

## **Commission on Parliamentary Reform**

### **Colleges Scotland Board Meeting**

**Thursday 26 January 2017**

**We asked: What are your views on how the Parliament is working?**

**You said:**

- There were a range of different experiences when giving evidence on a panel as opposed to a round table. Round tables are often more productive, and were seen as more about information gathering.
- Giving evidence to Committees – When attending Committee meetings there is a sense that sometimes Parliament is there for the benefit of the Parliamentarians to further their own goals, rather than for non-politicians to positively influence decision making. Some felt they can be treated discourteously during Committee meetings with MSPs (such as MSPs on their phones etc. during the meeting). The line of questioning can be seen to sometimes be more about political point scoring than working towards positive solutions.
- Not always possible to know if you have actually been listened to when giving evidence to Committees as there is a lack of tangible feedback/closing the loop after evidence is given.
- When asked to give evidence the feeling was that it was usually on negative points, and this approach can harm the public's perception of both the sector and the Parliament. Some commented that the more disrespectful nature of the questioning in Parliament can occasionally negatively impact on the ability to recruit people into senior roles.
- It is possible to work closer with MSPs than MP's at a local level to influence decision making and has meant you are able to influence policy decisions that would not have been possible before the Scottish Parliament was established.
- Being able to use the Parliament building to host conference and events has been a great positive. People are attracted to coming to events if they are held in the Parliament.
- Due to the nature of the Colleges Scotland Board, they usually speak with Government before Parliament when discussing policy and legislation decisions.

- Having 8 MSPs in each area allow the Colleges to engage more on a local level with targeted groups.
- Due to the complex nature of how Parliament operates it can be difficult for the ordinary person to engage with its work unless they are part of an interest group who has some knowledge of the processes.
- The introduction of Special Advisors to Ministers, has added to the complexity when trying to influence on issues.
- The Colleges often bring a selection of students to visit Parliament and they are always engaged when seeing how it works in person. It is important that Parliament does all it can to engage with young people to enable them to participate and contribute to policies and legislation that will affect their lives.
- It was agreed by those present that they would discuss the work of the Commission with the colleges they represent and consider how they can further contribute to the Commission's work.