



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Richard Leonard
Convener
Public Audit Committee
The Scottish Parliament

publicaudit.committee@parliament.scot

25 February 2025

Dear Richard

Consultation on Committee Effectiveness Inquiry

Request

The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee is seeking your committee's views to inform its [inquiry on committee effectiveness](#). Our inquiry wishes to answer the following question:

“Are there changes to the Parliament's procedures and practices which would help committees to work more effectively?”

We are keen to draw upon your Committee's experience and for you to provide examples of good practice to inform the inquiry.

As well as this request for written views the Committee plans to host a Chamber debate before the summer recess to inform the Committee's recommendations which it plans to publish in its inquiry report in the early autumn. I hope that the debate will provide an opportunity for contributions from Conveners to speak on behalf of their committees regarding their insights into committee effectiveness.

The Committee is aware that individual members may also wish to provide views, and welcomes this. An anonymous response form is available for any member to do so, which will be open until Friday 4 April.

Background

The Committee's inquiry is considering three key themes:

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.

Structure

The Committee will consider the current structure of committees. This theme encompasses the best size of committee membership, the number of committees, and the remit of committees, including whether they should mirror the Scottish Government Ministerial portfolios or whether a different approach could be taken.

The Gender Sensitive Audit set out a suite of proposals relating to quotas for committee membership. As a Committee, we have agreed that, as a minimum, there should be no single sex committees. We intend to propose this change take effect from the start of the next parliamentary session.

The key questions the Committee will seek to answer on this theme are:

- Are there structural and procedural changes which would improve committee scrutiny?
- Are there structural and procedural changes which would allow committees to be more effective with their time?

Elected Conveners

The Committee has already consulted on the practical operation of elected conveners. The Committee will consider what cultural changes it thinks elected conveners would bring to the operation of committees.

The key question the Committee will seek to answer on this theme is:

"Would elected conveners strengthen the committees of the Parliament, and if so, how?"

Evaluation

The Committee will consider how committees currently evaluate their work and whether there are changes or improvements which could be made.

This may include approaches to pre and post legislative scrutiny and considerations of how work is planned to build in evaluation and reflection.

The key questions the Committee will seek to answer on this theme are:

- Are there additional opportunities for committees to evaluate and reflect on work they undertake?
- How can time be built into work programmes for committees to evaluate their own approaches, especially where these may be new?

A research briefing giving background context was prepared for the Committee by SPICe and the Committee Adviser Dr Danielle Beswick and has been made available [online](#).

Action

The SPPA Committee is inviting the views of your committee on each of the three main themes of the inquiry. It would be much appreciated if a response could be provided in advance of the next recess by **Friday 4 April 2025**.

Please do contact me, or the Clerks to the SPPA Committee, if you require any further information regarding the Committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Whitfield', written in a cursive style.

Martin Whitfield MSP
Convener