



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Minute of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) meeting held on Thursday 4 February 2021 at 09.00, via Teams

Present:

- Ken Macintosh MSP (Chair)
- Jackson Carlaw MSP
- Liam McArthur MSP
- David Stewart MSP
- Sandra White MSP
- Andy Wightman MSP

In attendance:

- David McGill
- Michelle Hegarty
- Lynsey Hamill
- Roy Devon
- Janice Crerar
- Callum Thomson
- Emma Armstrong
- Eric MacLeod
- Joanne McNaughton
- Huw Williams
- Lisa Creamer
- Judith Proudfoot, Secretary

Previous minutes

1. The SPCB agreed the minute of the meeting held on 21 January 2021.

Matters arising

2. A number of items had been dealt with by correspondence since the previous meeting. The SPCB had:

2.1 Agreed the rationale and arrangements for the Scottish Government Handling of Harassment Complaints Committee to meet safely at Holyrood, as set out in the organisation's updated risk assessment.

2.2 Noted a letter from the Convener of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments (SPPA) Committee relating to arrangements for cross party groups in the run up to the 2016 elections.

2.3 Noted proposals for the Parliament to engage with the I Am Me Scotland's 'Keep Safe Places' initiative.

2.4 Noted a proposed amendment likely to be made at stage 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill which would provide additional powers to the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC). The SPCB considered that any additional costs resulting from the powers, if passed, should be met initially from the Officeholders' Contingency Fund until such time as actual costs were determined.

3. The SPCB also discussed updates on plans for the period leading up to the forthcoming Scottish Parliamentary elections, which Parliament would be asked to approve next week.

Covid-19: update

4. The SPCB noted the ongoing work looking into potential impacts for the Parliament following the First Minister's latest statement.

Festival of Politics 2020 report – SPCB(2021)Paper04

5. The SPCB welcomed the report on the 2020 Festival of Politics which had been run fully on-line for the first time. Some of the highlights included:
 - The increased provision of BSL services for events and the participation of a deaf panelist member for the first time.
 - Positive feedback from those outwith the central belt and those with disabilities that the virtual format had enabled them to engage more easily, some for the first time. Many still hoped to be able to engage 'in person' in the future.
 - Almost 2000 participants across the 14 events which equated to a slightly higher average across the events compared to previous 3 Festivals.
6. The SPCB congratulated the Team on pulling together a successful programme of events in new and challenging circumstances. The SPCB also welcomed the organisational benefits achieved by staff acquiring new skills and experience in running on-line events; skills which would enable them to support other colleagues in the routine support to parliamentary business and also in the running of future on-line events.
7. The SPCB noted the Report.

Officeholders: salaries mechanism review – SPCB(2021)Paper 05

8. The SPCB has a statutory duty to determine the terms and conditions of appointment for the officeholders it supports. In 2020, officials were asked to undertake a review of the officeholders' salaries and uprating mechanism, addressing any anomalies or inequalities.
9. Based on the strong case made in the paper, the SPCB agreed that officeholders should be placed on incremental salary scales in line with the SPCB's senior staffing grades instead of the current spot salary arrangement. A new salary uprating mechanism would be introduced aligned to the percentage awarded to SPCB staff salaries. These changes would take effect from 1 April 2022. A further paper would be presented to agree the uplift of salaries for 2020/21. Changes to the Ombudsman's salary would take effect immediately to address current anomalies and the recent additional responsibilities and statutory functions assigned to the post.
10. The SPCB also agreed that a review of officeholders should be undertaken in the next session. This would likely need to be done by an ad-hoc parliamentary committee. It was agreed that officials should also investigate the reduction in applications for posts in recent years and whether salary levels was a factor.

Website accessibility project – SPCB(2021)Paper 06

11. The SPCB had previously been updated on work being undertaken to ensure the Parliament's existing web sites were compliant with new Regulations relating to accessibility. The SPCB noted that the project had successfully delivered against its brief, both on time and under budget, and endorsed the recommended approach to how web accessibility would be managed on an ongoing basis.
12. The SPCB congratulated the project team on a job well done and noted the Report.

AOB

Correspondence

13. The SPCB discussed a letter received from the SPPA committee on the subject of introducing a new process for urgent questions to the SPCB. A draft response would be circulated for agreement.
14. Clarification was also sought on the content of a letter issued to MSPs by the SPPA Committee on the subject of cross party groups.

Cleaning contract

15. The SPCB noted the positive feedback on the work of the cleaning staff and recorded its appreciation of their contribution to enabling Parliament to continue to operate. The contractual arrangements were raised and discussed.

Clearing of MSP rooms

16. The SPCB noted that additional guidance would be issued by Facilities Management on arrangements for clearing rooms in the run up to the Scottish parliamentary elections.

Publication of material

17. The SPCB discussed issues relating to its role as publisher of material acquired and held by committees, with particular reference to the Scottish Government Handling of Harassment Complaints Committee.

Date of next meeting

18. The next meeting of the SPCB was scheduled for 18 February 2021.

SPCB secretariat

February 2021