



Wednesday 24 April 2013

### **SPPA Committee announces consultation on Members Interests Bill**

A consultation on a new Members Interests Bill has been launched today by the Scottish Parliament's Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

Following the UK Parliament passing the Scotland Act 2012, the Scottish Parliament is, for the first time, able to consider changes in full to the Members Interests regime at Holyrood.

The committee is seeking to further strengthen transparency and accessibility of information and to widen rules around paid advocacy. It is also seeking to replace offences for minor breaches with a wider range of Parliamentary sanctions.

Convener of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee (SPPA) Dave Thompson MSP said:

"The Scottish Parliament prides itself on openness and accountability, including in relation to the conduct of MSPs.

"Although the committee considers the existing regime to be a robust framework, this consultation marks the start of our first, full opportunity to revisit the Scottish Parliament's Members Interests legislation.

"Robust standards are essential to ensure that, should wrongdoing occur, there are sufficient checks and balances to hold MSPs to account effectively.

"The committee is inviting views on a number of priorities which it believes will further enhance our high standards of conduct."

The proposals put forward by the committee seek to:

- improve the public accessibility of information reported by MSPs, allowing for effective public scrutiny;
- make the parliamentary complaints process more responsive;
- ensure a wide range of parliamentary sanctions are available;

- broaden the definition of the serious offence of paid advocacy; and
- replace criminal offences for failure to declare or register financial interests, which have never been used in 14 years of the Parliament, with wider Parliamentary sanctions.

## **Background**

The closing date for the twelve weeks consultation is **22 July** 2013.

Full details of the consultation can be found on the SPPA Committee's homepage at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/29890.aspx>

## **Media information**

Eric MacLeod: 0131 348 5389

Text Relay calls welcome

[eric.macleod@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:eric.macleod@scottish.parliament.uk)

## **Committee information**

NAME: 0131 348 5177

Text Relay calls welcome

[NAME@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:NAME@scottish.parliament.uk)

## **Public information**

- Telephone: 0800 092 7500
- Textphone users can contact us on 0800 092 7100
- We also welcome calls using the Text Relay service
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