



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Conveners Group

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*By email only*

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Dear Presiding Officer

I am writing in response to your letter of 23 September 2022 in which you propose the introduction of a written agreement between the Parliament's Committees and the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body on their relationship with SPCB-supported officeholders.

The Conveners Group signed off the proposed written agreement at its meeting on 25 January. During its consideration the Group also raised some issues which I have set out below.

Conveners are very keen to ensure that measures are in place to avoid any reoccurrence of the circumstances that gave rise to the Auditor General for Scotland's Section 22 report following the audit into the office of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland. This includes ensuring that early warning systems are in place so that any issues can be addressed before they become a problem. The written agreement is a welcome step towards achieving that.

The clarification the written agreement provides of the respective roles of the SPCB and committees and in setting out the expectations on committees in carrying out effective scrutiny is also welcome. The Group was pleased that further reassurance as to the SPCB responsibilities in terms of governance is provided. This includes human resources issues with officeholders, as well as the detail provided on the additional governance measures that the SPCB has in place.

These points, coupled with the work being taken forward at official level in raising awareness through guidance and training, provide welcome assurance that we are all working towards ensuring safeguards and effective scrutiny measures are in place.

Having said that, there is already a significant draw on committee time to scrutinise other matters and so carrying out any effective scrutiny work in the time available realistically could prove challenging. That does not mean that committees will not make every effort to carry out this scrutiny work. However, we need to acknowledge the challenge this presents for committees with busy workloads.

The Group has agreed to keep the operation of the written agreement under review and so we propose to return to this in 12 to 18 months to assess the effectiveness of these measures.

We will keep you informed of any issues arising from the review process.

Yours sincerely

**Liam McArthur MSP**  
**Chair, Conveners Group**