



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 18 January 2024

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE
1st Meeting 2024, 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

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Catherine Fergusson

LOCATION

The Sir Alexander Fleming Room (CR6)

Scottish Parliament
Standards, Procedures and
Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 18 January 2024

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:30]

Decision on Taking Business in
Private

The Convener (Martin Whitfield): Good morning, and welcome, everyone, to the first meeting in 2024 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. I have received apologies from Stephen Kerr MSP.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on whether to take items 3 and 4 in private. Item 3 is consideration of a complaint that has been made against the cross-party group on drug and alcohol misuse, and item 4 is consideration of the committee's work programme.

Do members agree to take those items in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I am grateful to members for that.

Commissioner for Ethical
Standards in Public Life in
Scotland

09:30

The Convener: Item 2 concerns a report that we have received from the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland on a public appointment. The report examines the methods and practices that the appointing minister used in making appointments to the Scottish Local Authority Remuneration Committee. The purpose of the commissioner's examination was to determine whether there had been a change of policy during the appointment process that precluded serving councillors from sitting on SLARC due to their having an unmanageable conflict of interest.

During the examination, the commissioner established that the "Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland" had not been complied with and that the principles of merit and integrity had been breached. A serving councillor who applied in good faith and was found to be suitable for appointment by the selection panel was not appointed by the appointing minister. The commissioner found that the appointment process was not fair and transparent.

The commissioner engaged with the Scottish Government officials during and after the appointment process. His recommendations are listed in paragraph 17 of the report, which was laid before Parliament with the reference CES/2023/02.

The committee is invited to agree what action—if any—it wishes to take in relation to the commissioner's report. The committee may wish to consider writing to the Scottish Government to confirm its response on the points that are raised in the report and to inquire about the extent to which the recommendations in it have been addressed.

I invite comments from members, who have had a chance to look at the report. Is there anything that you would like to raise?

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): I would be quite comfortable to proceed as you have suggested and to write to the Government, asking it to confirm its response on the points that the report raises.

The Convener: Excellent. Is the rest of the committee happy with that proposal?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Excellent. The committee will write to the Scottish Government to ask about the extent to which the recommendations have been implemented.

Is the committee also content to write to the commissioner about his report?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Excellent. I close the public part of the meeting.

09:33

Meeting continued in private until 10:18.

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