

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

16th Meeting 2023 (Session 6), Thursday 5 October 2023

Cross-Party Groups Compliance with the Code of Conduct

Introduction

1. Section 6 of the Code of Conduct sets out the [rules on CPGs](#). CPGs provide an opportunity for MSPs to engage with external stakeholders on a particular subject and are “formed and led by MSPs”. CPGs are not formal parliamentary business.
2. The Committee has a role in according recognition to Groups and the Convener of every new Group must come to a committee meeting to discuss their application for recognition. Similarly, the Committee also has a role in removing recognition from Groups that cannot comply with the Code of Conduct. Section 6, paragraph 47 states, “Failure to comply with the Code could lead to a Group’s recognition being withdrawn or to sanctions being imposed on individual MSPs.”
3. The Committee considers the compliance of CPGs with the rules set out in the Code on the basis of an annual report prepared by the Clerks. The Committee considered an annual update on CPGs’ compliance with the Code at its meeting on 9 January 2023 and agreed to write to all CPGs in relation to their compliance with the Code.

Compliance with the Code

4. Following the Convener’s correspondence with CPGs in early 2023, there were a number of ministerial appointments that required CPGs to seek new MSP members in order to comply with the rules in the Code relating to MSP membership.
5. CPGs are required to have five MSPs from the majority of parties represented on the Parliamentary Bureau. The Code also requires one MSP to be Convener of the Group and there must be at least one other MSP who is an office bearer.
6. The Committee will consider a full report on compliance with the Code in early 2024. However, the Committee is invited to agree to write to the following three CPGs to stress the importance of continuing compliance with the rules:
 - CPG China

- CPG Japan
- CPG Future of Football in Scotland

7. The CPGs on China and Japan did not hold AGM meetings for 2021/22 and were without a Convener for a significant period after Dean Lockhart stood down as an MSP. However, Colin Smyth MSP has taken over the role of Convener of these two CPGs and has recently written to the Convener to confirm the two CPGs are now meeting the Code requirements and have held meetings on 13 September 2023. Correspondence is attached at Annexe A.

8. This CPG on the Future of Football in Scotland convened by Fulton MacGregor MSP was accorded recognition in October 2021. It has only held one quorate meeting on 28 October 2021 which was its initial meeting. A meeting scheduled for 29 June 2022 had to be cancelled due to illness and a meeting in December 2022 was inquorate.

Committee consideration

9. The Committee is invited to write to these three CPGs to highlight the importance of continuing compliance with the relevant rules in the Code of Conduct and to highlight that the Committee will next consider its annual compliance report in early 2024.

SPPA Committee Clerks October 2023

Annexe A

Letters from Colin Smyth MSP



13 September 2023

Dear Martin

AGM Cross Party Group on Japan

I am writing to update the Committee on the above Cross-Party Group.

As you aware the Convener of the Group Dean Lockhart left his post as an MSP towards the end of last year, which meant the Group did not have the required number of office bearers or members. This was shortly before the Group AGM was scheduled to take place, so the meeting had to be postponed.

In my capacity as Deputy Convener, since then I have discussed with existing members of the CPG the future of the Group and they indicated that they wished it to continue. I therefore contacted all MSPs to seek new members for the group to ensure the CPG was compliant with the membership requirements. An attempt to arrange the Group AGM in June was postponed when a further member of the CPG had to leave as a result of being appointed as a Minister.

However, I am writing to confirm that Paul Sweeney and Alexander Stewart have now joined the existing membership of the Group- myself, Liam McArthur and Craig Hoy taking the number of eligible members to five from three parties.

An AGM was held today to update the position of office bearers and I was appointed as Convener of the Group with Alexander Stewart as Deputy Convener.

There are no other changes to the information contacted in the registration form submitted from the Group. I have attached a copy of the minutes of the meeting.

It was agreed at the meeting that I would write to all non-MSP Members of the Group in

the coming days to seek views on preferred subjects for a future meeting. It is the intention to hold this meeting as soon as practicable, and certainly before the end of November.

It was also agreed that I would write to the Consul General of Japan in Edinburgh Tadashi Fujiwara to invite him to attend the next meeting, as he had expressed his support for the continuation of the Group.

If the Committee requires any further information at this stage, please do contact me. In the meantime, I am confident that there is now sufficient interest to continue the group in compliance with the CPG Code of Conduct.

Yours sincerely



Colin Smyth
**Member of the Scottish
Parliament for South Scotland
Region**



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Colin Smyth MSP
South Scotland

13 September 2023

Dear Martin

AGM Cross Party Group on China

I am writing to update the Committee on the above Cross-Party Group.

As you aware the Convener of the Group Dean Lockhart left his post as an MSP towards the end of last year, which meant the Group did not have the required number of office bearers or members. This was shortly before the Group AGM was scheduled to take place, so the meeting had to be postponed.

In my capacity as Deputy Convener, since then I have discussed with existing members of the CPG the future of the Group and they indicated that they wished it to continue. I therefore contacted all MSPs to seek new members for the group to ensure the CPG was compliant with the membership requirements. This has taken longer than I would have liked but I appreciate that the demands on MSPs time meant that a number of MSPs were interested in attending meeting but unable to commit at this stage to joining another CPG on top of their existing commitments.

However, I am writing to confirm that Paul Sweeney has now joined the existing membership of the Group- myself, Jackie Baillie, Colin Beattie and Craig Hoy taking the number of eligible members to five from three parties.

An AGM was held today to update the position of office bearers and I was appointed as Convener of the Group with Paul Sweeney as Deputy Convener.

It was agreed at the meeting that I would write to all non-MSP Members of the Group in the coming days to seek views on preferred subjects for a future meeting. It is the intention to hold this meeting as soon as practicable, and certainly before the end of November. There are no other changes to the information contacted in the registration form submitted from the Group. I have attached a copy of the minutes of the meeting.

If the Committee requires any further information at this stage, please do contact me. In the meantime, I am confident that there is now sufficient interest to continue the group in compliance with the CPG Code of Conduct.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Col Smyth', is enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.

Colin Smyth
**Member of the Scottish
Parliament for South Scotland
Region**