

**Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee**

**20th Meeting 2015 (Session 4), Thursday 26 November 2015**

**Cross-Party Groups – six monthly monitoring report**

**Introduction**

1. The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments (SPPA) Committee is responsible for overseeing the Cross-Party Group (CPG) system. As part of this role it considers regular monitoring reports on the work undertaken by groups and their compliance with the rules in the [Code of Conduct](#) for MSPs (Section 6, volumes 2 and 3).

**Examples of work undertaken by groups**

2. The Annual returns submitted by the CPGs detail specific pieces of work that allow for information sharing and collaboration within the policy community. As noted in the Committee's review [report](#), this work provides MSPs with, amongst other things, information that aids them in scrutinising the Scottish Government. Some extracts of minutes detailing the work undertaken by groups, are detailed below.

3. This is just a sample selection. Full details of the work undertaken by groups are available in the annual returns which have been circulated to members and are all on the Cross-Party Group [website](#).

- [Aviation meeting on 1 October 2014](#)

Brian Donohue MP, chair of the All Party Group on Aviation in Westminster attended the meeting and discussed the London capacity debate, the current work of the APG and gave a general update on the Aviation Industry.

- **Deafness**

On 17 September 2015 the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill was unanimously passed at Stage 3. The success of this Bill was, in part, due to the work of the CPG on Deafness. Mark Griffin MSP, who was the Member in Charge of the Bill, said in the [Stage 3 debate](#)—

*“Finally, I thank members of the cross-party group on deafness, many of whom are in the chamber today. The bill marks almost a decade of their hard work. The process is a fantastic advert for the openness and accessibility of our Parliament. What has happened is a fantastic example of members of a minority group in our society coming together, forming a cross-party group, setting out their priorities and lobbying members to the point that we have a bill in front of us. That is a result of their dedication, so it is only right and proper that we show our appreciation and thank them”*

- [Dyslexia meeting on 21 May 2014](#)

The Group discussed the Education Scotland Report: Making sense: Education for Children and Young People with Dyslexia. Claudia Beamish MSP outlined a question she had tabled in the Parliament in relation to the Scottish Government's response to the report in terms of equalities.

- [Human Trafficking meeting 5 March 2015](#)

The Scottish Government Bill Team attended the meeting to update the Group on the progress of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill.

- [Palliative Care meeting on 10 December 2014](#)

Professor David Clark, University of Glasgow, gave a presentation (slides attached) exploring considerations, evidence and actions required to develop a national strategy for palliative and end of life care in Scotland.

## **Compliance**

4. The requirements placed on groups under the Code are listed below, followed by details of compliance from groups over the past 6 months.

## **Membership**

5. Groups must have—

- at least 5 MSP members
- at least one MSP from each of the parties or groups represented on the Parliamentary Bureau (*in practice the Committee has waived this requirement in this session, only requiring the SNP, Labour Party and Conservatives to be represented*); and
- at least 2 MSP office bearers.

6. All groups are currently meeting these requirements.

## **Operation of Group**

7. Groups must—

- hold at least two meetings per year, and one of these must be the AGM.
- announce meetings in advance via the Parliament website with meeting details notified to the Standards clerks at least 10 calendar days in advance of the meeting.
- hold an AGM once every 12 months following the date of the Group's establishment and submit annual returns within 30 days of the AGM being held – for publication on the Parliament website.
- provide minutes of meetings, including attendee lists to confirm meetings are quorate, for publication on the Parliament's website.

*Meetings*

8. Of the 89 Groups, 85 of them have either met twice in the period after their second last AGM (these two meetings can include their most recent AGM), or will have met twice by their next AGM.

9. The following four Groups have not met twice—

- Co-operatives - they aim to schedule four meetings per year but missed one due to the Referendum. Although they did have other meetings scheduled, all of them were inquorate;
- CPG on Japan – further information has been provided in annexe B;
- CPG on Park Homes – further information has been provided in annexe B;
- CPG on Video Games Technology – further information has been provided in annexe B.

10. The following Groups met but did not give the required 10 calendar days' notice—

- Adult Learning;
- Culture;
- Diabetes – this was due to an unexpected absence of the secretariat; and
- Poland.

11. The CPGs on Adult Learning, Culture and Poland all have the same Convener, who had a change of staff member; they forgot to inform us of the meetings. The Convener has been reminded of the requirement in the Code to notify the Standards Clerks 10 days prior to any meeting and she has apologised for this oversight.

*AGMs*

12. The CPGs on Learning Disability and Sport should have held AGMs by the last report that the Committee considered in June 2015; these Groups were unable to do so and provided reasons for this at that time. The Committee was content with the reasons provided. These Groups have now held AGMs and submitted their annual return form. The annual return forms are in the packs issued to members.

13. Since the report in June 2015 38 Groups should have held AGMs. Of this 38, the following 10 groups have not held AGMs—

- Drug and Alcohol Misuse – the AGM was due on 13 August 2015, as this was recess the Group scheduled the AGM for 4 June 2015. This meeting ended up being inquorate. The Group held electronic elections. The AGM was then rescheduled for 3 November 2015; this meeting was also inquorate. The Group is currently trying to secure another date for the AGM.
- Funerals and Bereavements – the AGM was due on 12 November 2015. The Group was struggling to find a suitable date for the meeting. It has now been scheduled for 2 December 2015.
- Housing – the AGM was due on 6 November 2015, the Group scheduled its AGM for 24 September 2015 but this had to be cancelled, it is now scheduled for 26 November 2015.

- Human Rights – the AGM was due on 1 October 2015, it was scheduled for 1 September 2015 but was inquorate, they have been unable to schedule another date but will hold electronic elections.
- Japan – further information has been provided in annexe B;
- MS – the AGM was due on 7 October 2015, the secretariat has apologised for this oversight and the meeting is now scheduled for 24 November 2015.
- Palestine – the AGM was due on 8 Oct, this has been scheduled for 9 December 2015.
- Park Homes – further information has been provided in annexe B;
- Recreational Boating and Marine Tourism – the AGM was due on 29 September 2015, this meeting ended up being inquorate. The AGM has now been re-scheduled for 1 December 2015;
- Video Games Technology – further information has been provided in annexe B.

14. Out of the 28 Groups that have held AGMs during this period, the following four Groups held them late. Where delays are short (under 10 days), the number of days is highlighted in the table below. The reasons provided by the Groups for longer delays are also detailed—

CPG	Due	Held	Reason for late AGM
Animal Welfare	19/08/2015	29/09/2015	The AGM in 2014 had to be held in August due to the split recess, that meant this year's AGM had to be held late.
Co-operatives	24/06/2015	25/06/2015	1 day
Food	18/06/2015	08/10/2015	AGM was booked for required date but due to parliamentary business being extended it had to be cancelled
Palliative Care	11/06/2015	09/09/2015	The Group was due to hold its AGM on 24 June but due to parliamentary business being extended this meeting had to be cancelled. The Group held its AGM at the next available date.

#### *Annual returns*

15. Of the 28 Groups that have held AGMs all have submitted their annual returns.

16. The following three groups submitted their forms late—

CPG	Due	Submitted	Reason for late AR
Credit Unions	03/07/2015	13/07/2015	No reason given
International Development	17/07/2015	20/07/2015	3 days late
Older People, Age and Ageing	10/07/2015	01/09/2015	New secretary took over, the previous secretariat thought the

			form had been submitted on time, took a while to track it down.
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17. Seven Groups had held AGMs in advance of the last monitoring report consideration in June 2015, but the annual returns had not been submitted in time for them to be issued with that monitoring report. The forms are in the packs issued to members and the Groups are:

CPG	Due	Submitted	Comments
Aviation	27/06/2015	16/07/2015	No reason given
Dyslexia	19/06/2015	18/06/2015	Submitted on time
Learning Disability	16/07/2015	06/07/2015	Submitted on time
Scotch Whisky	25/06/2015	17/06/2015	Submitted on time
Scottish Showmen's Guild	18/06/2015	11/06/2015	Submitted on time
Skills	13/06/2015	02/06/2015	Submitted on time
Social Enterprise	28/05/2015	23/06/2015	Secretariat could not find form to complete and emailed clerks, clerks sent form but the secretariat was on leave

#### *Minutes*

18. Groups can provide minutes in draft form or wait until they are approved at a future meeting. There are no Groups that have been unable to provide minutes.

### **Conclusion**

19. **The Committee is invited to note the work undertaken by groups reporting in annual returns in this reporting period.**

20. **Having considered the information on compliance for the CPGs on Japan, Park Homes and Video Games Technology (see Annexe B), the Committee is invited to consider whether it wishes to take any action in relation these non-compliant groups. The Committee could consider—**

- **writing to the Conveners of these groups requesting an explanation;**
- **taking evidence from the Convener of any non-compliant groups; or**
- **disbanding the groups.**

21. **Having considered the information on compliance, the Committee is invited to consider whether it wishes to take any action in relation the other non-compliant groups.**

**Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee  
November 2015**

**ANNEXE A: CURRENT CROSS-PARTY GROUPS**

Accident Prevention and Safety Awareness
Adult Learning
Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse
Animal Welfare
Architecture and the Built Environment
Armed Forces Veterans
Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Conditions
Asthma
Aviation
Cancer
Carers
Caribbean
Children and Young People
China
Chronic Pain
Colleges and Universities
Construction
Consumer Affairs
Co-operatives
Credit Unions
Crofting
Cuba
Culture
Cycling
Deafness
Dementia
Diabetes
Digital Participation
Disability
Drugs and Alcohol Misuse
Dyslexia
Epilepsy
Fair Trade
Families Affected by Imprisonment
Food
France
Funerals and Bereavement
Gaelic
Germany
Golf
Health Inequalities
Heart Disease and Stroke
Housing

Human Rights
Human Trafficking
Industrial Communities
International Development
Japan
Learning Disability
Malawi
Men's Violence Against Women and Children
Mental Health
Middle East and South Asia
MS
Muscular Dystrophy
Nuclear Disarmament
Oil and Gas
Older People, Age and Ageing
Pakistan
Palestine
Palliative Care
Park Homes
Poland
Postal Issues
Racial Equality in Scotland
Rail
Rare Diseases
Recreational Boating and Marine Tourism
Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
Religious Freedom
Rural Policy
Russia
Science and Technology
Scotch Whisky
Scottish Economy
Scottish Showmen's Guild
Skills
Skin and Associated Rheumatic Conditions
Social Enterprise
Sport
Taiwan
Tibet
Tobacco and Health
Tourism
Towns and Town Centres
Turkey
Video Games Technology

Visual Impairment
Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector



## **ANNEXE B: FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE CPGS ON JAPAN, PARK HOMES AND VIDEO GAMES TECHNOLOGY**

1. The CPGs on Japan, Park Homes and Video Games Technology have not complied with the Code by not meeting frequently enough and not holding AGMs. Further information has been provided on each Group.

### **Japan**

2. The CPG on Japan was established on 6 November 2013. It did not meet again formally until 5 November 2014. Clerks were in contact at the Group during that time to encourage them to hold further meetings. Although the Group had held informal meetings and events, no formal CPG meetings were held.

3. The Group has not met formally since 5 November 2014. Clerks wrote to the Group on 1 May 2015 reminding them of the requirements in the Code for Groups to meet twice. Clerks wrote again on 22 September 2015 to remind the Group again of the requirement for all Groups to meet twice and the requirement for the Group to hold its AGM by 5 November 2015.

4. The Group provided clerks with information on informal meetings and events held by the Group but no formal CPG meetings have been held. Clerks issued a final reminder to the Group on 2 December 2014 that in order to comply with the Code in the coming year the Group would be required to hold to meetings and its AGM by 5 November 2015.

### **Park Homes**

5. The CPG on Park Homes was established on 18 January 2012 and subsequently met on 27 June 2012, 15 January 2013, 4 June 2013 (first AGM) and 10 September 2013.

6. The first monitoring report the Committee considered in May 2013 reported that the Group had not met since its initial meeting on 18 January 2012 and the Committee wrote to the Group at that time to ask the Group to why it had not met and had not had an AGM. The Group responded to the Committee confirming it had met, on 27 June 2012 and 15 January 2013, but had omitted to inform Standards clerks. The Group also confirmed it had not held an AGM but that one would be arranged.

7. The Group then provided the required minutes of the meetings and confirmed its AGM would be held on 10 June 2013. The AGM was held and the annual return form submitted.

8. The Group subsequently met on 10 September 2013, 22 April 2014 (although this meeting was inquorate) and 5 August 2014. The 2014 AGM should have been held on 5 June 2014 but the Group took the decision to delay it until August as they had substantial business to discuss at their meeting in June 2014.

9. The Group has not met since the AGM on 5 August 2014. Clerks wrote to the Group on 8 May 2015 to remind them that the Group was required to meet twice, and one of these meetings should be the AGM, by 5 August 2015.

10. The Group responded to say that they are awaiting the publication of guidance from the Scottish Government on the new licensing system following Royal Assent of the Housing (Scotland) Bill before meeting. Again the Group was advised of the requirements in the Code to meet twice and hold an AGM.

11. The Group was then written to on 27 August and 15 October 2015 to ask how it intended to proceed but as yet has not responded.

### **Video Games Technology**

12. The CPG on Video Games Technology has not met formally since 12 June 2014. The Group was highlighted to the Committee in the last monitoring report on 4 June 2015 as follows—

Video Games Technology - the AGM is due on 12 June 2015, clerks have emailed the Co-Conveners of the Group on three occasions, 2 February, 17 March and 29 April 2015 to remind them of the requirements in the Code. Groups are required to give 10 days' notice of any meeting and so clerks will update the Committee at the meeting on 4 June as to whether an additional meeting has been organised and, if not, whether any reason has been offered.

13. Clerks emailed the Group again on 5 June 2015 to remind them that they had not complied with the Code. The Group responded to say that they had been having issues arranging meetings prior to recess and sought advice. The Group was advised by clerks to arrange an AGM as soon as possible and to provide formal information to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee on why it had been unable to comply with the Code.

14. One of the Co-Conveners of the Group has contacted clerks to say that “the Group is now inactive and has been for some time. Consideration will be given to re-establishing the Group in the new Parliamentary term”.