



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Public Audit Committee

Martin Whitfield MSP
Convener
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee
The Scottish Parliament

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28 March 2025

Dear Martin

Consultation on Committee Effectiveness Inquiry

Thank you for [your letter of 25 February 2025](#) inviting the Public Audit Committee to contribute to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's inquiry on Committee Effectiveness.

The Committee discussed the letter at its meeting yesterday and is pleased to provide a short response in the attached Annexe. Members also expressed an interest in providing views individually and may do so by responding to the Committee directly.

We hope our response assists your inquiry and look forward to further discussions in due course, including through the planned Chamber debate.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Leonard MSP

Convener

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Email publicaudit.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

Annexe: Public Audit Committee's Response to the SPPA Inquiry on Committee Effectiveness

1. Structure

- The Public Audit Committee (PAC) agreed that the smaller size of our committee, with only five members, has been advantageous.
- The smaller membership has allowed each Member adequate time during Committee meetings to make a substantial contribution, and in our view, scrutiny has been more effective as a result.
- The smaller group has also created a better environment for effective collaboration and has reduced divisions that may otherwise arise in larger committees.
- We agreed that an increased number of smaller committees could provide better and more focused scrutiny.
- PAC are in a unique position in that it rarely takes evidence from Scottish Government Ministers. Rather, it hears from Scottish Government Portfolio Accountable Officers and / or the Accountable Officer from a Public Body, as appropriate. We agreed that hearing from senior officials rather than Ministers has been beneficial, minimising political differences and enabling members to take a more impartial and constructive approach to scrutiny.
- The Committee also welcomed the recent change in its meeting schedule from a Thursday morning to a Wednesday morning. This adjustment has provided adequate time for scrutiny and avoided the need to conclude meetings prematurely due to the 11.40 am start of parliamentary business on a Thursday.

2. Elected Conveners

- The Committee discussed the issue of elected conveners and acknowledged that there are potential advantages and disadvantages to the introduction of such a system. Members held mixed views and accordingly agreed to submit individual views directly.

3. Gender Balance

- The Committee supports an end to single-sex committees and would welcome a better gender balance.