

REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES SCHEME – TRAVEL AND OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION APPLICATION

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider an application submitted by Tavish Scott MSP to have the travel and expenses associated with his attending meetings in the Faroe Islands met under the provisions made at paragraphs 2.2.3 and 5.1.5 of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme.

Issues and Options

2. The Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme makes provision to meet travel and overnight costs associated with a Member undertaking their parliamentary duties. However, in relation to travel outwith the UK, with the exception of travel to Brussels and Strasbourg, Members are required to make an application to the SPCB to have such costs met.
3. The criteria previously applied when determining such applications included where the reason for the journey was:
 - Directly related to a specific constituency matter, where the visit is necessary in order to address the issue;
 - Directly related to Parliamentary business;
 - Something the SPCB considers the Parliament should be paying for;
 - Provides value for money.
4. Mr Scott's application relates to an invitation by Faroese Telecom to attend meetings to discuss strengthening the business and political ties between the Faroes and Shetland. The meetings will look at issues faced by both islands and how they can work together to solve these issues.
5. This will include the issues of access to high speed broadband, mobile telecom networks, supporting local businesses, in particular the partnering with the Shetland and Faroe space centres, as well as looking at training young apprentices in the skills required to create and support the joint efforts between the islands.
6. Mr Scott has been working in particular on the telecoms aspects of the joint venture in getting investment for 4G and broadband across Shetland and would therefore like to take up this opportunity to continue work in this area which heavily affects his constituents.

7. Mr Scott also wishes to take the opportunity to see the fixed link development that the Faroes is undertaking in terms of tunnels linking their islands and examining the parallels with Shetland. There will also be an opportunity to have other related meetings around oil and gas development and fishing.
8. The meeting will take place on the Faroe Islands on 25th and 26th February 2019.
9. Mr Scott is applying for the costs of travel from Edinburgh to the Faroe Islands at an approximate cost of £430 along with the costs of meals during the visits. Accommodation costs will be met by Faroese Telecom.

Resource Implications

10. Should the SPCB determine that the costs should be met it is confirmed that there are funds available.

Governance issues

11. As noted above The Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme makes provision to meet travel and overnight costs associated with a Member undertaking their parliamentary duties. However, in relation to travel outwith the UK, with the exception of travel to Brussels and Strasbourg, Members are required to make an application to the SPCB to have such costs met.

Publication Scheme

12. This paper can be published in accordance with the SPCB's publication scheme.

Next steps

13. To inform the Member of the decision.

Decision

14. The SPCB is invited to consider the application and determine whether the costs can be met from the Members' Travel Provision and Overnight Accommodation outside Edinburgh provision.

Allowances Office
February 2019