

THE USE OF PARLIAMENTARY RESOURCES DURING A UK ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Overview

The SPCB has a responsibility to ensure that the resources of the Parliament are used only in the support of parliamentary duties. This document is intended to assist Members by summarising the various relevant policies already in place about the use of parliamentary resources during elections and other party political campaigns.

The Members' Code of Conduct provides that all Members are responsible for ensuring that any SPCB policy is fully complied with.

Members are assured that the general principle and priority for all resources provided by the SPCB remains the same during this time. That is, Members and their staff will continue to have full access to and use of all services provided to support Members with their parliamentary duties both at Holyrood and in local offices. However, in line with existing policies these resources must not be used to any significant extent for any other purposes, including party political purposes. Parliamentary resources must not be used for electioneering or campaigning.

SPCB resources include local offices, all areas of the parliamentary complex, IT, postage and stationery, all matters covered by the Members' Reimbursement of Expenses Scheme and all services provided by SPCB staff.

In respect of the UK General election, normal parliamentary business activities will continue to be supported as normal e.g. parliamentary questions, motions, chamber debates and committee enquiries.

Where there is any clarity required about the interpretation of any matter related to any SPCB policies, the SPCB will be the final arbiter.

Members are asked to direct any questions they have on the information contained within this document to the relevant office. Contact details are provided throughout the text.

1. Members' Expenses

1.1 A Member is entitled to reimbursement of expenses which have been incurred only for the purpose of carrying out parliamentary duties. Section 9 of the [Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme](#) provides illustrations of what is included as 'parliamentary duties'. A Member should not submit a claim relating to any electioneering, party political activity or party political campaigning nor enter into any arrangement which could give rise to a benefit to a party political organisation.

Contact: Mairi Pearson, extension 86609

2. MSP Staff

2.1 Members are reminded that during their contracted hours members of staff employed by the Member may not undertake any significant party political activity. Campaigning or assisting in an election or other political campaign would constitute "significant party political activity". Members are responsible to the SPCB for the activities of their staff as for their own activities.

2.2 Members' employees may participate in political campaigning only if it is done either a) outside contracted hours; or b) provided they take unpaid leave (or paid accrued annual leave) to do so. In this instance Members must be able to demonstrate that the employee is on leave and they must ensure that parliamentary monies or facilities are not used for the purposes of political campaigning.

2.3 If a member of staff is taking annual leave in accordance with their contract of employment, no adjustment needs to be made as they are free to do as they wish in their own time and there is no need to tell the Human Resources Office. It is for Members to ensure that they keep their own records of staff annual leave.

2.4 If a member of staff is taking unpaid leave then the Human Resources Office must be informed, in advance of the leave being taken, to enable the appropriate adjustments to be made to their pay.

2.5 Members are encouraged to contact the Human Resources Office as quickly as possible for help and guidance should they have any concerns or questions on any issue relating to the employment of staff and their participation in political campaigning.

Contacts: Neil Mackie, extension 86634
Vicky McSherry, extension 85350

3. Local Office Accommodation

3.1 The Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme makes it clear that a Member's office (which may form part of a shared office with an MP) must be a clearly defined office space within these premises and must not be used for party political or electioneering activities of any kind.

3.2 Party political or campaign material is not permitted to be externally (or internally) displayed in an area occupied by the parliamentary office and Members should be aware that such premises must not be used as a base for canvassing or campaigning or any party activity related to the UK election.

Contact: Mairi Pearson, extension 86609

4. Parliamentary Funded Publications

4.1 Parliamentary funded publications such as annual reports, newsletters, general surveys, general circular letters, questionnaires and petitions may not be issued within 4 months of a Scottish parliamentary election, or within 3 months of a UK parliamentary general election, European parliamentary election, Scottish local government election or any national referendum.

4.2. As Members will know, this has meant that no publications have been permitted in advance of the forthcoming Scottish local government elections since 4th February 2017. With a UK general election having now been called this prohibition is now extended until 9 June 2017.

4.3 Members can apply for an exemption to issue circular letters to local residents provided such publications are solely related to a defined and specific local issue such as the closure of a local facility or the withdrawal of a local service which is time sensitive in relation to the specific deadlines. There must be a defined list of constituents who will receive the letters and the matter must not form part of a wider political campaign. Any Member intending to issue such a circular letter who wishes the costs to be reimbursed under the postage and stationery provision or office costs provision of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme, must seek prior approval by sending a copy of the intended letter to the Allowances Office for approval prior to issuing.

Contact: Mairi Pearson, extension 86609

5. Parliamentary funded websites

5.1 Members' websites, where setup and/or maintenance costs are paid from the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme, must not be used for political electioneering or canvassing.

Contact: Emma Armstrong, extension 85153

6. Corporate identity/copyright

6.1 A copy of the SPCB's existing policy in relation to use of the corporate identity can be accessed here: [Corporate Identity](#). The corporate identity should not be used in any party political publications.

Contact: Michael Peters, extension 86232

6.2 The corporate policy and copyright licence arrangements can be accessed here: [Policy on the use of SPCB Copyright Material](#)

Contact: Claire Turnbull, extension 86913

7. Bookable Meeting Rooms

7.1 Meeting rooms must be used for parliamentary purposes and not party political purposes. All bookings are made on the understanding that parliamentary business takes precedence, and that any booking may be withdrawn at short notice if the room or space is required for this purpose. If possible, alternative accommodation will be found for the external activity but this cannot be guaranteed.

7.2 Members are reminded that only Members, their staff and SPCB staff may book meeting rooms. The person under whom the booking is made must attend personally or be represented by at least one Parliament pass holder with signing-in rights. Invitations to attend a meeting in any of the Parliament's meeting rooms should only be issued in the name of the person making the booking. In the case of Cross Party Group (CPG) meetings, Members or a nominated member of their staff authorised by them will be responsible for issuing invitations to other Members to attend the CPG meeting. External invitations can be issued by external organisations but must clearly state in the opening paragraph that the CPG meeting is being hosted by named Members. The policy can be found here: [Meeting Room Policy](#)

Contact: Brian Mitchell, extension 85130

8. Media Interviews

8.1 External commentators (other than accredited journalists) must not be interviewed in the building unless there are exceptional circumstances and, in which case, the Media Relations Office has agreed to the interview taking place following consultation with the Chief Executive and Presiding Officer's offices. [Media policy - paragraph 3 refers](#).

8.2 Members can continue to undertake media interviews within offices and shared spaces as covered in the general media access policy [Media access policy](#). However, there should be no recording/filming/photography by

current Members, or anyone else, within the Parliament for electioneering or party political purposes or for inclusion in party political campaigning material.

Contact: Jane McEwan, extension 86235

9. News Conferences and Media Briefings

9.1 Parliamentary resources must not be used in the production of any press release which promotes the views of a political party or election candidate.

9.2 External parties' news conferences and media briefings must not be held at the Parliament. Members are, however, permitted to call/host news conferences or media briefings in their parliamentary role, supported by an external party. [Media policy – paragraph 5 refers](#). This precludes providing a platform for any group campaigning in relation to the UK General election, including press conferences to launch a campaign specific leaflet, pieces of research or groups allied to particular parties.

Contact: Jane McEwan, extension 86235

10. Member Sponsored Events and Exhibitions

10.1 Any Member can sponsor an event on a particular topic or issue provided it is not party political or related to election campaigning. Any event must be open to all Members. The policy can be found here: [Organising events](#).

10.2 Member sponsored exhibitions which seek to influence/raise awareness with other Members will continue as normal. As such they must not be party political or related to election campaigning. The policy can be found here: [Organising exhibitions](#)

Contact: Roy Devon, extension 86701

11. SPICe

11.1 SPICe will continue to operate as normal during the run up to the UK general election, supporting the business of the Scottish Parliament and its committees and responding to both constituency and parliamentary enquiries. However, SPICe will not respond to enquiries which are clearly related to the UK election campaign. SPICe services must not be used as any part of the election campaign.

Contact: Denis Oag, extension 85369

12. Educational visits with schools

12.1 The SPCB's policy is to offer a programme of inward and outreach education visits for Scottish schools in term-time. MSPs are invited to take part in both parts of the programme. The policy can be found here: [Education visits for schools](#).

12.2 Inward and outreach school visits will continue to run as usual apart from on the day itself of the UK Election. Whilst Outreach Services will continue to respond to requests from schools, the number of outreach visits with MSPs may naturally reduce as local authorities may issue guidance to teachers about hosting visits by politicians during this period.

Contact: Sally Coyne, extension 85393

13. Financial Assistance for Registered Political Parties

13.1 The SPCB makes payment in accordance with the Scottish Parliament (Assistance for Registered Political Parties) Order 1999 to assist a political party represented in the Parliament with any expenses incurred by the party to enable them to perform their parliamentary duties. As this money is specifically paid in connection with a party's role in the Parliament (and is audited at the end of a financial year) it must not in any way be used in connection with the general election campaign.

Contact: Derek Croll, extension 86819