



## Agenda

### 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting

**Friday 16 December 2016**

The Commission will meet at 9.30 am in the Robert Burns Room (CR1) at the Scottish Parliament.

1. The Commission will discuss improving diversity and inclusion in the Scottish Parliament with—

Professor Sarah Childs, University of Bristol;  
Kate Nevens, Policy and Parliamentary Officer, Engender;  
Iain Smith, Policy and Engagement Team Manager, Inclusion Scotland; and  
Rebecca Marek, Policy and Parliamentary Officer, Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights.

**Paper CPR/5/1 – written views of discussion participants**  
**Paper CPR/5/2 (private paper) – note by the Secretariat**

2. The Commission will discuss the Scottish Parliament in comparison with other legislatures with—

Professor Michael Keating, Professor of Politics, University of Aberdeen and  
Director, ESRC Centre on Constitutional Change;  
Professor Laura McAllister, Wales Governance Centre, University of Cardiff  
(by video conference); and  
John Sturrock QC, Chief Executive and Senior Mediator, Core Solutions  
Group.

**Paper CPR/5/3 – written views of discussion participants**  
**Paper CPR/5/4 (private paper) – note by the Secretariat**

3. The Commission will review its engagement programme (in private).

**Paper CPR/5/5 (private paper) – engagement programme**  
**Paper CPR/5/6 (private paper) – proposed format for future external  
meeting**

4. The Commission will review its approach to research (in private).

**Paper CPR/5/7 (private paper) – research**

Commission Secretariat  
Room CG.07  
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**Commission on Parliamentary Reform**

**5<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Friday 16 December 2016**

**Diversity and inclusion in the Scottish Parliament**

1. At its meeting on 7 November, the Commission agreed to take evidence on issues around diversity and inclusion in the Scottish Parliament.
2. The following participants have agreed to meet with the Commission—

**Professor Sarah Childs**, University of Bristol;  
Kate Nevens, Policy and Parliamentary Officer, **Engender**;  
Iain Smith, Policy and Engagement Team Manager, **Inclusion Scotland**; and  
Rebecca Marek, Policy and Parliamentary Officer, **Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights**.

3. Following a 12 month secondment to the House of Commons, Professor Childs published her report, [\*The Good Parliament\*](#) (103MB pdf), which set out 43 recommendations to make the House more representative and inclusive. The Executive Summary (pages 1-6) provides an overview of the report.
4. Professor Childs and the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights have provided background papers for Commission members' information and these are set out in the annexes to this paper. Background information about Engender and Inclusion Scotland has also been included.

## PROFESSOR SARAH CHILDS - SUBMISSION

*The Good Parliament* was published in June 2016. It is a blueprint for achieving a 'truly representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective' Parliament ([www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)). The Report is a response to existing academic research and in-House reports that had already documented many of the diversity insensitivities that characterise the Commons, as shown in the Table below.

### 'Red, Amber, Green' Analysis of the Commons: Representation and Inclusion

Dimension	Measure	Red	Amber	Green
Equality of Participation	Diversity of MPs	X		
	Women's House leadership positions	X		
	Women's participation (internal structures; committees)		X	
Infrastructure	Standing Orders		X	
	Calendar & sitting hours	X		
	Equalities & diversity body (policy)			X
	Equalities & diversity body (institutional)	x		
	Parliamentary buildings & spaces		X	
	Childcare & child-friendly provisions		X	
	Maternity & parental leave	X		
Culture	House commitment & action plan	X		
	Chamber culture (PMQs & 'set pieces')	X		

*The Good Parliament* makes 43 recommendations to a range of individuals and institutions within, and closely related to, the House of Commons. They address three dimensions:

1. *Equality and Participation within the House*. This dimension asks the question of how a diverse group of MPs might be selected for, and elected to, Parliament and how, once present, they are enabled to become effective Members. It addresses in particular the composition of the House and MPs' participation across the House leadership, and in its various committees.
2. *Parliamentary Infrastructure*. This dimension examines how Parliament facilitates the work of Members and whether this privileges a particular type of MP. It covers everything from the buildings and furniture to the official rules and working practices.
3. *Commons Culture*. This dimension acknowledges that the official, written-down rules never tell the whole story about how institutions function on the ground.

The individual recommendations are listed on pages 3-5 of *The Good Parliament*. Together these will transform who sits in the House, have the potential to significantly enhance Member effectiveness individually and collectively, improve the quality of parliamentary outcomes, and should ultimately raise the public's regard for the House.

The Commons to-date has, however, lacked sufficient collective will to act on issues of representation and inclusion. *The Good Parliament* addressed this by: exploiting the experience and expertise of the political and institutional sides of the House (via

a MPs Panel and an Advisory Group of officials); designing technical rather than fantastical recommendations; including a range of soft and hard recommendations; and linking each recommendation to a particular actor/institution that would be responsible for its implementation.

Most importantly, the Commons' institutional deficiency was directly redressed. Mr Speaker established *The Commons Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion* to lead on this agenda. Mr Speaker chairs the Group, comprised of MPs, male and female, from across the House. The Group has met once (Nov. 2016) and it will meet again in the New Year. The Report recommended that it draw up a 'programme of action' for the duration of this Parliament.

## **ENGENDER – BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Engender is Scotland’s feminist membership organisation. It has a vision for “a Scotland in which women and men have equal opportunities in life, equal access to resources and power, and are equally safe and secure from harm”.

Its core equalities activities are funded by the Scottish Government.

Engender works in three key ways to achieve women’s equality with men.

- Making women’s inequality visible;
- Influencing and enabling; and
- Bring women together to make change happen.

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## **INCLUSION SCOTLAND – BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

[Inclusion Scotland](#) is a consortium of organisations of disabled people and disabled individuals which seeks “to reverse the current social exclusion experienced by disabled people through civil dialogue, partnerships, capacity building, education, persuasion, training and advocacy”.

## COALITION ON RACIAL EQUALITY AND RIGHTS - SUBMISSION

The [Coalition on Racial Equality and Rights](#) (CRER) is a Scottish strategic anti-racism charity which focuses on helping to eliminate racial discrimination and harassment and promote racial justice. Our key mission is to: 1) protect, enhance, and promote the rights of minority ethnic communities across all areas of life in Scotland and 2) empower minority ethnic communities to strengthen their social, economic, and political capital.

We welcome the opportunity to give evidence to the Commission on Parliamentary Reform on the issue of diversity and inclusion within the Scottish Parliament. While some of our considerations raised may be beyond the current scope of the Commission, we believe it is important to contemplate a variety of proposals and initiatives to increase the diversity and scrutiny powers of the Scottish Parliament.

### Issues<sup>1</sup>

#### *Under-representation*

Firstly, CRER recognises the significant under-representation of Black / minority ethnic (BME) individuals within the Scottish Parliament. While BME groups account for 4% of Scotland's population, only 1.6% of MSPs have a BME background, unchanged since the 2011 election. The first BME MSP was elected in 2007.

This under-representation is not limited to elected office. In March 2016, 1.2% of parliamentary staff listed their ethnicity as "other than white" (with 135 nil responses). There were no staff members from a BME background at grades 6 and above. There were also no internal BME applications for posts. The percentage of applications from BME people was 10%, with 8% of BME applications moving to interview stage, and 11% passing the interview. However, no BME applicants were appointed in the 2015-2016 reporting year.

These figures do not include MSP staff, which we believe from anecdotal evidence to be very low. This is due to a lack of openness in recruiting, with many posts being made within parties themselves. As such, if party membership is not diverse, parliamentary staff will not be diverse.

#### *Interest*

This has a knock-on effect throughout the Scottish Parliament. There has never been a BME MSP on the Equal Opportunities Committee (now the Equalities and Human Rights Committee) and race is a subject rarely addressed during parliamentary debates, questions, and motions. Indeed, a majority of parliamentary questions addressing race in 2016 were the direct result of CRER intervention. In 2013, it was reported that only 2.3% of events hosted by external groups were coordinated by organisations/groups with a focus on race.

Without BME voices and voices articulating racial equality issues in elected office, the work of keeping race on the agenda falls to third sector organisations and

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<sup>1</sup> Citations are available upon request.

external pressure. While the parliament should be responsive to this pressure, it is often not enough.

### *Expertise*

While having a BME background does not necessarily make one an expert on racial equality issues, it does provide a unique perspective which is all too often not expressed in the Scottish Parliament. In our work, CRER finds that there is often a lack of expertise in race equality issues amongst some elected officials. While MSPs cannot be expected to be proficient on all issues and inequalities, we believe equalities training could improve understanding and awareness, and, therefore, improve policy and scrutiny.

In summation, under-representation, low levels of interest, and a general lack of equalities expertise persist across the Scottish Parliament, which, we believe, severely limits the parliament's ability to be inclusive and respond appropriately to issues affecting under-represented communities. Without a concerted effort, this will not change and BME voices and issues relating to racial equality will continue to be excluded from the Scottish Parliament.

### **Opportunities**

CRER acknowledges that efforts to see the Scottish Parliament fully reflective – both in participation and in issues discussed - of the people of Scotland will be a long-term effort. Simply raising awareness of opportunities to participate and engage will not be enough; the structures, practices, and procedures of the parliament must undergo purposeful change backed by institutional will until such a time that race equality in the Scottish Parliament is a natural occurrence. Furthermore, commitment from political parties to increase their diversity is needed – if there are few minority ethnic individuals in the pipeline, few will go on to being active in the Scottish Parliament.

To this aim, the Commission must take a wider scope, examining all aspects of the Scottish Parliament from events, to parliamentary questions, to committees, to debates, to scrutiny of legislation, to parliamentary and MSP staff. This Commission must focus on structural issues that limit engagement in the parliament rather than issues of national dress, language, or art, which, while perhaps relevant and important, can sometimes detract from wider institutional problems.

As the parliament is not representative of the people of Scotland in terms of ethnicity, the emphasis should be widening diverse participation with a focus on obtaining expertise on equalities issues.

Regarding “The Good Parliament,” we suggest that, while some of the issues raised may not neatly apply to Holyrood, others could be seen as priorities for discussion for this Commission, including:

- The Speaker's Office [Presiding Officer's Office] to **monitor and report on the parliamentary activities** of MPs by major characteristics (2)
- Targets for a **representative parliamentary press gallery and distribution of lobby passes** (4)

- Engagement in parliamentary and other activities (including by political parties themselves) to enhance the **supply of and demand for diverse parliamentary candidates** (7) (43)
- A requirement of the House Service [SPBC] to provide **comprehensive and systematic diversity data in respect of committee witnesses** and establish annual rolling targets (28)
- Introduction of permissive legislation allowing for **party quotas for under-represented groups** (9)<sup>2</sup>
- Commencement of **Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010** (22) (24)<sup>3</sup>

In addition to these, CRER also offers the Commission the following areas for consideration:

- **Conducting a bespoke parliament-wide quantitative and qualitative equality audit to identify issues**
- **Establishing and resourcing an equivalent to the Commons Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion** to offer political direction and leadership to the Scottish Parliament
- **Monitoring and publication of MSP staff appointments, parliamentary party staff, and backroom staff** by protected characteristics to examine levels of under-representation
- **Monitoring responses to legislative consultations** for equality and diversity information
- **Allowing expert non-voting, non-MSP members on Committees** to address any lack of diversity or sector expertise
- **Designating MSP Equalities Reporters**, or even specific race equality reporters, in the manner of European Union Reporters to provide equalities perspective in all Committees
- **Placing independent expert consultants on Committees** to provide equality and diversity perspective
- **Considering changes to improve scrutiny by Committees**, including in-depth inquiry of witnesses, allowing witnesses to question each other, and clarification on the scope of Committee evidence sessions
- **Considering changes to the structure of debates** to identify whether scrutiny of legislation and policy could become more robust and responsive to concerns
- **Increasing the role of SPICe**, requiring the production and publication of reports on all issues being scrutinised by committees and chamber debates
- **Requiring Equality Impact Assessments** to be conducted early in the legislative process to allow Committees to consider relevant issues
- **Improving scrutiny measures for parliamentary questions**, including allowing external organisations/groups to lodge questions themselves, public calls for questions, and holding Ministers to account when questions are not fully answered
- **Introducing robust equalities training for MSPs** to increase awareness and understanding of equalities issues

<sup>2</sup> While the power to address this issue lies with Westminster, we believe it still merits discussion by the Commission.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

- **Working with political parties to increase their diversity** through measures such as auditing and monitoring the diversity of party members at all levels, setting targets where there is under-representation, and addressing barriers to participation in party activities
- **Supporting a BME political mentoring scheme** which involves both political parties and elected officials to further engage politically active minority ethnic individuals in the political arena

Further information received on 13 January 2017 from Rebecca Marek

### **Equal Opportunities Committee (2011-2016) – Audit of Agenda Items**

#### **Pertaining to Protected Characteristics**

*(Excluding agenda items related to the budget, work programme, Equality Act 2010, EHRC, and subordinate legislation)*

#### Total

Age – 32

Disability – 5

Gender identity – 2

Marriage and civil partnership – 0

Pregnancy and maternity – 0

Race – 42 (Gypsy/Traveller – 29; Other Race – 13)

Religion – 4

Sex – 35

Sexual Orientation – 13

*Topics – Access to transportation, age and social isolation, fathers and parenting, Gypsy/Travellers and care, female genital mutilation, where Gypsy/Travellers live, inquiry into the lives of Gypsy/Travellers, preventing homelessness in young people, human trafficking, Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill, public petitions, race/ethnicity and employment, women and work*

#### **Audit of Race/Ethnicity Issues in Parliamentary Questions in 2016**

*(Topics searched were race, racism, racial, ethnic, ethnicity, and BME)*

CRER prompted questions – 17

Non-CRER prompted questions – 14

**Commission on Parliamentary Reform**

**5<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Friday 16 December 2016**

**Comparisons with other UK and European regional legislatures**

1. At its meeting on 7 November, the Commission agreed to take evidence comparing the Scottish Parliament with other UK and European regional legislatures.
2. The following participants have agreed to meet with the Commission—  
  

**Professor Michael Keating**, Professor of Politics, University of Aberdeen and Director, ESRC Centre on Constitutional Change; and  
**Professor Laura McAllister**, Wales Governance Centre, University of Cardiff.
3. The Commission also agreed it wished to take evidence from **John Sturrock QC**, Chief Executive and Senior Mediator, Core Solutions Group.
4. Participants have provided background papers for Commission members' information and these are set out in the annexes to this paper.

## Professor Michael Keating - submission

### Devolved Parliaments in Europe

1. Recent decades have seen a growth of 'regional' or 'meso-level' governments, between the central and local levels, in Europe.
2. Usually these are organized on the parliamentary-executive model in which a directly-elected assembly produces a government answerable to it.
3. Assemblies have the classic functions of legislation; choosing the government; scrutiny and accountability; and finance.
4. One consequence of this 'parliamentary' model is, paradoxically, dominance by the executive, since it will normally have a majority in the assembly. This is in contrast to the presidential or 'separation of powers' model found in the United States.
5. This accentuated by a certain 'presidentialization' of leadership, where a party leader heads the list of candidates and is then automatically the candidate for first minister (to use the Scottish term). In Italy, this is further encouraged by a provision for semi-direct election of the first minister, who is then guaranteed a majority in the assembly.
6. Many European countries, moreover, lack the parliamentary tradition of Westminster, which was influential in the design of Scottish devolution.
7. When setting up new devolved governments, attention has usually been focused more on the need for effective and decisive government than scrutiny and control. This has led to a focus on executive government and away from older committee-based systems (this happened in Wales as well).
8. Executive dominance is reinforced by electoral systems. These are usually proportional but based on party lists, reinforcing the power of party leaders. Alternatively, they are designed to produce majority governments, for reasons of effectiveness. It is this, rather than weak parliamentary control, that has typically been seen as the problem.
9. List systems also weaken the connection between elected members and constituencies, although some politicians do have local power bases.
10. Devolved legislatures are usually dominated by political parties, which may be state-wide, imposing party discipline in the same way as happens at the central level.
11. Turnout in devolved elections tends to be lower than in state-wide elections. Devolved elections are sometimes treated as 'second-order', being used to pronounce a verdict on the central government rather than deal with local issues. This is less the case where there is a distinct party system or a national question, as in Scotland.
12. Much policy-making in devolved systems is conducted through intergovernmental relations (IGR), that is by negotiations among the levels. This tends to exclude assemblies and is difficult to hold to account.
13. In some countries (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Belgium) there is regular movement of elected politicians between central and devolved levels. On the one hand, this may weaken the devolved level where it is seen as merely a stepping-stone to higher office. On the other hand, it may encourage heavyweight politicians to come back to their home regions, including at times

when they in the opposition state-wide. Scotland has not seen this movement back and forth after the first elections, only a steady drift of politicians to Westminster.

14. Most countries have seen the growth of a 'political class' of professional politicians who remain for long periods of time (whether at one level or moving between the two). This has caused public disenchantment and led to the devolved level being regarded in the same way as the central one. Professionalization of the political class is also a feature of the Scottish system.
15. No sub-state assembly in Europe has a second chamber. The Bavarian Senate, which represented social and economic interests, was abolished some years ago.
16. The devolved level may wholly (Germany Austria and Belgium) or partly (France, Spain) elect the second chamber of the central legislature. (Spain, Belgium, France); a similar proposal featured in the failed Italian constitutional reform referendum of 2016. In the case of Germany, however, it is the Land governments (not parliaments) that send the members to the Bundesrat.
17. There are numerous efforts at sub-state level to reach out to civil society and social and economic groups. There are often social and economic councils and social partnership initiatives. These, however, tend to be organized by governments not assemblies. Indeed members of elected assemblies often look with suspicion at this kind of arrangement, seeing it as a rival and insisting that only they have the democratic mandate.
18. Devolved legislatures have not been very effective in scrutiny or dealing with financial and budgetary matters. They have not developed strong committees able to accumulate knowledge and expertise over time.
19. The devolved level has not been a propitious one for parliamentarism.

**John Sturrock QC - submission*****Reflecting on whether the right 'checks and balances' are in place to ensure effective parliamentary business******Towards a World Class Parliament?***

*"Let me say now that if Members from either side want to shout out, they should not bother to stand, because they will not be called. I say that to Members on both sides—stop it. It is juvenile, low grade and hugely deprecated by the public, whose support we should be seeking and whom we should try to impress, not to repel."*

**John Bercow MP, Speaker of the House of Commons, during the Autumn Statement, 23 November 2016**

**Symptoms and Diagnosis?**

Contemporary politics is perceived by many to be polarising, positional, parochial, unnecessarily partisan and often unhelpfully adversarial. This can be attributed to a number of historical and behavioural factors, including the primacy of political parties, the often binary (yes/no, right/wrong) nature of political decision-making, relatively unsophisticated argument, over-emphasis on debate, and personalisation of issues resulting in animosity, attack and defence on an individual basis.

This can result in classic zero-sum outcomes with "winners" and "losers" on the political stage but sub-optimal policy decisions and loss of focus on the true interests and needs of those affected. Such thinking can be inimical to achieving maximum economic and social performance and use of scarce resources, especially in an uncertain, ambiguous and complex world. There is also a serious issue about the allocation of time and the absence of opportunity for MSPs and others to prepare effectively for aspects of parliamentary work, including on committees.

These symptoms are particularly concerning at a time of reducing public resources and increasing powers being devolved to Scotland. They can also lead to inadequate accountability, scrutiny and review of legislation and policies, both before and after implementation. Overall, the result can be loss of public confidence, belittling of politics and politicians, mirroring of behavior in other public contexts, and damage to parliamentary democracy overall.

**Remedies?**

Overall, there is a need for more creative and interest-based approaches to policy-making and future planning in order to maximise use of resources and powers and to minimise unnecessary wastage. Some of the remedies lie in enhancing the performance of public servants and officials overall and, in the context of the work of the Commission, in helping members of the Scottish Parliament and those who support them to be more effective in analysis and assessment of policy, more creative and constructive in developing and assessing the options, and more skilled in the areas of scrutiny, communication, preparation and dialogue.

In parliamentary matters, the value of dialogue rather than debate, working creatively together to understand better the real underlying issues and choices/options available, rather than seeking to knock each other's arguments down, could be a

model for even more constructive activity in an even more mature Scottish Parliament<sup>1</sup>.

1 see note 1 below

The use of language and tone and the building of relationships and trust across political boundaries is critical to a new approach. So much can be achieved by careful choice of words, reframing, separating people from the problem, and a manner which is measured and respectful. Collaborative Scotland proposed these commitments in order to underpin a more respectful approach to political dialogue generally:

- **Show respect and courtesy** towards all those who are engaged in these discussions, whatever views they hold;
- Acknowledge that there are **many differing, deeply held and valid points of view**;
- **Use language carefully** and avoid personal or other remarks which might cause unnecessary offence;
- **Listen carefully** to all points of view and seek fully to understand what concerns and motivates those with differing views from our own;
- **Ask questions** for clarification and when we may not understand what others are saying or proposing;
- Express our own views **clearly and honestly with transparency** about our motives and our interests;
- Respond to questions asked of us with clarity and openness and, whenever we can, with **credible information**;
- **Look for common ground and shared interests at all times.**

### Proposals

- A **Strategic Plan** could be introduced for the formal, structured, systematic skills-based training of all MSPs, support staff and others in relevant areas of parliamentary work. This would include, for example, effective methods for: preparation and analysis of policy and strategy; working collaboratively in committees; the role of committee conveners; scrutiny techniques (including, critically, effective questioning in a number of settings); use of language; and tools for risk analysis and problem-solving and effective decision-making. Understanding the practical application of economic ideas such as game theory is important, to exemplify the benefits of reciprocity and mutual gains rather than zero sum outcomes. The plan would include consideration of the latest developments in professional training, group and individual behaviour, psychology, risk, and performance review<sup>2</sup>.
- It is noted that senior judges, lawyers, doctors and many other professionals in public and private service undertake continuing professional training. A world-class Scottish performer, Andy Murray, has achieved that world class performance by seeking out and using the best coaching throughout his career. At the heart of enhanced performance are skills, competency,

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<sup>1</sup> See note 1 below

<sup>2</sup> See note 2 below

capability and capacity, leading to professional confidence, with a positive attitude and awareness. These can be taught and learned and this can be expedited with the provision of the proper resources. Marginal improvements and even minor changes in habit (which can be learned), can make a huge difference to performance and outcomes.

- Follow up is essential to ensure progress and sustainability. It is recognised that there has been frustration about a lack of consistency and follow through in training, especially in questioning skills in committees, in the Scottish Parliament over the years.

***It is strongly arguable that a structured training programme is not a 'nice to have' or a luxury, but a necessary investment which could, over time, make a significant contribution to increasing parliamentary effectiveness and enhancing individual and collective performance, improving political decision-making and making politics (and parliamentary democracy) appear more professional, relevant and credible to the wider population.***

- An **annual audit** could be conducted, perhaps by a university, to review the extent to which MSPs adhere to the objective benchmarks designed by Collaborative Scotland, set out above. This would be aspirational in its ambition, with support for feedback and development. MSPs could be invited to commit to the eight propositions. A working title for the project might be: *The Beyond Adversarialism in Politics Project Scotland (BAPPS)*.
- Encouragement could be given to political parties to identify common ground and to publish a **Joint Manifesto for Scotland**, on an annual or biennial basis, setting out agreed overall strategies for Scotland, and clearly identifying where and how differences exist and how the parties propose to address these. This would encourage more collaborative working across parties and a sense of common purpose, while recognising and informing the public where differences really lie.
- A **Scrutiny Skills Annual Forum** could be established as a place for learning best practice in parliamentary democracies with and from colleagues in other jurisdictions. There is much to gain from cross-fertilisation of ideas with other UK parliaments and assemblies and from being seen to lead the way.

### **Concluding Remarks**

There is a sense in which this is really about maturity: politics in many ways, not least with its deferential hierarchies and squabbling, can seem child-like and immature at times. The work of the Commission offers a real opportunity to encourage greater maturity in politics in Scotland and in the Scottish Parliament - and to lead the world in a new way of doing politics.

To quote the first President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel: *"In other words, if there is to be any chance at all of success, there is only one way to strive for decency, reason, responsibility, sincerity, civility, and tolerance, and that is decently, reasonably, responsibly, sincerely, civilly, and tolerantly. I'm aware that, in everyday politics, this is not seen as the most practical way of going about it."* It is time to change this perception so far as it applies to and in Scotland.

### **Background information**

This note is offered by John Sturrock QC, the founder, senior mediator and chief executive at Core Solutions Group ([www.core-solutions.com](http://www.core-solutions.com)), Scotland's pre-eminent mediation service in the private and public sectors. As a mediator, John Sturrock has worked throughout Scotland, the rest of the UK, Ireland, mainland Europe, the Middle East and Africa. He is also a coach and facilitator, regularly leading training for senior executives, managers, sports people, consultants, church leaders and others.

*In particular, since 2003, John Sturrock has conducted training in various parliaments and assemblies in the UK.* He conducted initial training with the Justice 1 Committee, as it then was, of the Scottish Parliament and since then he has worked regularly with many committees in the Scottish Parliament, extensively with Committees in the Northern Ireland Assembly, with a number of Select and other Committees in the House of Commons, with several committees in the National Assembly for Wales and also with members in various groupings in the States of Jersey and Guernsey and the London Assembly. He has also worked with party political groupings in a number of parliaments and with groups of chairs and individual members, including chairs, in one to one coaching, in each jurisdiction. He is a special adviser to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee of the House of Commons.

His work in this field has focused on the skills of effective *(i) scrutiny (especially questioning and preparation techniques), (ii) working in committees, (iii) chairing meetings of committees, (iv) cross-party working and its benefits; (v) overall strategy-making and benchmarking success*, together with personal development for individual members.

**In a paper entitled *Reflections on Continuing Professional Development for Members of Select and other Parliamentary and Assembly Committees*, John Sturrock sets out a number of areas for development in the work of members of parliaments around the themes of Purpose, Preparation and Performance. Members are referred to this paper [here](#) and to the many questions posed in the notes accompanying the Lecture referred to below [here](#).**

He has also worked with the Scottish Parliament's executive team, many senior officials in the Scottish Government, Cabinet Office and others responsible for effective strategy, decision-making, negotiation, and management of difficult situations. He has undertaken work in connection with intra-government relationships. He led Collaborative Scotland in the run up the independence referendum: [www.collaborativescotland.org](http://www.collaborativescotland.org).

Recently, John Sturrock gave the University of Edinburgh Academy of Government Annual Lecture with the title: *"Beyond Adversarial Politics: Reaching for the common good through respectful dialogue"*. He is also a regular writer on the adversarial, positional nature of politics and the prospects of a more mature, interest-based approach, with a focus on common ground and, in Scotland's case, the interests of

the people of Scotland. For example: <http://www.core-solutions.com/blog/putting-away-childish-things/>

### Notes

1. The first President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel, in a brilliant essay, “*Politics, Morality and Civility*” (here - with several quotations from the essay in the Lecture notes [here](#)), suggested that economic improvement was dependent on civility.

2. Many argue that there is a need to understand better the areas of *behavioural psychology and neuro science* (and neuro-politics) in order to appreciate the impact of, for example, the fight or flight instinct (Systems 1 and 2 as described by Daniele Kahnemann in *Thinking, Fast and Slow*) on how politicians and others behave under pressure. Training undergone by Olympic sportspeople, which is designed to maximise excellence in performance under extremely pressurised circumstances, offers a good illustration.

Research and training could also be useful in what are known as *cognitive biases* (confirmation bias, reactive devaluation, endowment effect, attribution error, group think, peer pressure, wilful blindness, ladder of inference, system inertia, and so on). This reminds us that there is now available much learning about how the brain works and how our minds think, which can help both explain why politics can seem so adversarial and tribal and how we might learn to do things differently

**Professor Laura McAllister CBE – biography**  
(extract from [Wales Governance Centre](#))

Laura McAllister is currently Professor of Public Policy and the Governance of Wales at Cardiff University. Formerly Professor of Governance at the University of Liverpool, Laura McAllister is an expert on devolution. Laura has published extensively on Welsh politics and was a member of the Richard Commission on the Powers and Electoral Arrangements for National Assembly for Wales and a member of the National Assembly Remuneration Board, examining AMs' pay and allowances and other structural support for Assembly members and their staff.