



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Kenneth Gibson MSP
Convener
Finance and Public Administration Committee

7 January 2025

Dear Kenneth,

Scrutiny of SPCB Supported Bodies

Thank you for your letter in relation to scrutiny of SPCB-supported bodies.

The Committee is responsible for matters relating to the conduct of MSPs and matters relating to public appointments. As such, the Ethical Standards Commissioner for Scotland falls within the SPPA Committee's remit. The Ethical Standards Commissioner is also responsible for consideration of complaints against councillors and members of the boards of devolved public bodies and reports on these matters to the Standards Commission for Scotland (which is also supported by the SPCB). Scrutiny of the Ethical Standards Commissioner in respect of matters within the responsibility of the Standards Commission for Scotland fall within the remit of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee.

The Scottish Information Commissioner also falls within the Committee's remit due to Freedom of Information falling within the responsibilities of the Minister for Parliamentary Business.

The Committee's approach to scrutiny of the Scottish Information Commissioner and the Ethical Standards Commissioner has focused on annual evidence sessions, based on the annual report and accounts of each office, plus other performance reports, such as from Audit Scotland, and scrutiny of any strategic plans laid before the Parliament. These evidence sessions have usually taken place in the first quarter of the calendar year, after the process for budgets being submitted to and discussed with the SPCB. The Committee most recently took evidence from the Scottish Information Commissioner in February 2024 and from the Ethical Standards Commissioner in March 2024. Evidence sessions in which the Committee will scrutinise the most recent annual reports and accounts of both the Ethical Standards Commissioner and the Scottish Information Commissioner are currently being arranged.

There have been particular challenges for the Ethical Standards Commissioner's office during this session but the Committee is content, through its annual evidence sessions, that the current Commissioner has sought to address these challenges and that the performance of the Commissioner's functions has improved.

The Committee is content that its current approach to scrutiny strikes the right balance of ensuring scrutiny of the relevant officeholders while also enabling the Committee to fulfil its other functions and responsibilities.

Contact: Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email SPPA.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

I hope this is helpful.

Your sincerely,

Martin Whitfield MSP
Convener