



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Conveners Group

## Agenda

3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, 2021 (Session 6) Wednesday 24 November 2021

The group will meet at 12.30pm in Committee Room 2

1. Minutes of the previous meeting
2. Minister for Parliamentary Business
3. Meeting with First Minister: 15 December 2021
4. Conveners Group strategic priorities

The papers for this meeting are as follows –

- |    |                                      |              |
|----|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. | Minutes of last meeting              | CG/S6/21/2/M |
| 2. | Meeting with First minister          | CG/S6/21/3/1 |
| 3. | Conveners Group strategic priorities | CG/S6/21/3/2 |

## Contact details for the clerk

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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Conveners Group

## Minutes

2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, 2021 (Session 6) Wednesday 27 October 2021

### Present:

Liam McArthur MSP, Chair of Conveners Group  
Clare Adamson MSP, Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee  
Claire Baker MSP, Economy and Fair Work Committee  
Siobhian Brown MSP, COVID-19 Recovery Committee  
Ariane Burgess MSP, Local Government, Housing & Planning Committee  
Jackson Carlaw MSP, Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee  
Finlay Carson MSP, Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee  
Joe Fitzpatrick MSP, Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee (*Virtual*)  
Kenneth Gibson MSP, Finance and Public Administration Committee  
Neil Gray MSP, Social Justice and Social Security Committee  
Richard Leonard MSP, Public Audit Committee  
Dean Lockhart MSP, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee  
Gillian Martin MSP, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee  
Stuart McMillan MSP, Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee (*Virtual*)  
Martin Whitfield MSP, Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

### Apologies:

Stephen Kerr MSP, Education, Children and Young People Committee  
Audrey Nicoll MSP, Criminal Justice Committee

### 1. Draft Minutes of 29 September:

The Group agreed the minutes of its 29 September meeting.

### 2. Conveners Group work programme:

The Group agreed its strategic priorities for the session, broken down into the following four themes—

- Cross-committee working
- Diversity, inclusion & participation
- Post-legislative scrutiny

- Supporting Members as Parliamentarians

Officials were asked to work up more detail for a future meeting.

**3. Committee debates:**

The Group consented to bids by the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee and the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee for Committee debates in the Chamber.

**4. Selection of Stage 3 amendments:**

The Group considered a paper on the process for the selection of amendments at Stage 3. Officials from the Parliament's Legislation team attended virtually to provide information and answer questions raised by the Group.

Date of Next Meeting: 24 November 2021

## Contact details for the clerk

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# **Conveners Group**

## **3rd Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Wednesday 24 November 2021**

### **Meeting with First Minister**

#### **Purpose of paper**

1. The purpose of this paper is to invite the Conveners Group to consider the arrangements for the forthcoming meeting with the First Minister.

#### **Introduction**

2. The Conveners Group has agreed to follow the practice from previous sessions to hold two annual formal evidence sessions with the First Minister.
3. The first of these meetings with the First Minister is scheduled to take place at lunchtime on Wednesday 15 December 2021.
4. These sessions usually last around 90-120 minutes and are held in public and broadcast live on SPTV. This means that the meeting will need to start at 12 noon.

#### **Approach**

5. These meetings originally focused largely on the programme for Government from the perspective of each Committee.
6. The Group in the previous session moved to a more thematic approach to the handling of these meetings. This approach allows questions to be grouped by theme, providing for a more sustained approach to questioning.
7. The Group has signed up to this approach in principle however, no decision has been taken on which themes to explore.
8. In terms of issues which are current, the Group may wish to consider focusing the session on Covid Recovery and Net-Zero. These subjects would fall well within the Group's strategic priority of cross-committee working as these are issues that impact on most, if not all, committee remits.

## Arrangements

9. Conveners may attend the meeting virtually. However, it is anticipated that all Conveners will wish to attend this meeting in person.
10. The Group will be aware that the Covid restrictions create challenges in accommodating all Conveners, including the First Minister, at a microphone in the room. This will require use of all seats in the room, including those in the public gallery area.
11. The best approach would be to seat the First Minister at the top end of the table where the Deputy Presiding Officer would normally sit. The Deputy Presiding Officer would then sit at the other end of the table with his side on to the Members seated in the public gallery area.
12. This arrangement would ensure that the First Minister does not have her back to any Conveners and would give the Deputy Presiding Officer a relatively full line of sight of all Conveners.

## Recommendations

- 13. The Conveners Group is invited to agree the thematic approach to and note the arrangements for the forthcoming meeting with the First Minister.**

**Clerk to the Conveners Group  
November 2021**

# **Conveners Group**

## **3rd Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Wednesday 24 November 2021**

### **Strategic Priorities**

#### **Purpose of paper**

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update for Conveners on the Group's strategic priorities for this session.

#### **Introduction**

2. Conveners will recall at the previous meeting that the Group agreed its strategic priorities under 4 themes. These are—

- i. Cross-committee working
- ii. Diversity, Inclusion & Participation
- iii. Post-legislative scrutiny
- iv. Supporting Members as Parliamentarians

3. It is intended that these will provide a strategic role for the Group in promoting effective scrutiny by committees. This in turn will support an enhanced scrutiny role for the Parliament.

4. The Annex details the Group's delivery plan which sets out agreed actions under each theme and progress made on achieving these.

5. It is a working document which will be regularly updated and progress under each theme will be provided to the Group. A work programme will also be developed around this.

#### **Strategic priorities update**

6. This section provides an update on progress which has been made in some of the agreed areas under the four themes.

7. More detail will be provided on the actions under each theme at future meetings. The delivery plan also sets out the ongoing work in each of these areas and provisional timescales involved.

## Theme 1: Cross-committee working

8. The Group agreed cross-committee working as a priority this session. This is recorded in the minutes of the previous meeting.
9. To maximise opportunities for cross-committee working, Conveners will have the opportunity to raise awareness of potential areas of cross-committee working at each meeting.
10. This will be supplemented by the ongoing work between officials from across the various offices who support the work of individual committees. Officials will continue to keep these lines of communication open.
11. Structures have also been put in place at an official level at the start of Session 6 to support this type of integrated scrutiny. This includes the creation of “clusters” of committees which comprise of clerking teams supporting 3 or 4 committees, headed up by a principal clerk who provides a strategic overview. This structure is intended to improve communication across teams.
12. In addition to the ongoing communication between the clerking teams, meetings of all the clerks to committees take place on a regular basis which allow for the sharing of information on current and future scrutiny issues. This includes the potential for cross-committee working. These in turn leads to subgroups of officials to take forward this work. The principal clerks also meet on a regular basis.
13. The forthcoming National Care Service Bill is an early example of cross-committee working. This is expected to be a complex piece of legislation engaging the remits of a number of committees.
14. The Group has agreed to pilot this cross-committee piece of work. Officials from across the various teams involved met recently and work has begun on working up possible approaches to scrutiny of the legislation by the committees expected to have an interest in this.
15. Possible approaches which are being considered include joint meetings, and/or secondary committees, and use of reporters.
16. Joint engagement activity could also be considered as a way to ensure Members are brought up to speed on the key issues arising from the legislation. Engagement activity will be centrally coordinated to remove duplication. Other approaches being considered could include commissioned research and academic engagement coordinated across committees.
17. We are at a very early stage in the process. The Group will be provided with regular updates on progress.

## Theme 2: Diversity, Inclusion & Participation

18. Officials have met with representatives from the House of Commons and House of Lords, Senedd (Welsh Parliament) and Northern Ireland Assembly to consider their approaches to witness diversity.



19. This has provided the opportunity to share what stage each institution has reached on witness diversity and to learn from each other.
20. Further consideration will be given to issues raised at this meeting, including how data is gathered and what information diversity surveys should focus on. Also, how to engage with harder to reach communities and groups
21. A paper will be brought to the Group for consideration at a future meeting.
22. It is also proposed to invite the Participation and Communities Team (PACT) to provide a briefing to the Group on current developments and consider how the Group can support other initiatives in this area. It is hoped to do this in early 2022.

### **Theme 3: Post-legislative scrutiny**

23. A working group of officials has been set up to examine possible approaches to encourage and facilitate more post-legislative scrutiny.
24. An options paper setting out proposed principles will be brought to the Group in early 2022 for consideration. This will be followed by a further paper with worked up proposals informed by this discussion to be considered at a future meeting.

### **Theme 4: Supporting Members as parliamentarians**

25. Conveners have a key role in identifying the development needs of Conveners and Committee members.
26. The Group therefore has the opportunity to shape the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme throughout the session.
27. Conveners are invited to flag up with the Group on an ongoing basis any training or development requirements.
28. An option available to committees is training in questioning techniques for committee members. Clerking teams have been asked to gauge interest amongst Conveners and Members on whether this would be a helpful exercise. Conveners' views on this or any other training or development needs would be welcome.

### **Conclusion**

29. A lot of this work is at a very early stage. The Group will be updated on the actions under each theme in more detail on a regular basis.
30. Conveners can also examine actions that are being taken on these issues through the delivery plan

### **Recommendations**

31. **The Conveners Group is invited to note the contents of this paper and the delivery plan set out in the Annex.**

**Clerk to the Conveners Group, November 2021**

## ANNEX

## CONVENERS GROUP SESSION 6 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: DELIVERY PLAN

Strategic priority	Decision	Agreed action	Further detail	Timescale/ completion
<b>Cross-committee working</b>	To prioritise facilitation of cross-committee working by making a commitment to this as a strategic priority in Session 6, and taking steps to facilitate this work	Recorded in minute of the meeting of 27 October 2021		Minute due to be published once approved by Group
	To maximise opportunities for cross-committee working by using the Group as a forum for raising awareness of potential cross-cutting items of business. This in turn will encourage joint working, cooperation and coordination in order to ensure effective, holistic scrutiny of public policy	Conveners to be provided with the opportunity to raise awareness of potential cross-cutting inquiries or items of business at each meeting	Standing item on agenda	Ongoing
		Conveners to be provided with details of mechanisms and networks for sharing information amongst officials	This detail is set out in paper on agenda for meeting in November 2021	November meeting

Strategic priority	Decision	Agreed action	Further detail	Timescale/ completion
	To use the Group as a forum to coordinate scrutiny in complex policy areas and scrutiny of items of business which engage the remit of a number of committees	The Group to identify forthcoming bills which are notably cross-cutting in nature throughout the session	<p>Agreed as a pilot cross-committee scrutiny of the forthcoming National Care Service bill</p> <p>Officials to work together to identify other potential forthcoming business</p>	<p>Bill due to be introduced before summer recess</p> <p>Work being taken forward by officials.</p> <p>Updates to be provided to the Group on an ongoing basis</p>
	To consider ways in which to facilitate and enhance scrutiny of session-wide issues which impact on most or all committees	<p><u>Net zero</u></p> <p>To encourage and facilitate cooperative working on net zero to enable committees to carry out scrutiny in their policy areas through the lens of net zero; and to consider ways in which committees can bring about change in policy areas</p>	<p>Work being taken forward at official level to facilitate this work.</p> <p>The Group will be invited to consider options at a future meeting</p>	Options paper: early 2022
		<p><u>Post-EU issues</u></p> <p>The Group to provide a leadership role to enable committees to carry out effective scrutiny of post-EU issues</p>	Work on the scrutiny role of the Parliament in this area is being taken forward at official level.	Update and options paper: early 2022

Strategic priority	Decision	Agreed action	Further detail	Timescale/ completion
			CEEAC conducting scrutiny of policy statement on alignment with EU law	November/December 2021
		<u>Interparliamentary working</u> Develop a role for Conveners Group in relation to interparliamentary working	Inter-parliamentary Forum (comprising membership from Parliaments and Assemblies across UK) which deals with post-EU issues is in process of being re-established. Representation is a matter for each Parliament or Assembly. Scottish Parliament representation is led by CEEAC committee	First meeting of forum planned to take place before end of the year  Further updates to be provided to CG in early 2022

Strategic priority	Decision	Agreed action	Further detail	Timescale/ completion
			Consideration to be given to other areas which would benefit from inter-parliamentary working and whether there is a role for the Group in these areas	Options paper to be brought to future meeting
<b>Diversity, inclusion and participation</b>	To consider ways in which committees can enhance the quality of scrutiny by hearing from a wider range of voices when carrying out inquiry work	Consider ways in which participation work can be used to hear from hard to reach communities	The Participation and Communities Team (PACT) to provide a briefing to the Group on current developments and consider how the Group can support other initiatives in this area	Early 2022 (provisionally January meeting)
		Develop role for the Group in examining ways in which to improve the diversity of witnesses appearing before committees	The Group to receive briefing on ongoing work on developing witness diversity as a follow up to the first phase of this exercise in the previous session	Early 2022

Strategic priority	Decision	Agreed action	Further detail	Timescale/ completion
<b>Post-legislative scrutiny</b>	To prioritise post-legislative scrutiny in session 6	Consider ways in which to encourage and facilitate increased post-legislative scrutiny by committees	<p>An options paper setting out proposed principles to be brought to the Group for consideration</p> <p>A further paper with worked up proposal to be brought to Group at a future meeting following this discussion</p>	<p>Initial paper to be considered at meeting in early 2022 (provisionally January)</p> <p>Note planned post-legislative scrutiny work being undertaken by Finance and Public Administration and the Citizens Participation and Public Petitions Committees</p>
<b>Supporting Members as parliamentarians</b>	To encourage and facilitate continuous professional development (CPD) for Members	Consider what CPD would be valuable for committee members in carrying out their scrutiny function	Conveners to be encouraged to bring forward proposals for possible areas of training or development	Ongoing