



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme – Use of Parliamentary Resources 23 March 2021 by Correspondence Reference: SPCB(2021)Paper 23

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider a complaint regarding the use of parliamentary resources by Peter Chapman MSP.

Issues and Options

2. A complaint was received on 2nd March 2021 which raised concerns about an email containing a Conservative and Unionist Party press release, attached at Annex A, which was issued by a member of staff employed through the Reimbursement of Members Expenses Scheme using their parliamentary email account and also using a party focused job title “Press manager, Scottish Conservative North East region media”. The content of the majority of the press release is parliamentary in nature but some areas could be considered as party political and/or campaigning. The news release was issued on behalf of Peter Chapman MSP.
3. Under Section 7 of the Code of Conduct Members must abide by the rules of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme and the policies of the SPCB. The SPCB's policies on the use of parliamentary resources and the Scheme state that parliamentary resources must not be used for party political purposes or political campaigning.
4. The Allowances Office has looked into the matter and can confirm that the email was issued by a member of staff employed as part of a pool that supports Mr Chapman. Mr Chapman has advised that this was a release about his parliamentary duties which was inadvertently sent out using the incorrect headings. Mr Chapman stated that it was not a party press release.
5. The SPCB will wish to note that parliamentary resources and staff time paid for from the Members' Expenses Scheme were used to issue the email. The SPCB will wish to that as the cost is so small it is not possible to determine the costs associated with the issuing of the email.
6. The SPCB is invited to determine whether a breach has occurred, and if so, whether they wish to take any action on the matter.
7. Given the limited financial implications, we suggest that a course of action would be for the Presiding Officer to write to the Member seeking assurances that this

will not happen again. We would also suggest that this paper is also published (alongside other SPCB papers) on the website this week. The SPCB will be aware that we would normally publish papers following a meeting of the SPCB, but that it is unlikely there will be another meeting this session.

Governance issues

8. The Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme and the SPCB's policies on use of parliamentary resources state that parliamentary resources must not be used for party political purposes or for political campaigning.

Resource Implications

9. Any cost to parliamentary resources would be incalculable due the small amount of usage.

Publication Scheme

10. This paper can be published in accordance with the SPCB's Publication Scheme.

Next steps

11. To inform the Member and the complainant of the SPCB decision.

Decision

12. The SPCB is invited to consider the complaint and if it considers a breach has occurred, agree that
 - The Presiding Officer, on behalf of the SPCB, writes to Mr Chapman seeking his assurances this will not happen again; and
 - This paper is published on the website this week.

Allowances Office

23 March 2021