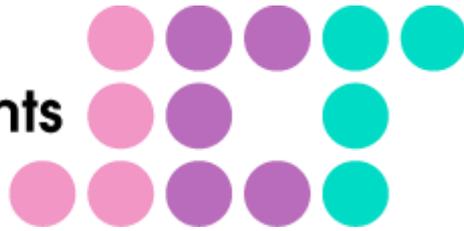


judicial
complaints
reviewer



PE1458/LL

The Convener
Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

12 January 2015

Dear Convener

Petition No PE1458: Register of Interests for members of Scotland's Judiciary

Please accept my apologies to the Committee for not replying to your letter of 31 October 2014 in relation to this petition. I subsequently explained to Anne Peat that your letter had not reached me and she kindly forwarded it to me along with a request that I let you have my view on the substance of this petition.

I have seen the evidence provided to the Committee by my predecessor Moi Ali in May 2013, what was said by the Lord President in his written submission of 21 November 2014 and previously, the evidence provided by the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs on 9 December 2014.

As a general principle I am in favour of those in public life, whether paid or unpaid, being required to maintain a register of interests including hospitality given or received.

We live in an age in which transparency about interests and activities of those in the public eye is regarded as good practice. There is a perception that anything less is the result of attempts to hide things. In the case of Judges, it is clear that court users and the public more widely seek reassurances of fairness and impartiality. I think it is difficult for those outside the Judiciary to understand the notion that the Oath taken by Judges on appointment should be regarded as sufficient evidence of their commitment to uphold the principles of public life.

Of course a register as called for by this petition would require to be kept up to date and the burden of cost and responsibility would have to be borne by, most likely, the public purse. It seems to me however that the costs attached would be offset to a degree by an increase in confidence and, conceivably, a drop in complaints.

In respect of the Annual Report by the Judicial Complaints Reviewer (JCR) for the period 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014, the Report is now on the JCR website. It was sent in draft to the Lord President prior to publication.

Finally, I have undertaken to publish my own register of interests on my website. Currently in addition to my appointment as JCR for which I am paid a daily fee of £213 over a restricted number of days annually, I am a non- executive director of Registry Trust Ltd a not- for-profit company based in London (fee of £8,200 paid for 10 days work a year), I am a Scottish Trustee of Stepchange Debt Charity (unpaid), a Scottish Ambassador for Tomorrow's People a charity that works with disadvantage young people to find employment (unpaid). For each body I am required to provide regular updates of my interests. I am a member of the English Speaking Union Scotland and the Scottish Dachshund club. I make a monthly payments in support of Cancer Research, the RSPB and the SSPCA.

I hope this is helpful in the Committee's on going consideration of petition PE1458.

Yours sincerely

GILLIAN THOMPSON OBE