the committee's work. On a personal note, I place on record my special thanks to Dr Orr for her patience with me, as convener, in what has been a very steep learning curve during this session. Dr Orr will be missed, but we wish her very well—and the best for what is coming along.

10:11

Meeting continued in private until 10:46.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: sp.info@parliament.scot



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba