

**Chief Executive's Report to the SPCB  
December 2019**

## **Introduction**

This report looks at recent activities across the organisation throughout November and December.

Items include:

- The legislative programme continues to be busy with a significant number of bills in the Parliamentary process. This includes Government, Member, and committee bills as well as one Private Bill.
- The introduction of the Budget (Scotland) Bill has been delayed due to a delay in the UK Budget as a consequence of the UK general election. Clerks in the Legislation Team and the Finance and Constitution Committee are considering the implications of this.
- The Parliament held its first ever Young People's Festival of Politics at the end of November. The event was attended by over 900 people, who attended a selection of talks, workshops and panel discussions as well as a mix of entertainment in the Garden Lobby.
- The Presiding Officer will host the Parliament's annual Carol Service in the Garden Lobby on Wednesday 18 December. This annual event brings together local residents, businesses, and school children with members and staff to celebrate Christmas with traditional carol singing, and performances from local choirs and a silver band.

**David McGill**

Clerk/Chief Executive

## OVERVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES

### Parliamentary Business

#### Legislative Programme

The legislative programme continues to be busy, with a significant number of bills in the parliamentary process.

In order to forward plan for Stage 3 proceedings on bills more effectively and give earlier notice of late sittings where necessary, the Bureau is now provided with an assessment of the passage of the bills at each end of Stage 2 proceedings in committee. This includes details such as the number of -

- amendments lodged;
- Members who lodged amendments;
- groups;
- days taken at Stage 2; and
- commitments made by the Scottish Government and other Members to bring issues back at Stage 3.

#### Budget Bill

Various parliamentary teams are working, in conjunction with Scottish Government colleagues, on options for scrutiny of the Budget (Scotland) Bill for financial year 2020-21.

The Bill would normally have been expected to be introduced in late December, following the UK autumn budget. Due to the UK Parliament election however, the UK Budget has not taken place and it is not yet known when it will do so. This is likely to mean that the time available for parliamentary scrutiny of the Scottish budget will be curtailed.

Clerks in the Legislation Team are considering the implications of this with the Finance and Constitution Committee clerks. As soon as firmer details are known, options will be prepared for consideration by the Committee and the Bureau.

#### Non-Government Bills

Two NGBU-drafted Members' Bills are currently being considered by the Parliament at Stage 1: the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill and the Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Bill. Oral evidence-taking on these Bills will begin early in 2020. Seven other Members' Bills are being instructed or are in draft for introduction between January and May. In addition to these, a number of Members have completed the proposal process and have gained the right to introduce Bills and three Committee Bills are at early stages of preparation. There is one Private Bill in progress (the Solicitors in the Supreme Courts of Scotland (Amendment) Bill). The Private Bill Committee has held its first meeting and has agreed a work programme.

## **Lobbying Register**

The Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016 (section 50) states that the Parliament must make arrangements for one of its committees to report on the operation of the Act having reviewed the first two years of its operation.

On a motion of the Bureau, the Parliament has now agreed that the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee should undertake this work. The Act allows the committee up to two years to publish its report.

## **Code of Conduct for MSPs**

On 3 December, the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee published its report on proposed changes to the Code of Conduct to implement the recommendations of Joint Working Group on sexual harassment and sexist behaviour. If agreed by the Parliament, these changes to the code, together with new guidance and direction, will be in place for the beginning of the new year.

## **Parliamentary Engagement**

### **International Relations**

In mid-November the Presiding Officer met with the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade on his first official visit to the Scottish Parliament. As part of this visit, the Tánaiste also met with Members to discuss the strengthening of relations between Ireland and Scotland.

The Presiding Officer also welcomed the Consul General of India on his first official visit to the Scottish Parliament.

In late November, parliamentary officials hosted the Human Resources & Social Security Bureau of the Shenzhen Municipality in China to discuss social work and childcare.

Also, in late November, Deputy Presiding Officer Linda Fabiani welcomed the Consul General of Germany to the Parliament.

On 6 December the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Scotland Branch hosted the CPA British Isles and Mediterranean Region Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee. Delegates discussed zero tolerance on sexual harassment and diversity amongst female electoral candidates.

In mid-December parliamentary officials will welcome officials from the Mongolian Ministry of Finance to discuss macro-economic forecasting and policy analysis, as well as the Scotland's Futures Forum's Scotland 2030 Programme.

## **Public Engagement**

### **Committee Engagement Unit**

It has been a busy period for the Committee Engagement Unit (CEU). The Health & Sport Committee invited participants from its primary care public panels to take part in a public committee meeting on 19 November to round off its inquiry into the future of primary care in Scotland. This was the first time a committee had used randomly selected members of the public to help shape an inquiry. Following the session, participants were asked how they had found the experience. Comments included:

“It has been a wonderful experience ... it has been informative and educative, and the collaborative approach that has been taken has been very good for solving problems.”

And:

“I have found the process to be really engaging and empowering, because being involved in it has made it feel as if the Scottish Parliament is a Parliament for me.”

Independent evaluation found a 26% increase in participants’ perception that “politicians care about what people like me think”.

The CEU is also trialling several online public engagement platforms. As part of these trials, a digital consultation was recently conducted using “Citizen Space” – one of several new digital engagement tools that we are piloting – for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee as part of its scrutiny of the Animals and Wildlife (Scotland) Bill. Forty-seven responses were received and feedback from users about the ease of use of the system was positive. Citizen Space is also being used for the Education and Skills Committee’s inquiry into the effectiveness of teacher training.

Another of the tools being trialled, “Your Priorities”, is being used to gather views for the Local Government and Communities Committee’s work on community wellbeing. There has been significant interest in this inquiry and 162 users have engaged via the platform so far. The CEU plan to also use this tool for engagement around the Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill which will be scrutinised by the Equalities and Human Rights Committee in the New Year.

The Health and Sport Committee has used the online engagement tool “Dialogue” as part of its inquiry into NHS Grampian. As a result of this the Committee gained 35 “ideas” and 49 comments from the public.

As part of the pilot of the above mentioned engagement tools, an evaluation template has been developed to ensure that use of each tool is being properly scrutinised. This will inform how the CEU develop its approach to the tools and digital consultation more generally.

## **BSL at the Scottish Parliament**

The Parliament's BSL Development Officer is working with Broadcasting Office to produce a regular BSL version of parliamentary news for our BSL Facebook page, which is intended to be published fortnightly. Work has begun on the design of an interactive BSL map of the Parliament that BSL users visiting the building can download or access on hand held devices during their visit.

## **Young People's Festival of Politics**

For the first time in its history, the parliament hosted a Young People's Festival of Politics on Saturday 30 November to mark St Andrew's Day, and as a key event in the 20th anniversary programme.

The Young People's FoP comprised a selection of talks, workshops and panel discussions, covering topical issues such as climate change, political activism and mental health. Like the main Festival which took place in October, there was also a mix of entertainment in the Garden Lobby for festival goers to enjoy.

It is estimated that over 900 people attended the event and feedback has been very positive. We are now evaluating the event in more detail to see if we attracted the intended audience and to consider if we should run more events like this in the future.

## **SPICe**

SPICe is currently preparing a variety of materials on Brexit for publication after the UK general election, including:

- a briefing and blog article on the UK as a "third country" (a definition used by the EU to define a country that is not part of the EU) and associated access to funding;
- a common frameworks hub; and
- material reacting to the potential return of the Withdrawal Agreement Bill (which might be 23 Dec).

SPICe will also publish a series of infographics and blog articles on the UK general election result in Scotland.

The latest SPICe/Futures Forum seminar series on the climate and ecological crisis began on 4 December with a seminar on the State of Nature Scotland 2019 report. Further seminars will follow in 2020.

## **Events and Exhibitions**

The Presiding Officer and Deputy First Minister co-hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> Holyrood Magazine Scottish Public Service Awards on Wednesday 4 December in the Garden Lobby which celebrated excellence within Scotland's public services. The Parliament won two awards: Championing Gender Equality for the work carried out by the Parliament's Women's Network and Human Resources Office on the Period and Menopause policy; and the Rising Star Award which was awarded to Mhairi Gavin, an Assistant Clerk in the Chamber Office.

As part of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary programme of events, the 2019 National Secondary Schools' Gaelic Debate Final was held in the Parliament on Thursday 5 December, chaired by the Presiding Officer. This event has been held annually at Parliament since 1999, and for the first time took place on the floor of Debating Chamber to mark both the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the debating competition and of the Parliament itself. Finalists were awarded specially engraved quaichs by the Presiding Officer to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the competition.

On Friday 6 December the Presiding Officer chaired "Alba 2030: A' Ghàidhlig - Buaidh is Piseach" ('The Future for Gaelic'). This event, organised by Scotland's Futures Forum, featured contributions from Wilson McLeod, Professor of Gaelic at the University of Edinburgh, singer Mary Ann Kennedy, and Professor of Modern Irish at the National University of Ireland Galway, Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin. This half-day event also included workshops where attendees discussed the role of Gaelic in the future.

On Wednesday 18 December the Presiding Officer will host the Parliament's annual Carol Service in the Garden Lobby, followed by an informal reception in the Main Hall. This event will bring together local residents, schoolchildren, business people, community groups, Members and staff to celebrate Christmas with a traditional Carol Service. The evening will include musical contributions from the Royal Mile Primary School, Coroedina Choir, Edinburgh Signing Choir and the Newtongrange Silver Band.

The Presiding Officer will host the annual Consular Corps' Burns Supper on Wednesday 22 January 2020.

### **Visitor Services**

The Parliament Shop offered special Christmas shopping discount days to all visitors on St Andrew's Day, and on Wednesday 4 and 11 December with business being brisk. A further discount day will be held on Wednesday 18 December to coincide with the Carol Service hosted by the Presiding Officer.

The Parliament building will close to the public from Sunday 22 December 2019 until Monday 6 January 2020.