

## **REIMBURSEMENT OF MEMBERS' EXPENSES SCHEME – EXCEPTIONAL EXPENSES APPLICATION**

### **Executive summary**

1. The SPCB is invited to consider an application for exceptional expenses under paragraph 7.2.1 of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme to meet office relocation costs.

### **Issues and Options**

2. Under the Members' Expenses Scheme, provision is made for a Member to apply for the reimbursement of any exceptional expenses incurred by the Member in connection with the performance of parliamentary duties. An application has been received from Lewis Macdonald MSP to meet the additional costs associated with relocating to a new local office.

3. Mr Macdonald has advised that as a result of the number of his party's regional members in the North East falling from three to two following the election he has had to terminate the lease of the former shared regional office and relocate to a smaller more affordable office for a single Member occupancy. Whilst the move will produce savings over the term of the lease it has involved some exceptional and unexpected up-front costs in this financial year.

4. Mr Macdonald has incurred unexpected costs of £6,341.75 in relation to this office relocation. This breaks down as £5,269.75 in relation to the discharge of lease obligations for the former office (this being a share of dilapidation costs) and £1,072 in relation to legal costs associated with the new lease. Mr Macdonald's application is based on the fact that had he been in a position to continue with the former shared office he would not have incurred these additional costs part way through a year.

5. The SPCB will wish to note that these unexpected costs cannot currently be met from within the Office Cost Provision available to Mr Macdonald for the remainder of the current financial year due to his current commitments for rent, utilities etc. The budget available to Mr Macdonald is £17,556.80 and his commitments including these additional costs are currently £23,673.18 leaving a shortfall of £6,116.38.

6. The SPCB may also wish to note that had Mr Macdonald not been returned at the election he would have been entitled to funds under the Winding Up provision to the sum of £4,773 to meet the costs of winding up the former regional office.

### **Resource Implications**

7. Should the SPCB decide the circumstances are exceptional and the costs should be met it is confirmed that there are funds available within the overall expenses budget.

### **Governance issues**

8. There are no governance issues.

### **Publication Scheme**

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

### **Next steps**

10. To inform the Member of the decision and, if agreed, take the necessary administrative steps to allocate the appropriate funds to the exceptional expenses provision.

### **Decision**

11. The SPCB is invited to consider the application for exceptional expenses to cover the costs associated with moving to a smaller regional office.

Allowances Office  
September 2016