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COMPARATIVE INFORMATION ON ALL-PARTY GROUPS

This paper is prepared for Members of the Committee on Standards and Privileges of the Northern Ireland (NI) Assembly to facilitate their understanding of All-Party Groups both in the NI Assembly and other Legislatures.

Library Research Papers are compiled for the benefit of Members of The Assembly and their personal staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

This paper details a variety of information regarding All-Party Groups in the Northern Ireland (NI) Assembly and other Legislatures. By reviewing the procedures and practices in other Legislatures, a number of issues have been identified which the Committee Standards and Privileges may wish to consider further.

The following paragraphs provide a summary of those key issues:

- An issue which the Committee on Standards and Privileges may wish to consider further is, whether the need remains for two different types of All-Party Group in the NI Assembly. Given the nature of All-Party Groups in other legislatures the Committee may wish to consider creating one universal All-Party Group of which, membership could be made up solely of Members, or both Members and individuals/organisations from outside the Assembly.
- Another issue which the Committee may wish to consider further is whether the administration and support of All-Party Groups should fall within the remit of this Committee, or whether this role would be better placed in another area of the Assembly secretariat.
- If the Committee decides responsibility of All-Party Groups should be part of its remit, the Committee may wish to consider further the degree and type of subsequent support which the Committee staff should give.
- Another option which the Committee may wish to consider relating to the administration and provision of support for All-Party Groups is moving the responsibility for All-Party Groups to another area within the Assembly secretariat all together. It is worth noting that, the use of resources may prove to be similar regardless of who had responsibility for All-Party Groups. However All-Party Groups and everything they entail may fit strategically better within another part of the Assembly secretariat.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper has been prepared for the Committee on Standards and Privileges by Research and Library Service. The purpose of this briefing paper is to facilitate the Committee's understanding of the All-Party Groups in other legislatures and to identify any potential issues which the Committee may wish to consider.

THE INQUIRY

The main purpose of this review is to gain clarity in relation to the registration of groups, maintenance of the register, monitoring changes in relation to groups and defining funding and resources that will be available to them. In addition, to determine if this area of work should remain with the Standards and Privileges Committee or if it would be more appropriate for it to be carried out in a different area of the Northern Ireland Assembly secretariat.

This inquiry was initiated in January 2009 and the Terms of Reference are:

- To define the purpose and role of All Party Groups and All Party Assembly Groups;
- To establish whether there continues to be a need for the two different types of groups;
- To consider or make recommendations as to which area of the Northern Ireland Assembly secretariat should take the lead role in administering and providing support for All Party Groups;
- To examine the arrangements for the establishment of such groups (and, in particular, consider whether the application forms and guidance notes are fit for purpose);
- To consider the role of the Committee on Standards and Privileges in approving such groups;
- To consider how the approval of such groups and their subsequent meetings should be publicised;
- To consider the requirements for the registration and updating of the group's details;
- To clarify the degree of entitlement and support available to these groups;
- To consider how any rules governing such groups should be managed/monitored.

PART ONE: NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Within the Northern Ireland Assembly at present, there are two different types of All-Party Groups. There are groups titled, 'All-Party Groups' which consist of both Assembly Members and individuals/bodies outside of the Assembly, and groups titled 'All-Party Assembly Groups' which consist of Assembly Members alone. These groups provide a forum by which Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly and outside organisations and individuals can meet to discuss shared interests in a particular cause or subject.

In February 1999, a Motion was proposed following concerns relating to the membership of such groups and the assistance they received from lobby groups or

other interested parties. The purpose of this Motion was to ensure complete probity in relation to the financing of any all-party groups and to ensure financial transparency also.

Guidance notes were subsequently drawn up after the Motion in February 1999, outlining the establishment of such groups and these notes are currently still in use. These guidance notes outline how a group can apply for inclusion on the 'Register of All-Party Assembly Groups and All-Party Groups' (the Register) and/or inclusion on what is known as the 'Approved List'. In practice however, there is no distinction between the two lists. Every All-Party Group in the NI Assembly is registered on one list only. Since the guidance notes and application forms no longer accurately represent the current situation in the Assembly with regards to All-Party Groups, these documents may warrant a revision.

SUPPORT AND ENTITLEMENT AVAILABLE TO GROUPS

During the last mandate the Committee on Standards and Privileges did not hold any responsibility for the booking of rooms or ordering of hospitality. Each All Party Group, through its own secretariat support, was responsible for organising hospitality and booking rooms for any group meetings through the Central Committee Office. It would seem however, that the current practice is for staff of the Standards and Privileges Committee to book rooms and hospitality for All Party Groups. This practice is still ongoing even after an All Party Notice was issued informing Members that rooms should be booked through the Central Committee Office.

PART TWO: HOUSE OF COMMONS, UK PARLIAMENT

The House of Commons in Westminster also has guidance notes which outline the establishment of All-Party Groups. These groups within the House of Commons have a similar role and purpose to those within the Northern Ireland Assembly. Similarly to the Northern Ireland Assembly, All-Party Groups of the House of Commons can register for inclusion on the Groups' Register and/or the Approved List.¹

THE REGISTER

Details of All-Party Groups within the House of Commons are recorded on a Register. The purpose of this register is to record which All-Party Groups are recognised by the House, who their officers are and to record what assistance from outside Parliament each group receives. Registration is compulsory where the group includes Members of the Commons (and may include Members of the Lords) from more than one party and has at least one officer who is from the Commons.²

The Groups' Register is compiled and maintained by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. However, any changes to the rules governing the Groups' Register are determined by the Committee on Standards and Privileges. Where such changes are substantial they are put by the Committee to the House for approval before being implemented.³

¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/members/apg.cfm>

² Groups with no officers from the Commons are not registered.

³ *House of Commons Guide to the Rules on All-Party Groups* April 2005, Pg 19.
<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/PCFSGroupsRules.pdf>

The Groups' Register is usually updated every 4-6 weeks however, during recess and in the period from the dissolution of one parliament to the start of another, updates are less frequent. A copy of the most recent edition is published on the House of Commons web pages. A group's registry entry shows:

- The title of the group;
- Officers of the group;⁴
- Any financial and material assistance received from outside parliament, and;
- Any relevant gainful occupation of its staff.

THE APPROVED LIST

The Approved list exists as a result of a Resolution made by the House of Commons in October 1984 and its main purpose is to control the extent to which groups use the House's facilities and status. As mentioned previously, inclusion on the Register is compulsory for most All Party Groups however, a group may choose whether or not to apply for inclusion on the Approved List. Most All Party Groups are on both the Register and the Approved List, as a group will gain certain entitlements when it is registered on the Approved List.

In order to qualify for these privileges, groups on the Approved List have to register more information and are subject to more rules than unlisted groups. For example, when a group registers for the Approved List, as opposed to the Register, it must declare whether it is an 'All Party Parliamentary Group' or an 'Associate Parliamentary Group'.⁵ The group must also include the names of 20 qualifying members⁶, a statement of the group's purpose, affiliation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union or Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the date of the group's last registered Annual General Meeting.

The Approved list is compiled and maintained by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. Changes to the rules governing the Approved List are determined by the Administration Committee, although where such changes are substantial they are put by the Committee to the House for approval before being implemented. The Approval List is usually updated every 1-2 weeks, when the Commons is sitting and it is distributed to various departments within the Commons but is not published.⁷

⁴ Officers are responsible for ensuring that the group complies with the rules. Groups typically have a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Groups may have fewer or more officers than the four outlined however, the minimum number of officers allowed is two (i.e. a Chair and a Secretary). Each officer must be of the Commons or Lords, at least one officer must be from the Commons.

⁵ In an All Party Parliamentary Group only Members of the House of Commons have voting rights whereas, in an Associate Parliamentary Group voting rights are allowed to non parliamentarians also.

⁶ Qualifying members have no special responsibilities other than demonstrating that the group qualifies for inclusion on the Approved List by meeting the minimum membership quotas. These are, each qualifying member must be a Member of either the Commons or the Lords and may also be an officer. The group must have at all times exactly 20 qualifying members on its Register entry namely: 10 from the Government party, plus a total of 10 Opposition/Other Members (of which 6 must be from the main Opposition party).

⁷ *House of Commons Guide to the Rules on All-Party Groups* April 2005, 20

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/PCFSGroupsRules.pdf>

SUPPORT AND ENTITLEMENT AVAILABLE TO ALL-PARTY GROUPS

All-Party Groups which are on the Approved List gain a number of entitlements which are not available to those groups which are not on the Approved List. For example, groups will gain the right to use the All-Party Notices to advertise all groups meetings, the right to include the words 'All-Party', 'Parliamentary' or 'Associate' in the groups' title and a relative priority over unlisted groups in booking rooms in the Palace of Westminster. However, All-Party Groups of the House of Commons are responsible for booking their own rooms for meetings and any hospitality required. This does not fall within the remit of any Committee or their staff.

All-Party Groups may also receive financial or material assistance from outside parliament. However the group must notify the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards if it receives from the same source outside Parliament one or more benefits whose total value is £1000 or more in a calendar year.

It is worth noting that, in May 2006 the Committee on Standards and Privileges of the House of Commons published a report after a complaint was made by the Editor of the Times. The complaint alleged that six named All-Party Groups had breached the rules requiring groups for which secretariat services are provided by a public relations company to name in their entry in the Register of All-Party Groups the ultimate client of the company which is meeting the cost of this assistance. The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards subsequently issued a number of recommendations which aimed to increase the level of information which had to be recorded by groups and hence, increase transparency.

The Commissioner recommended that in the future where a group is assisted by an outside consultancy, the names of any clients of the consultancy with a direct interest in the work of the group should be listed. Similarly, where assistance is provided by a charity or not-for-profit organisation, the name of any commercial company with a direct interest in the work of the group which contributes materially to meeting the central costs of the charity should be listed also. The aim of the change was to ensure that any relationship that could reasonably be viewed as presenting a potential conflict of interest should be recorded in the Register and therefore increase the level of transparency.

The recommendations outlined in this report have yet to be approved by the Committee on Standards and Privileges of the House of Commons. However this report, along with another report by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, which recommends the amalgamation of the Groups' Register and the Approved List are to be discussed by the Committee provisionally at the end of February this year. It is believed any changes discussed in the Commissioner's memorandum will be implemented shortly thereafter.⁸

PART THREE: SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

All-Party Groups also exist in the Scottish Parliament, however here they are referred to as Cross-Party Groups. Cross-Party Groups within the Scottish Parliament provide an opportunity for Members of all parties, outside organisations and

⁸ Information gained through correspondence with the Clerk of Standards and Privileges Committee of the House of Commons.

members of the public to meet and discuss a shared interest in a particular cause or subject.

PURPOSE AND MEMBERSHIP OF CROSS-PARTY GROUPS

A Cross-Party Group of the Scottish Parliament must be parliamentary in nature and its purpose must be of genuine public interest. The membership of a Cross-Party Group of the Scottish Parliament must be open to all Members of the Parliament and must include at least 5 MSPs of which at least one Member must be from each of the parties or groups represented in the Parliamentary Bureau. Groups may contain members from outside Parliament, however the overall membership profile of the group must remain clearly parliamentary in character. Furthermore, at least two Members of Parliament, both members of the Cross-Party Group, must be present at every meeting.⁹

A group must apply to the Standards and Public Appointments Committee through the clerks, for recognition as a Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament. This process of the Committee approving an application of recognition as a Cross-Party Group also occurs in the Northern Ireland Assembly, it does not however occur in the House of Commons. A group must register the following details:

- The group's name;
- The group's purpose;
- The elected officers;
- All members;
- Financial or other benefits of £250 and over in any calendar year received from any single source;¹⁰
- Details of subscriptions, where charged;
- Certain details in relation to any staff employed by the group.

SUPPORT AND ENTITLEMENT AVAILABLE TO CROSS-PARTY GROUPS

Once a group has been approved for recognition as a Cross-Party Group, the group's details are compiled and maintained by the clerks of the Standards and Public Appointments Committee. Any changes to the rules governing Cross-Party Groups in the Scottish Parliament are determined by the Standards and Public Appointments Committee.¹¹

In relation to the services provided to Cross-Party Groups by the clerks to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Rule 12 of the Code of Conduct for MSPs sets out the limits of the use of Parliamentary staff resource by these groups.¹² However, the Committee recently recommended updating the guidance notes to make clear that the role of the clerks of the Committee was:¹³

⁹ *Code of Conduct for MSPs*, Rules 2 & 10.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/msp/conduct/coc-v2-2.htm>

¹⁰ The Standards and Public Appointments Committee of the Scottish Parliament recently recommended that this threshold be increased to £500 in a report reviewing Section 6 of the Code of Conduct for MSPs which governs Cross-Party Groups. This report has yet to be debated by the Scottish Parliament, therefore all recommendations are pending.

¹¹ Information gained through correspondence with the Standards and Public Appointments Committee of the Scottish Parliament and from the *Code of Conduct for MSPs*, Section 6 Para 6.2.1.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/msp/conduct/coc-v2-2.htm>

¹² *Code of Conduct for MSPs*, Rule 12.

- To provide general advice in relation to Cross-Party Groups;
- To maintain the Register of Cross-Party Groups; and,
- To update individual Cross-Party Group web pages with meeting information, including minutes and agendas (but no other papers) and publishing links to external web pages.

It is not within the remit of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee to book rooms or hospitality for Cross-Party Groups. This is done through the Facilities Management Helpdesk.

PART FOUR: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES

Cross-Party Groups also exist in the National Assembly for Wales. These groups provide an opportunity for Members of all parties, outside organisations and members of the public to meet and discuss a shared interest in a particular cause or subject.

PURPOSE AND MEMBERSHIP OF CROSS-PARTY GROUPS

Cross-Party Groups may be set up by Members in respect of any subject area relevant to the Assembly. A Group must include Members from three political party groups represented within the Assembly. Cross-Party Groups may also include non-parliamentarians. Cross-Party Groups are not formal Assembly groupings and are not, therefore, bound by any of the Assembly's Standing Orders.¹⁴

The Table Office of the National Assembly for Wales processes any Cross-Party Group application forms. The Table Office will also maintain and update the list of Cross-Party Groups within the Assembly according to the registration forms received. A group must register the following details:

- The group's name;
- The group's purpose;
- The names of at least three Members from three political parties;
- The names of all other members;
- The chair of the group;
- Any changes to details of the group.

Cross-Party Groups in the National Assembly for Wales do not have to register any financial or other benefits received by the Party or any details in relation to any staff employed by the group. The guidelines issued to Cross-Party Groups however states that these Groups must bear in mind the integrity of the Assembly in considering the acceptance of any monies, gifts or hospitality from outside bodies.

Once an application has been processed, the Table Office will publish the group's details on the Cross-Party Group web pages. The Table Office will also publish

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/msp/conduct/coc-v2-2.htm#s6>

¹³ The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee Report, *Review of Section 6 of the Code of Conduct (Cross-Party Groups)* Para 29.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/stanproc/reports-08/stpr08-11.htm>

¹⁴ Guidelines on the Formation of Cross-Party Groups within the National Assembly for Wales.

details such as meeting information. However, it is ultimately up to the group to undertake its own publicity wider than this.¹⁵

SUPPORT AND ENTITLEMENT AVAILABLE TO CROSS-PARTY GROUPS

Cross-Party Groups of the National Assembly for Wales will have access to the Assembly's accommodation facilities however they do not have access to any of the Presiding Office staffing services such as translation or committee secretariat. Assembly Building room bookings for Cross-Party Group meetings must be made by an Assembly Member who is a member of the Cross-Party Group. The Assembly Member will also be responsible for all meeting arrangements including meeting and escorting external members of the Group within the Assembly Building.

PART FIVE: POTENTIAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The first issue which the Committee on Standards and Privileges may wish to consider further is, whether the need remains for two different types of All-Party Group in the NI Assembly. The only difference between an All-Party Assembly Group and an All-Party Group is that the former consists entirely of Members of the Assembly only, whereas the latter consists of both Members and individuals/organisations from outside the Assembly. This existence of two types of group may potentially cause confusion and may also add to the administration of such groups. Therefore, the Committee may wish to consider creating one universal All-Party Group of which, membership could be made up solely of Members, or both Members and individuals/organisations from outside the Assembly. The Committee may have concerns regarding the potential interest and level of support of non-parliamentarian members of an All-Party Group. If this were the case, the Committee may wish to consider creating a more stringent registration form which required registering additional information of any outside support received by the group.

Another issue which the Committee may wish to consider further is whether the administration and support of All-Party Groups should fall within the remit of this Committee, or whether this role would be better placed in another area of the Assembly secretariat. At the moment, the Committee process of approving applications for recognition as an All-Party Group may seem like a 'rubber stamping' exercise by some and the need for such a process may have been questioned. However, the process of approving applications through the Committee may hold some advantages. These advantages become apparent after examining the processes in other legislatures.

For example, presently in the House of Commons application forms for recognition as an All-Party Group do not go through a Committee process. All-Party Group status is granted by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, if all required information is provided on the registration form. This lack of Committee approval may be one of the reasons why there are currently over five hundred registered All-Party Groups in the House of Commons. An advantage of passing applications for All-Party Group status through the Committee on Standards and Privileges of the NI Assembly therefore would be the regulation of the number of All-Party Groups and the potential reduction in duplication of groups with similar subject interests. This process in the future may also assist in reducing any potential strains put on Assembly accommodation from a large number of All-Party Groups.

¹⁵ Information gained through correspondence with the Head of the Table Office of the National Assembly for Wales.

Another issue which the Committee may wish to consider further relates to whether administering and providing support for All-Party Groups falls within its remit, and if so, the degree and type of subsequent support which the Committee staff should give. There are a number of options which the Committee may wish to consider regarding this issue, which are outlined below.

Firstly, the Committee may decide that it and Committee staff should retain the lead responsibility for administering and providing support to All-Party Groups, which is similar to the situation in the Scottish Parliament. If this were the case, the Committee may wish to retain the responsibility of approving All-Party Group application forms, and the creation and regulation of the guidance notes. If this were the case, the Committee may wish to consider that the compilation and maintenance of the list of All-Party Groups remain the responsibility of the Committee Clerks.

If this option was favoured by the Committee, the need to update the guidance notes to clearly outline the exact support which the Committee and its staff give to All-Party Groups, may need to be considered in order to avoid confusion and misinterpretation. Therefore, the current practice for staff of the Standards and Privileges Committee to book rooms and hospitality for All Party Groups, could be clarified. It is worth noting that in the legislatures which have been discussed within this paper, this responsibility lies with the All-Party Group members and their support staff and not with Committee or any other parliamentary secretariat staff.

Another option which the Committee may wish to consider relating to the administration and provision of support for All-Party Groups, is moving the responsibility for All-Party Groups to another area within the Assembly secretariat all together. This option is similar to current practices in the National Assembly for Wales. If this were the case, a completely separate section of the secretariat would have lead responsibility for areas such as, approving application forms, updating and regulating guidance notes for All-Party Groups and publishing the group's details on the Cross-Party Group web pages. If this were the preferred option the Committee may lose the ability to regulate the number and type of All-Party Group. It may also be worth noting that, the use of resources may be similar regardless of where the responsibility for All-Party Groups is placed. However, the responsibility of All-Party Groups could fit strategically better in another area of the Assembly secretariat.

Annex A:**Comparative Information Regarding All – Party Groups**

	NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY	SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT	NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES	HOUSE OF COMMONS, WESTMINSTER
Purpose and role of Cross – Party Groups	<p>There are two types of All – Party Group in the Northern Ireland Assembly, All Party Assembly Groups and All Party Groups.</p> <p>All Party Groups consist entirely of Assembly Members whereas All Party Groups may include outside bodies or individuals as well as Assembly Members.</p> <p>These groups provide a forum by which Members of the Assembly and outside organisations and individuals can meet to discuss shared interests in a particular subject.</p>	<p>Cross – Party Groups provide an opportunity for Members of all parties, outside organisations and members of the public to meet and discuss a shared interest in a particular cause or subject.</p>	<p>Cross-Party Groups may be set up by Members in respect of any subject area relevant to the Assembly.</p>	<p>All Party Groups are informal cross-party groups that have no official status within Parliament. Some groups consist of Members of Parliament, however many groups involve individuals and organisations outside Parliament in their administration and activities.</p>
How are details of the groups recorded?	<p>Details of the different groups are recorded on one Register.</p>	<p>Details of Cross-Party Groups are recorded on one list.</p>	<p>Details of Cross-Party Groups are recorded on one list.</p>	<p>Details of groups are recorded on a Register. Groups may apply for inclusion on the Approved List. Most groups are on both lists.</p>
What details are recorded on the Register?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The name of the group; - The officers of the group; - Any financial and material assistance received from outside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Name of the group; - Purpose of the group; - Elected officers; - All members; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The group’s name; - The group’s purpose; - The names of at least three Members from three political 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The title of the group; - Officers of the group; - Any financial and material assistance received from outside

	<p>the Assembly;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any relevant gainful occupation of its staff. - The names of 10 qualifying members; - A statement of the group's purpose, affiliation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union or Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, - The date of the group's last election of officers; and - Contact details of a member of the group for correspondence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial and other benefits of £250 and over; - Details of subscriptions, where charged; - Details in relation to any staff employed by the group. 	<p>parties;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The names of all other members; - The chair of the group; - Any changes to details of the group. 	<p>parliament, and;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any relevant gainful occupation of its staff.
<p>What details are recorded on the Approved List?</p>	<p>Not Applicable.</p>	<p>Not Applicable.</p>	<p>Not Applicable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The names of 20 qualifying members; - A statement of the group's purpose, affiliation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union or Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and; - The date of the group's last registered Annual General Meeting.
<p>Membership</p>	<p>There must be a minimum number of Assembly Members and the founding members must come from all three political designations in the Assembly. All parties must be able to join at any time.</p>	<p>A group's membership must include at least 5 Members, of which one must be from each of the parties or groups represented in the Parliamentary Bureau.</p>	<p>A Cross-Party Group must contain at least 3 Assembly Members from different political groups represented in the Assembly.</p>	<p>The minimum number of officers allowed is two (i.e. a Chair and a Secretary). Each officer must be a Member of the House of Commons or the House of Lords and at least one officer must be from the Commons.</p> <p>There is a minimum membership quota a group must meet to qualify</p>

				<p>for inclusion on the Approved List.</p> <p>- Each qualifying member must be a Member of either the House of Commons or the Lords and may also be an officer. The group must have at all times exactly 20 qualifying members on its Register entry, 10 from the Government party, plus a total of 10 Opposition/Other Members (of which 6 must be from the main Opposition party).</p>
<p>Which area of the secretariat takes the lead role in administering and providing support?</p>	<p>The Register of Cross-Party Groups is compiled and maintained by the Clerk on behalf of the Commissioner for Standards and is regulated by the Committee on Standards and Privileges.</p>	<p>The Standards and Public Appointments Committee.</p>	<p>Cross-Party Groups in the National Assembly for Wales do not receive any Committee support. The Table Office provides a certain level of support.</p>	<p>The Groups' Register and the Approved List are compiled and maintained by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.</p>
<p>Who approves such groups?</p>	<p>The Committee on Standards and Privileges approves groups.</p>	<p>Applications for recognition as a Cross – Party Group must be submitted to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee for approval.</p>	<p>The Table Office processes any Cross-Party Group application forms.</p>	<p>There is no formal mechanism for approving applications for All-Party Groups. As long as all relevant information is included on the application forms, approval will be granted.</p>
<p>How is the approval of such groups and their meetings publicised?</p>	<p>The Committee on Standards updates the list of All-Party Groups.</p>	<p>The Clerks of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee approve and publish subsequent meetings on the individual web pages of the Cross-Party Groups.</p>	<p>The Table Office publishes the details on the Cross-Party websites.</p>	<p>The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards will publish a list of the All-Party Groups. It is up to the group to publicise its own meeting time etc.</p>

<p>Updating the group's details</p>	<p>Any change in registration details should be put in writing to the Clerk of Standards within 28 days of the change occurring.</p>	<p>Any changes to the initial registration details must be notified in writing to the Standards Clerks not later than 30 calendar days after the change occurring.</p>	<p>Any changes to group's details must be notified to the Table Office, who will then update the Cross-Party web pages.</p>	<p>Any change required to the entry must be put in writing to the Assistant Registrar within 28 days of the change occurring.</p>
<p>Degree of entitlement and support available to these groups</p>	<p>Current practice is for staff of the Standards and Privileges Committee to book rooms and hospitality for All Party Groups.</p>	<p>The Standards and Public Appointments Committee provides the following support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides general advice in relation to Cross-Party Groups; - Maintains the Register of Cross-Party Groups; and, - Updates individual Cross-Party Group web pages with meeting information, including minutes and agendas (but no other papers) and publishing links to external web pages. <p>The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee does not book rooms or hospitality for Cross-Party Groups. This is done through the Facilities Management Helpdesk.</p>	<p>Cross-Party Groups have access to the Assembly's accommodation facilities, but any booking for Cross-Party Group meetings must be made by an Assembly Member who is a member of the Group. The Assembly Member would also be responsible for booking hospitality. The cost of any hospitality would also have to be met by the Group – it would not be met through Assembly funds.</p> <p>Cross-Party groups cannot use the Research services of the Assembly.</p>	<p>Groups on the Approved List are entitled to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The right to use the All-Party Notices to advertise all group meetings; - The right to include the words 'All-Party', 'Parliamentary' or 'Associate' in the groups' title; and, - A relative priority over unlisted groups in booking rooms in the Palace of Westminster. <p>It is the responsibility of All-Party Groups to book room for meetings and hospitality.</p>
<p>How the rules governing such groups are managed/monitored</p>	<p>The Committee on Standards and Privileges would manage the rules.</p>	<p>Any changes to the rules governing Cross-Party Groups in the Scottish Parliament are determined by the Standards and Public Appointments Committee.</p>	<p>The Table Office formalised the Guidance for the establishment of Cross-Party Groups.</p>	<p>Changes to the rules governing the Groups' Register are determined by the Committee on Standards and Privileges.</p>