

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

10th Meeting 2015 (Session 4), Thursday 4 June 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).
2. As is apparent later in the report, the steps taken by the Committee following its review of the CPG rules in 2012 continue to generate a positive response from groups. There has been a noticeable increase in the level of information readily being provided to the Standards clerks since the start of the session, with each of the successive monitoring reports showing greater compliance than the last.

Examples of work undertaken by groups

3. Annual returns submitted detail specific pieces of work that allow for information sharing and collaboration within the policy community. As noted in the Committee's review [report](#), amongst other things, this work provides MSPs with information that aids them in scrutinising the Scottish Government. Some extracts of minutes detailing the work undertaken by groups, are detailed below.
4. 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](#).

- [Armed Forces Veterans meeting on 30 September 2014](#)

The newly appointed Scottish Veterans Commissioner attended the meeting to give the Group an overview of his background and experience. Keith Brown MSP, the then Minister for Transport and Veterans spoke to the Group on the appointment of the Commissioner.

- [Diabetes meeting on 25 November 2014](#)

Dr Julia Platts, a lead clinician on Diabetes in Wales, presented to the Group on the experience of the Diabetes Delivery Plan in Wales. This gave opportunities for shared practice.

- [Housing meeting on 6 November 2014](#)

Michael Cameron, Chief Executive of Scottish Housing Regulator attended the meeting to discuss the Thematic Inquiry into Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention.

- [Men's Violence Against Women and Children event on 4 December 2014](#)

Event held in the Scottish Parliament during 16 Days of Action. Statement of Intent signing event to recognise the achievements in Scotland in tackling violence against women, and to engage the Scottish Parliament in committing the necessary support to meet the outcomes detailed in the recently published national strategy, 'Equally Safe'. 43 MSPs attended and signed the Statement.

- [Tobacco and Health meeting on 9 October 2014](#)

The meeting was attended by representatives from The Youth Commission on Smoking Prevention, which had been tasked by The Scottish Government to make recommendations on future youth prevention smoking activity in Scotland. Jordan Linden from the Commission summarised the purpose and remit of The Commission.

- [Towns and Town Centres meeting on 1 October 2014](#)

Derek Mackay, Minister for Local Planning and Government attended the meeting and provided the group with an update of activity being carried out under the Town Centre Action Plan and announced that STP would be awarded a £186,000 grant to act as the 'go-to' body for towns in Scotland.

- [Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector meeting on 18 June 2014](#)

The topic for June's meeting was Glasgow 2014 Volunteering Journey & Volunteering Legacy. The group was joined by Neil Campion, General Manager, Volunteer Recruitment Glasgow 2014 who gave a presentation to members about how volunteers were recruited and trained for Glasgow 2014; what those volunteers looked like (i.e. demographic, geographic breakdown) and what the response had been from the public and media to Glasgow 2014 Volunteers. The group then heard from George Thomson CEO of Volunteer Scotland about the volunteering legacy of the games and the use of the My Volunteer Account system.

Compliance

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

Membership

6. 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, requiring the SNP, Labour Party and Conservatives to be represented*); and
- at least 2 MSP office bearers.

7. All groups are currently meeting these requirements.

Operation of Group

8. 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.

9. All groups are currently meeting these requirements.

Meetings

10. Of the 88 Groups, 81 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.

11. The CPG on Golf has not met twice and the reason for this, given by the Convener of the Group, was that the development of plans to amalgamate the Scottish Golf Union (SGU) and Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association (SLGA) into a single unified governing body, coupled with what was such a busy year for golf in Scotland, has meant that the SGU - who act as the secretariat for the group - have been unable to facilitate a suitable time.

12. The other six Groups are—

- Funerals and Bereavement – the AGM is not due until 12 November 2015 so there is time for the Group to hold another meeting.
- Japan - the AGM is not due until 5 November 2015.
- Life Sciences – the AGM is due on 17 June 2015, clerks have emailed the Convener of the Group on three occasions, 2 February, 25 March and 29 April 2015 to remind him of the requirements in the Code.
- Park Homes – the AGM is not due until 5 August 2015. Given the Summer Recess the Convener has been emailed to highlight the requirements of the Code.
- Russia - the AGM is not due until 16 December 2015.
- 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. The following Groups met but did not give the required 10 calendar days' notice—

Group	Date met	Reason given
France	11/11/2014	MSP office thought the secretary had informed us and secretary thought MSP office had
Learning Disability	12/11/2014	Secretary forgot to tell us
Renewable Energy	11/12/2014	Secretary forgot to tell us
Russia	16/12/2014	No reason given
Turkey	16/12/2014	No reason given
Dyslexia	14/01/2015	No reason given
Adult Learning	28/01/2015	Secretary forgot to tell us
Asthma	28/01/2015	Secretary was off on sick leave
Skills	05/02/2015	Did not realise we needed 10 days' notice
Taiwan	04/03/2015	Sent notification on 24 February
France	21/04/2015	New secretary who was not aware of Code rules
Tourism	12/05/2015	Secretary thought she had informed us

14. These Groups have been reminded of the requirement in the Code to notify the Standards Clerks 10 days prior to any meeting.

AGMs

15. Since the report in November 2014 49 Groups should have held AGMs. Out of the 49 Groups there are two Groups that have not held their AGMs—

- Learning Disability (was due to be held on 28 May 2015) – this Group wished to meet during Learning Disability Awareness Week and have booked their AGM for 16 June. They found it difficult to get the Group together to meet before that date; and
- Sport (was due to be held on 27 May 2015) – the AGM for this CPG has tended to be held in either June or September/October. Margo MacDonald was the Convener. The Group delayed the AGM to provide additional time to Group members in relation to the AGM, including those who may wish to consider standing for election to one of the Group positions. The intention is to hold an AGM in September/October

16. Out of the 47 Groups that have held AGMs, the following 14 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
Cancer	12/12/2014	16/12/2014	4 days late
Digital Participation	11/12/2014	11/03/2015	Secretary was off for a lot of 2014 and lost track of when AGM was due; they were reminded on 26 Nov 2014, held electronic elections on 10 December 2014 and AGM on 11 March 2015
Epilepsy	24/04/2015	30/04/2015	6 days late

Industrial Communities	22/01/2015	28/01/2015	6 days late
Middle East and South Asia	02/04/2015	21/04/2015	No reason given
Nuclear Disarmament	05/03/2015	01/04/2015	There has been a lot of new interest in the CPG and the AGM was delayed in order to give new and potential new members time to participate and then possibly put their names forward for a position at the AGM.
Rail	06/11/2014	25/11/2014	No reason given
Russia	19/11/2014	16/12/2014	No reason given
Scottish Economy	25/09/2014	24/03/2015	The Group held electronic elections on 25 September 2014. With the various different periods of recess, including the extra period in late August/September close to the time when the AGM was due, the Group found it difficult to find a practical date to hold an AGM.
Scottish Showmen's Guild	12/03/2015	19/05/2015	As a result of a changeover of the Office Bearers of the Scottish Showmen's Guild as well as the diary commitments of the Scottish Showmen's Guild Chairman
Skills	08/05/2015	14/05/2015	6 days late
Tibet	19/02/2015	25/03/2015	The group miscalculated the date the AGM was due.
Tobacco and Health	07/11/2014	05/02/2015	AGM on 7 Nov 2014 was not quorate; the Group held electronic elections on 4 Dec 2014 and AGM on 5 Feb 2015
Towns and Town Centres	19/02/2015	25/02/2015	6 days late

Annual returns

17. Out of the 47 Groups that have held AGMs 40 should have submitted their annual returns (the rest are not due until after this report is issued to the Committee). 38 of these have been submitted. The following Groups have not yet submitted their annual returns—

- Middle East and South Asia (due to be submitted on 21 May 2015) – the Convener of the Group was emailed on 18 May and 26 May.
- Social Enterprise (due to be submitted on 28 May 2015) – the secretariat is aware that the form is due.

18. The following eight groups submitted their forms late—

CPG	Due	Submitted	Reason for late AR
Digital Participation	10/04/2015	17/04/2015	Secretary thought that extra time was allowed over recess
Families Affected by Imprisonment	06/03/2015	07/04/2015	MSP had a change of staff member who was unaware that the form had to be submitted
Nuclear Disarmament	01/05/2015	06/05/2015	No reason given
Palestine	07/11/2014	03/12/2014	Had completed but forgot to send it
Science and Technology	07/03/2015	10/03/2015	No reason given
Scottish Economy	23/04/2015	27/04/2015	Secretary was unexpectedly out of the office the week that the AR was due.
Taiwan	03/04/2015	10/04/2015	No reason given
Turkey	05/03/2015	13/03/2015	No reason given

19. Eight Groups had held AGMs in advance of the last monitoring report consideration in November 2014, but the annual returns had not been submitted in time for them to be issued with that monitoring report. All of these Groups submitted their forms within the 30 day limit. The forms are in the packs issued to members and the Groups are:

- Armed Forces Veterans;
- Construction;
- Culture;
- Disability;
- Human Rights;
- MS;
- Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency; and
- Rural Policy.

Minutes

20. 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

21. **The Committee is invited to note the work undertaken by groups reporting in annual returns in this reporting period and also the ongoing improvements in the level of compliance with the Code.**

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

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

ANNEXE**Current Cross-Party Groups**

CPG
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
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
Life Sciences
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
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