

LOBBYING REGISTER WORKING GROUP

MINUTES

6th Meeting, 2017

Tuesday 5 December 2017

Committee Room 6, Scottish Parliament

Present

Working Group: Jenny Bloomfield; Susan Lowes; Brian Simpson; Michelle Cullis; Matthew Revett; Margaret Smith

Officials: Dougie Wands; James Drummond; Joanne Kendall; Fiona Sinclair

Apologies: Colin Borland; Mandy Rhodes; Gary Dunion; Will Dinan; Kirsty Peebles; Phil Morgan; Ian Mackay; Sherry Perreault

1. Apologies/Guests: Dougie passed on the apologies for those unable to attend the meeting and welcomed the Presiding Officer, Rt Hon Ken Macintosh MSP, and Clerk/Chief Executive of the Scottish Parliament, Sir Paul Grice.

2. Presiding Officer and Clerk/Chief Executive of the Scottish Parliament: The Presiding Officer began by thanking members of the Lobbying Register Working Group for their efforts and diligence since it was convened.

He acknowledged that there were still concerns about some aspects of the legislation, but emphasised the positive contribution it will make to increase transparency allowing people to know more about conversations between organisations and MSPs, Ministers etc.

The Presiding Officer also explained to the Group the extensive awareness raising activities which officials, including the Clerk, were undertaking with MSPs, etc.

Finally, the Presiding Officer also reminded the Group that a statutory review of the Act will be undertaken after two years of operation. That would provide the opportunity to consider and address any significant issues arising from experience of implementation.

3. Draft Parliamentary Guidance and Code of Conduct: The latest version of the Parliamentary Guidance was provided to the Working Group in papers for this meeting. This incorporated some changes made in response to comments from the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. The guidance was now with Scottish Ministers for formal consultation.

Dougie Wands explained that the Scottish Government was expected to provide comments on the guidance before Christmas, with publication of the final version early next year.

Dougie also confirmed that the Code of Conduct was now finalised and would be published in the near future on the lobbying pages of the Scottish Parliament website and also the Lobbying Register website.

4. Common Scenarios – New Constituency/Region Scenarios: Two new scenarios were provided to the Working Group for comment which related to the exemption for communications made to member for constituency/regions.

Susan Lowes queried whether greater clarity on business “ordinarily carried on” could be provided and agreed to write to provide a scenario that had been raised with her by another organisation relating to the same exemption.

Brian Simpson also raised a question in relation to communications to MSPs etc. regarding UK Bills which have a Scottish dimension (e.g. EU Withdrawal Bill) and if a scenario could be provided for this.

Dougie agreed that it was possible that such communications could fall within the definition of regulated lobbying and that he would prepare a scenario about this.

5. Familiarisation Period: Joanne Kendall informed the Working Group that the register had over 80 registrants. Information returns that had been received so far showed that work is still required to assist registrants by providing feedback on the contents of the returns.

Jenny Bloomfield sought clarification about registration by organisations that hadn’t pre-registered before an instance of Regulated Lobbying had taken place. She gave the example of a large scale event where a number of conversations had taken place and asked whether that would that require all instances on that date to be recorded within 30 days as the Act stipulates.

Dougie confirmed that only the first instance of Regulated Lobbying in such circumstances would be required to be registered within 30 days. Any subsequent conversations on that day would then require to be registered within the relevant six month period starting on that date.

It was agreed that further work would be done to publicise registration requirements ahead of the Act being commenced.

6. Media Strategy: Dougie informed the Working Group that the media buying schedule for promoting awareness of the Act is almost complete and further information will be announced in due course.

Printed lobbying information leaflets would be provided to all MSP offices and Ministerial Private Offices. It was agreed that the PDF version of the leaflets would be sent to Working Group members for use and wider circulation.

The Working Group was also informed of other awareness-raising being carried out by the team ahead of commencement, including liaising with Events and Exhibitions



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team and Visitor Services to publicise the Act in their areas of the Parliament building.

Further initiatives being developed were a dedicated lobbying register Twitter account, and contact with journalists to offer an opportunity to learn more on the Act.

7. Thanks: Dougie concluded the meeting by again expressing his thanks on behalf of the Lobbying Register Team. Working Group members confirmed that they would be open to further engagement by the Team on any matters arising in the future.

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