



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

Wednesday 29 June 2011

Session 4

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SCOTTISH COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC AUDIT

1st Meeting 2011, Session 4

CONVENER

*Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)

COMMISSION MEMBERS

*Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)

*Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP)

*attended

SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION

Fergus Cochrane

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Commission for Public Audit

Meeting of the Commission

Wednesday 29 June 2011

[John Pentland opened the meeting at 13:32]

Convener

John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): Good afternoon and welcome to the first meeting of the Scottish Commission for Public Audit in the fourth session of the Scottish Parliament. I remind everybody present to turn off their BlackBerrys and mobiles.

No apologies have been received.

The first item of business is to choose a convener. I seek nominations for that position.

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): I nominate Colin Beattie.

John Pentland: One nomination has been received. Do members agree that Colin Beattie be chosen as convener?

Colin Beattie was chosen as convener.

John Pentland: I congratulate Colin Beattie on his appointment and ask him to move into the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The Convener (Colin Beattie): I thank members for choosing me as convener.

Are members content to declare their interests and choose a deputy convener?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Paragraph 4 of schedule 3 to the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 states that the commission may "determine its own procedure". With that in mind, members are in agreement that we should align the working practices of the commission to those of the Parliament's committees. Therefore, members agree that, before we progress, we should declare any interests that might be relevant to the commission's remit. I remind members that any declaration should be brief but sufficiently detailed to make clear to any listener the nature of the interest. I shall start with my declaration; we shall then proceed around the table.

I am a local authority councillor for Midlothian Council and receive remuneration of between £15,000 and £20,000 per annum. That salary has been waived as of the date of my election to the Scottish Parliament. Midlothian Council also makes available to each councillor an

environmental fund of £15,000 per annum. That fund is held by the council but, subject to set parameters, it can be spent at my discretion on projects for the benefit of the community in my council ward.

I own a 50 per cent share in a commercial property in Angus, a 50 per cent share in a commercial property in Fife, and two flats in Edinburgh. I am an unremunerated director trustee of the national mining museum of Scotland. I am the Scottish National Party's national treasurer and a member of the party's national executive. I receive no remuneration in connection with that role.

John Pentland: I am a local authority councillor for North Lanarkshire Council for which, following my election as a member of the Scottish Parliament, I receive no remuneration. I have a 1p shareholding with the North Lanarkshire Municipal Bank, which was paid by North Lanarkshire Council.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): I have looked over my entry in the register of members' interests and there is nothing in it that I believe to be of relevance to my membership of the commission.

Angus MacDonald: I am currently a local authority councillor with Falkirk Council and receive approximately £18,000 in remuneration, but I am donating that to local causes for the next few months. Apart from that, I do not think that there is anything of significant note to declare.

Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab): I have nothing to declare.

The Convener: Although we are not required to appoint a deputy convener, members have agreed to do so in the interests of conducting efficient business. I suggest that we simply follow the established process in committees of the Parliament for the selection of deputy conveners. I invite nominations for the position.

Hugh Henry: I nominate John Pentland.

Alex Johnstone: I second that.

The Convener: John, do you accept the nomination?

John Pentland: I do.

John Pentland was chosen as deputy convener.

The Convener: I think that our actions will demonstrate the approach that the commission wants to take in this session of the Parliament.

Decision on Taking Business in Private

13:37

The Convener: I seek members' agreement to take in private item 4, which is a discussion on appointments to the board of Audit Scotland. It is the practice for such discussions to take place in private, but where appropriate we will seek to record decisions in the minutes of the meeting, which will be published. Are members content with the approach?

Members indicated agreement.

Work Programme

13:37

The Convener: The commission is invited to consider its approach to developing its work programme. I refer members to paper SCPA/S4/11/1/2, from the secretary. I invite members' comments on paragraph 4.4, on whether to hold a business planning event.

Alex Johnstone: It sounds like a good idea, if we can fix a date for it.

The Convener: Do members agree?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: We therefore agree to hold a business planning event, at which we can consider our working practices, such as attendance of non-commission members at meetings and quorums for meetings, our relationship and engagement with key organisations in carrying forward the work programme, and a more detailed work programme, which will outline specific pieces of work that will come to us during the financial year. The secretary, in discussion with me, will make the necessary arrangements and liaise with members on the content and format of the event.

I invite members' comments on the provisional timetable for business, which is set out in paragraph 8.

John Pentland: It seems okay to me.

The Convener: Are members content with the timetable?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: In paragraph 10, we are invited to consider whether we want to invite Audit Scotland and Alexander Sloan to our next meeting, which is likely to be in September, to discuss Audit Scotland's annual report and accounts in more detail. I invite comments.

Alex Johnstone: That seems to be an important place to start.

The Convener: Are members content with the approach?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Finally, in paragraph 12, we are invited to consider whether to invite Audit Scotland to provide a provisional budget estimate for 2012-13, which could be considered along with the more firmed-up draft budget proposals in September. If there are no comments, do members agree to do that?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: I confirm that members are content to invite Audit Scotland to submit a provisional estimate.

The next meeting of the commission will be in September, on a date to be confirmed. The secretary will timetable the meeting and publish the agreed date on the website.

As agreed, we will take item 4 in private. I ask members of the public, the official reporters and broadcasting staff to vacate the room.

13:40

Meeting continued in private until 13:42.

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