

PE1843/C

Petitioner submission of 12 February 2021

1) Petition exposed serious issues. My MSP had assured me that it was best way to proceed. However, Presiding Officer seems to have virtually bypassed the events referred to in petition by not wanting to explore their significance and the possible consequences of such inherent inaction. He has discarded a real opportunity to examine and learn from past problems and inequities, for example the conflict of interest issues, disregard of any check and oversight of actual application of Nolan principles, unaccountability issue, denial of normally shared data. There is also no mechanism by which misbehaviour or possible corruption can be brought directly to the attention of a trusted independent outsider, who is completely unattached to the agencies referred to in petition. It would be in the national interest to examine all such matters.

"Strategic Plan(s)", "a general report" and "statutory governance arrangements" are all very well, but don't deal with all above issues and, in particular, the non accountability of senior management. They are inadequate and would not have positively impacted and resolved all the matters I've raised. I came up against a firewall in all these vital areas.

Protection of independence appears to have overridden the balanced and recognised norms and common sense of our democratic society: such a protective situation currently allows any Commissioner to opt to do what he/she likes, knowing power held is effectively unlimited and would never be subject to checks, no matter the circumstances.

2) Why is Presiding Officer apparently satisfied about inability of anyone to get to root of problems when "I had made a compelling case in terms of evidence"?

I had been in contact with an ex MSP's official representative, but he could not apparently "elicit information" and was told I had "frightened them off". He walked away from this disturbing situation without any explanation as to why he couldn't insist on getting to root of serious matters, he acknowledged I had brought to his attention. Have other conflicts of interest infected and negated due process, over and above the "HUSH and MONEY" data and other information in my petition?

3) In what way would the Presiding Officer's alleged current satisfactory arrangements be able to uncover any similar situations as referred to in petition, especially with abrogation of any real accountability? It all feels like a failure to apply basic democratic principles and a backward step in progressing Scottish Parliament's statement about "Making a positive difference to the lives of the people of Scotland". Maintaining an unsatisfactory status quo is certainly not the best way forward. MSPs are the democratically elected representatives of the people, but I was left with impression that they were banished from getting data about what was going on behind the scenes, in the unaccountable inner sanctums of agencies such as CESPLS, SPSO, SLCC. It's certainly not a good look and doesn't sit well with our First Minister's declared values, as recited on the recent "Robert Burns - No Holds Bard" programme on Sky Arts TV. She

had referred to egalitarianism and a passion for justice and equality.

4) I had understood, via Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPIC), that Justice Committee had the power to decide whether to take such matters, as I described, on board and what form any inquiry would take. I should reiterate that I found similar difficulties in my dealings and contacts with SLCC and SPSO. All exhibited a worrying theme of protecting each other, rather than dealing with customer in an even-handed and fair-minded manner by adherence to the Nolan principles.

I found a distinct absence of accountability, with defamation on the agenda and no apology ever being made. Accountability was also absent when the Chair of SLCC and its Chief Executive ended up investigating each other's behaviour and refusing to implement their own published process to resolve matters. I felt trapped by a cabal of unaccountable "agencies", and perplexed and daunted by their ability to survive unscathed. I regard all such matters as having considerable national interest and that people of Scotland should, at least, be made aware of possible consequences if involved with above agencies. Nothing that the Presiding Officer said in his submission gave me any confidence that the same or similar events couldn't be easily replicated.

5) I have noted that "Actions that the Committee can consider taking include referring the petition to another committee of the Parliament", which I presume could include above noted Justice Committee. Would you please consider taking such action in light of all the circumstances?