

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

7th Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Thursday 11 November 2021

Re-registration of Cross-Party Groups

Introduction

1. Under the terms of Section 6 of the Code of Conduct (the Code), Cross-Party Groups (CPGs) that were registered in the previous Session of the Parliament can seek to re-register in this Session. Standards clerks, in consultation with the Convener, undertake a sifting exercise and highlight applications to be referred to the Committee for further scrutiny (either through a paper to the Committee or an evidence session with the Convener of the proposed group). Proposed Groups that do not require further scrutiny because they meet all of the requirements will be re-registered and can begin operating without having to seek fresh recognition from the Committee.

2. Section 6, paragraph 24 of the Code lays out the criteria to be applied for re-registrations—

- *Name and purpose of Cross-Party Group:* These must be the same as were registered in the previous Session.
- *MSP membership:* There must be at least 5 MSP members and at least one MSP from each of the parties or groups represented on the Parliamentary Bureau. The Committee has agreed a waiver of this rule in Session 6 of the Parliament and Groups are required to have 5 MSPs from the majority of parties or groups represented on the Parliamentary Bureau.
- *Non-MSP membership:* There are two categories of membership, individual and organisational. For organisational members, it is the organisation that is the member and not the individuals that attend from that organisation. An individual or organisation is not a member of a Group until Standards Clerks have been informed.
- *Office Bearers:* There must be at least 2 MSP office bearers and one of these must be the Convener of the Group.
- *Financial Benefits:* Value and source of any financial benefit must be given. In the first instance, the Group will be contacted and asked to provide more information.
- *Contact:* Must be the Convener of the Group.

Cross-Party Groups that have been re-registered

3. For the Committee's information the following proposed CPGs met the criteria for re-registration, complied with the Code regarding meetings, complied with the Code in Session 5 and have consequently been re-registered.

- Aviation
- Building Bridges with Israel
- Children and Young People
- Co-Operatives
- Credit Unions
- Cuba
- Diabetes
- Drug and Alcohol Misuse
- End of Life Choices
- Freedom of Religion or Belief
- Future of Football in Scotland
- Gaelic
- Human Trafficking
- Malawi
- Men's Violence Against Women and Children
- MS
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Nordic Countries
- Oil and Gas
- Pakistan
- Recreational Boating and Marine Tourism
- Rural Policy
- Scottish Gypsy/Traveller Community
- Skills
- Social Enterprise
- Sport
- Tourism
- Volunteering
- Women in Enterprise
- Women's Health

Cross-Party Groups that require further scrutiny

Change of name / purpose

4. Section 6 paragraph 40 of the Code states that "Any proposal to change the name or purpose of the Group must be drawn to the attention of the Committee. The Committee will consider the proposed change and decide if recognition should still be accorded to the Group." As the decision to accord recognition is solely for the Committee, any change to a previously registered name or purpose requires the approval of the Committee.

5. The following proposed Groups complied with the Code regarding initial meetings and complied with the Code in Session 5 but did not meet all of the requirements for re-registration. Two Groups wish to change their purpose and one Group wishes to change its name and purpose.

6. The proposed CPG on Deafness has amended its purpose from last session. In Session 5 the purpose of the Group was-

- To raise awareness amongst Members of issues affecting the Deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing community in Scotland.

7. The proposed Group's new purpose is—

- To act as a channel of communication between the Scottish Parliament, individuals with deafness / hearing loss and organisations working or supporting individuals with deafness / hearing loss.

8. Colin Beattie MSP is the Convener of the proposed Group and his office have provided the following explanation for the change—

“The reason for the change of purpose is to keep up-to-date with the current understanding of the definition of deafness / hearing loss, and support the current needs of individuals with deafness / hearing loss and organisations working or supporting individuals with deafness / hearing loss.”

9. The proposed CPG on International Development has amended its purpose from last session. In Session 5 the purpose of the Group was-

- The purpose of the group is to ensure liaison between MSPs and organisations working in Scotland on international aid and development issues. To further raise awareness in Scotland of these issues and to provide a Scottish forum for discussion, while also promoting stronger links between Scotland and international aid and development agencies. The group will also seek to promote development education in Scotland, to support Scottish organisations working in international aid and development programmes and where appropriate facilitate regular visits to Scotland by representatives of the international humanitarian agencies while engaging with minority residents in Scotland to encourage their involvement in the work of the group.

10. The proposed Group's new purpose is—

- To ensure liaison between MSPs and organisations working in Scotland on issues related to global sustainable development and humanitarian action.

11. Sarah Boyack MSP is the Convener of the proposed Group and the Group have provided the following explanation for the change—

“The re-established CPG on International Development seeks to update its purpose statement inline with best practice and modern approaches to the work undertaken in this diverse sector and the terms used to describe it.

The proposed changes to the purpose statement would see the word ‘aid’ and ‘international development’ replaced with the phrases ‘humanitarian action’ and ‘global sustainable development’.

The rationale for these minor linguistic changes is twofold.

Firstly, at a conceptual level, there is broad consensus that ‘development’ must be ‘sustainable’ and that it must incorporate the three pillars of sustainability (environmental, economic & social) in order to be an effective long term solution for human progress in any setting. This conceptual understanding is embodied through the UN Sustainable Development Goals which the Scottish Parliament endorses and promotes.

Furthermore, there is a need to use a term that properly expresses the breadth of the incredibly diverse work undertaken by a range of private, public and NGO actors in this space working towards solving global problems in an integrated and sustainable way on crosscutting issues such as poverty, inequality, climate change and human rights.

Secondly, there is a need to help shape discourse on what our sector does and why. This is specifically about using terminology and language that does not reinforce colonial attitudes to development or the idea of passive beneficiaries and victimhood. We must ensure that our words actively empower those we work with.

For this reason, it is now considered appropriate to avoiding wherever possible the term ‘international’ and replacing with the term ‘global’ to reinforce that development issues are for everyone not just one group. In a similar vein, the term ‘aid’ can reinforce power imbalances, colonialism and paternalism. The term also doesn’t really convey much meaning or aspiration for what work in this area actually is or achieves. It is also often used to describe very different things, e.g humanitarian assistance, social development spending, investment in infrastructure etc. As such in the context of this group, we prefer the term ‘humanitarian action’ to describe a specific set of actors that operate globally when there is humanitarian need.”.

12. The proposed CPG on Tibet has amended its purpose from last session. In Session 5 the purpose of the Group was-

- To facilitate the building of relations between Scottish Parliament, Tibet and its people and those interested in Tibet.

13. The proposed Group’s new purpose is—

- To raise awareness of Tibet and its culture, to promote human rights in Tibet and to advocate for a peaceful resolution to the political situation, in line with international law and Tibetan Buddhist principles.

14. Mercedes Villalba MSP is a Co-Convener of the proposed Group and she has provided the following explanation for the change—

“The change in the group's purpose is to provide a clearer focus for group members.”

15. The proposed CPG on Challenging Racial and Religious Prejudice wishes to change its name and purpose this session. In session 5 the Group was called the CPG on Tackling Islamophobia and the Group's purpose was—

- The purpose of the Group will be to bring together elected members from all political parties, agencies and individuals working on the issue of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred in order to explore the nature and extent of Islamophobia in Scotland and how it can be challenged and overcome. The group recognises that the issue of Islamophobia presents specific challenges that have received relatively little attention in the Scottish context. It will seek to monitor the issue of Islamophobia in Scotland and develop strategies for tackling it. The group's main purpose will be to inform Parliament of the work that it does in the hope of increasing awareness about racism and Islamophobia in Scotland and to ensure such matters are engaged with where necessary in policy and practice.

16. The proposed Group's new purpose will be—

- To bring together elected members from all political parties, agencies and individuals working on issues of racial and religious prejudice in order to explore the nature and extent of these issues in Scotland and how they can be challenged and overcome. The group recognises that the issue of racism and religious prejudice presents specific challenges that have received relatively little attention in the Scottish context. It will seek to monitor the issue of racial and religious hatred in Scotland and develop strategies for tackling it. The group's main purpose will be to inform Parliament of the work that it does in the hope of increasing awareness about racism and religious intolerance in Scotland and to ensure such matters are engaged with where necessary in policy and practice.

17. Anas Sarwar MSP is the Convener of the proposed Group and has provided the following explanation for the change—

- In recognition of the group's work with different faith groups in the last parliamentary session, it was agreed at the group's initial meeting that we would like to widen the scope of the CPG and broaden the group's purpose to explore the nature and extent of issues of racial and religious hatred in Scotland, and how they can be challenged and overcome, whilst encouraging greater intersectional campaigning.

18. Members are invited to consider—

- whether they wish to seek further clarifications, in writing, on any specific questions they might have in relation to the change of purpose for any of these groups; or

- if they agree to the re-registration of the proposed CPGs on Deafness, International Development, Tibet and Challenging Racial and Religious Prejudice.

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