



**Scottish Council of  
Jewish Communities**

The Commission Secretariat  
Commission on Parliamentary Reform  
Room CG.07  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

*by e-mail*

**Re: RULES OF CONDUCT FOR CROSS PARTY GROUPS**

I am writing to draw your attention to a serious incident that occurred less than a week ago, that appears not to be addressed by the current rules and codes of conduct.

The issue is a narrow one and we would be grateful if you could take this issue on board. The matter only came to light for us on 25 April, and our exchange of correspondence with the Presiding Officer has failed to resolve the issue, so it may remain a source of concern in the future if not dealt with during the current review.

The background is set out in the enclosed letters, but the facts in brief are as follows: I attended the CPG on Palestine on 25 April as an observer. I had not attended before. During the meeting, the Treasurer, Mr Philip Chetwynd, questioned whether I and two other people had any right to be there as we had not signed the objectives of the CPG. I was purely there to observe the Group and learn more about its activities. The item for which Mr Chetwynd wanted us excluded (and which had not appeared on the published agenda) was a discussion on the definition of antisemitism in Scotland, which is clearly a matter of concern to this Council as the representative body of the Jewish Community in Scotland.

As you will see from the correspondence, the current rules of conduct make it clear that the attendance of non-members of a CPG is at the discretion of the Group. This implies that ordinary members of the public have no right to attend and observe CPGs. That puts CPGs in a different category from proceedings of the Parliament and its committees. SCoJeC is concerned that this damages the Parliament's openness and transparency, since CPGs could potentially function behind closed doors with only like-minded people speaking to one another, and since they can describe themselves by reference to the Parliament, that has the potential to damage the reputation of the Parliament.

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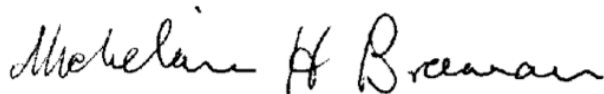
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We do have a solution to suggest. First it should be explicitly stated that CPGs, like other parliamentary committees, should normally be open to the public to observe. Then the rules could distinguish between CPG members and observers; members would have the right to speak, but observers only at the discretion of the Convenor or by resolution of the meeting. This would allow for non-members to contribute to the deliberations of a CPG while not detracting from the autonomy of the group or the authority of the chair. That way, no-one would be excluded (unless of course they were disruptive) but no-one would be able to attend a CPG just to press their own agenda in a way that could bring the Parliament into disrepute.

We would be grateful for your consideration of this proposal in your review.

Yours sincerely



Micheline Brannan  
Chair

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. SCoJeC advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, by providing information and assistance to educational, health, and welfare organisations, representing the Jewish community in Scotland to Government and other statutory and official bodies, and liaising with Ministers, MSPs, Churches, Trades Unions, and others on matters affecting the Jewish community. SCoJeC also provides a support network for the smaller communities and for individuals and families who live outwith any Jewish community or are not connected with any Jewish communities, and assists organisations within the Scottish Jewish community to comply with various regulatory requirements. SCoJeC also promotes dialogue and understanding between the Jewish community and other communities in Scotland, and works in partnership with other organisations and stakeholders to promote equality, good relations, and understanding among community groups.