



SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS COMMISSIONER

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From the Commissioner

PRESS NOTICE

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REASSURING VIEW OF STANDARDS OF MSP CONDUCT

Thirty-four complaints about MSP conduct were received by the Standards Commissioner in 2006/07, according to his annual report published today. While this was largest yearly total of complaints received to date, the number was only a little above the average for the first four years of the Commissioner's role. The Commissioner notes that, with relatively small numbers each year, significant fluctuation from year to year is to be expected.

Averaging of data over four years gives a better feel of the number and nature of complaints than a single year's data. Complaints have arisen at an average rate of 27 a year. A few are withdrawn during the first stage and, of those left, around a fifth go on to full investigation (around five a year).

Of 33 complaints considered for admissibility in 2006/07, only three were of sufficient relevance and substance to go on to full investigation. Two of these were completed within the year and both involved premature publication of material relating to committee reports. Both complaints were found by the Commissioner and by the Standards and Public Appointments Committee to involve breaches of the Code of Conduct. The third complaint remained at Stage 2 of the investigation process at the end of the reporting year.

Within the year the Commissioner also completed a full investigation of a complaint received in the previous year which was primarily about alleged breach of privacy of a constituent. Neither he nor the Committee found any breach of the Code. Only one complaint in the last year related to Members' interests; it went on to full investigation and remained incomplete at the end of the year. Further details on complaints are given in the body of the report.

Commenting on the data, Dr Dyer said:

“Overall, the complaints data continues to give a reassuring view of standards of conduct of Parliamentary duties in Scotland. However it is important that I continue to inform the public about my role and how to make use of it. I also intend over the next year to use a recently developed self-audit

tool to assess my performance against principles of good complaint handling.”

Dr Dyer notes in his report that the commonest type of complaint made continues to be about the level and quality of service provided by Members for constituents. Following a revision of the Code of Conduct for Members, such complaints should in future be directed to the Presiding Officer rather than the Standards Commissioner.

Note for Editors

The Commissioner will be available on 07909 872726 between 1500 and 1700 on 28 June to answer questions on his report.