



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme – Use of Parliamentary Resources

18 May 2023

Reference: SPCB (2023) Paper 37

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider whether they wish to take any action in relation to the use of parliamentary resources by a Member, Neil Bibby MSP, in issuing a publication which does not meet the requirements of the SPCB's policy on Members' publications.

Issues and options

2. Under the SPCB's policy on Members' publications any parliamentary funded publication must meet the requirements set out in the policy in order for the costs to be met. It is the Members' responsibility to ensure the requirements are met, although they can seek guidance from the Allowances Office on their publications.
3. The requirements that are relevant in this case include inclusion of a header at the top of a publication, which contains the parliament logo, the Members' name and their electoral area in full. Publications must also contain statements about the cost of the publication and can only include reference to the Members' party in a specific format and location within any publication.
4. Mr Bibby MSP issued a letter and leaflet to constituents advertising a cost of living event and whilst he sought guidance on the content of the letter, he did not seek advice on the included leaflet. Whilst the letter does meet the requirements of the policy the leaflet does not as it does not include a header as detailed above, it includes the party in the correct format but not in the permitted location within a publication and does not include any statement on the cost of the publication.
5. The leaflets were issued by Mr Bibby using a parliamentary printer and using plain paper and 500 copies of the leaflet were distributed. The cost of this has been calculated at £21.27 (£0.04 per page for the paper and £0.0035 for the photocopying element x 500).

6. Mr Bibby has acknowledged the error made in issuing the publication and apologised for this oversight, particularly given guidance had been sought on the covering letter. Mr Bibby has already repaid the £21.27 to the SPCB's budgets for the cost of the leaflet.
7. Given that Mr Bibby has already re-paid the cost of the publication and acknowledged and apologised for the error we would recommend to the SPCB that the Head of Allowances write to Mr Bibby reminding him of the rules on behalf of the SPCB and no further action is taken in relation to this matter.

Governance

8. Under the SPCB's policy on Members' publications the SPCB can take action in relation to any breach of the policy or any use of parliamentary resources outwith the policy.

Resource implications

9. The reimbursement of costs will be refunded into the appropriate SPCB budget.

Publication Scheme

10. The paper can be published in line with the SPCB publication policy.

Next steps

11. The Member will be advised of the outcome following SPCB consideration of the matter and if SPCB agree reminded of the rules regarding publications by the Head of Allowances on their behalf.
12. The Head of Allowances will also respond to the complainer to advise the outcome of their complaint.

Decision

13. The SPCB is invited to agree that: -
 - The Head of Allowances write to remind Mr Bibby of the requirements of the publication policy on their behalf and advised the complainant of the outcome of the matter.

Allowances Office

09 May 2023