

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

4th Meeting 2023 (Session 6), Thursday 9 March 2023

‘A Parliament for All’: Report of the Parliament’s Gender Sensitive Audit

Introduction

1. The Presiding Officer wrote to the Convener on 2 March to provide a copy of [“A Parliament for All”: Report of the Parliament’s Gender Sensitive Audit](#).

Recommendations falling within the remit of the Committee

2. The Presiding Officer highlighted the following recommendations as ones that would be for the Committee to consider—

Ongoing Review

Recommendation 14

The SPPA committee to consider these statistics (from Recommendation to collect statistics on chamber participation data – questions, debates, statements, interventions) biennially, and develop new rules and/or conventions to rebalance participation, where there is evidence of gender and other inequalities of participation

Rule changes regarding gender balance on Committees and other Parliamentary bodies

Recommendation 18

The SPPA Committee to propose amendments to Standing Orders to specify there should be a minimum of 40% for women, for

- SPCB
- Parliamentary Bureau
- Committee Convenerships.

Recommendation 19

The SPPA Committee to propose the introduction of a rule that there should be no single sex committees and to consider and agree, when ruling out such parliamentary committees, whether the rule should refer to: (i) a 40% minimum for women; (ii) a minimum % based on the numbers of women 'available' for committees (ie, excluding Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers, party leaders and Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers or (ii) the overall number of women in the Scottish Parliament.

Recommendation 20

Following agreement of recommendation 19, the SPPA Committee to propose the introduction of a rule that where parties either elect or appoint more than one member to a committee the party's membership must be mixed.

Recommendation 21

The SPPA Committee to propose the introduction of a formal quota for Presiding Officer/DPOs - at least one man and one woman. This recognises existing experience, and by formalising an existing Scottish Parliament norm, protects and further legitimises this for the future.

Proxy Voting**Recommendation 22**

When the trial period of a proxy voting scheme, agreed to by the Parliament is concluded, the SPPA Committee should propose a permanent Standing Order rule to introduce a proxy voting scheme for (i) parental leave; (ii) illness; (iii) caring/bereavement leave; (iv) on same grounds as remote voting.

A proxy voting scheme should recognise that it is (i) up to parents to determine whether they wish to use a proxy vote or to use remote voting when on parental leave, as the former enables them to take leave that more closely resembles the form of parental leave available in other workplaces; and (ii) that it is for the MSP to determine whom the proxy goes to.

Parliamentary culture**Recommendation 24**

The SPCB/SPPA Committee/Bureau as appropriate in consultation, with party leaders, to agree that MSPs taking parental leave will, on their return to parliament, be expected to be able to continue in their pre-leave Committee and party leadership posts and that there should be no expectation that MSPs taking parental leave will resign from bodies such as the SPCB. In relation to the SPCB, Standing Orders should be changed to allow for an 'acting' SPCB member along similar lines to the rule change that allowed for acting Conveners.

Recommendation 26

The SPPA committee to consider whether complaints against MSPs related to bullying and harassment should be referred to an independent panel rather than to the SPPA Committee after investigation by the Ethical Standards Commissioner.

Committee consideration

3. The Committee is invited to provide its initial views on the Gender Sensitive Audit Report and the recommendations set out above in order that the clerks can develop more detailed papers on the individual recommendations for the Committee to consider after the Easter recess.

**SPPA Committee clerks
March 2022**