



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Session 6 election planning

25 June 2020

Reference: SPCB(2020)Paper 29

Executive summary

1. The purpose of this paper is to update the SPCB on the planning and preparations being undertaken in readiness for the next Scottish parliamentary election in May 2021.
2. A programme board has been established to oversee support for Members both before and after the election. The intended deliverables of Session 6 are broadly the same as those for Session 5. However, the impact of the coronavirus outbreak will be very significant impact in terms of how we plan this programme and this will be a major focus of the programme board.
3. This paper is for information; there are no decisions that require to be taken.

Background

4. The next Scottish Parliamentary election is due to take place on Thursday 6 May 2021, with the first meeting of the new Parliament to be held within seven days.
5. The main deliverable of the Programme is support for Members, whether they are not standing again; not returned; re-elected or elected for the first time. This covers multiple areas, including HR, Allowances, BIT and Facilities. A programme board has been established, with membership drawn from across the SPS offices, to ensure that this support is delivered in a co-ordinated and timeous way. A communication plan has been developed and will continue to be refined as the programme evolves.
6. The First Days element of the programme covers the registration process, early induction for new Members as well as oath-taking, election of the new Presiding Officer and selection of the First Minister. There is also an events programme, including the Kirking of the Parliament and Opening Ceremony at the end of June to mark the start of the new Session.
7. There was very positive feedback from Members on the induction process that was provided for new Members in Session 5, as a result of a more structured programme being put in place, with greater emphasis on the parliamentarian role for new Members. We aim to build on this for next time, with a view to making sure that new Members receive the right information at the right time given the many and varied roles that they assume on being elected.

Governance

8. This programme is a strategic priority and is a key component of the SPS Delivery Plan. Governance will be through a programme board, with Callum Thomson as SRO, reporting to Leadership Group and the SPCB as required.

Risks

9. The impact of the coronavirus outbreak will be very significant in terms of how we plan for this programme and, possibly also, the look of the deliverables in May/June 2021. The programme board will ask each SPS office to make an assessment as to how deliverables may need to be modified in light of different public health scenarios that may be in place at the time of delivery, including what might be delivered virtually.
10. It is possible that some risks cannot be entirely mitigated and will simply need to be accepted as such. Furthermore, some elements of the programme simply may not be possible depending on the public health regulations in force and the amount of notice that we have of changes. We will return to the SPCB in the autumn with an update on this including any early decisions that need to be taken.

Resource Implications

11. Resources to support the programme have been factored into 2020/21 budgets and will also be a part of the 2021/22 budgeting round. With the exception of Opening Ceremony, most costs relate to staff time. As referred to above, planning for 'First Days' parliamentary business and other events are likely to be more complex than in previous sessions and offices have been advised to factor this in. Dependencies

Dependencies

12. The Programme will co-ordinate the work from offices across the parliamentary service. Political stakeholders are especially important to this programme, notably the Presiding Officer, SPCB and Business Managers – the latter being a key group when it comes to induction arrangements for new Members.

Publication Scheme

13. The paper can be published.

Decision

14. The SPCB is invited to note this paper, in particular the greater complexity of delivering a successful programme as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.
15. A further update will be provided to the SPCB in the early autumn.

Callum Thomson, SRO

John McArthur, Programme Manager