

## USE OF PARLIAMENTARY RESOURCES

### Executive summary

1. This paper covers proposed changes to the guidance on the use of parliamentary resources and external communications and invites the SPCB to agree the circulation to all Members of the revised version.

### Issues and Options

2. The SPCB invited officials to consider ways in which to provide further clarification to Members on the use of parliamentary resources and external communications in the light of experiences in the run up to the last general election and since the election.

3. The SPCB will see that in the light of complaints that were received prior to the election, the revised guidance links each section into a policy statement. This provides a more formal basis as SPCB policies are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members and this should also remove any argument that guidance may not be enforceable. New policy statements have been provided for publications (newsletters, annual reports etc.) at Annex A, advertisements at Annex B and political affiliation at Annex C. Previously agreed policies remain extant for the other areas of the guidance. **The SPCB is invited to agree the new policy statements.**

4. The revised guidance is attached at Annex D. The SPCB is invited to note and comment on the following:

#### New Section B – Advertisements

(a) The introduction of a new section covering advertisements with specific references to surgery adverts and contact details. This includes the policy that personal messages should not be included in such notices (B4).

(b) At B7 we propose that advertisements in party political publications are acceptable provided the market rate for such an advert is paid. **The SPCB is invited to offer a steer on this.**

#### Section C – Use of Corporate Identity

(c) At C6 we provide confirmation that all the names of the regional Members should appear in any signage even where there is more than one office, and that the font size for all names should be the same. **Does the SPCB agree?**

(d) C7 provides clarification on the use of the corporate identity on the signage for regional offices.

(e) C8 introduces a reference to social media outlets, such as twitter and facebook on parliamentary stationery. **The SPCB is invited to comment on this draft proposal.**

(f) C9 provides guidance on joint newsletters and annual reports and the use of corporate identities. **The SPCB is invited to consider if this proposed policy is acceptable.**

(g) Throughout the document we have clarified that the use of a logo or reference to party affiliation must not appear beside the Parliament's corporate identity and have suggested that it must be placed at all times below the mid-line of any letter, newsletter advert etc.

#### Section D - Political Party Affiliation

(h) We have provided a policy statement on the use of party affiliation by staff (D5).

(i) The SPCB will note that we have continued with the earlier agreed guidance whereby Members can refer to party affiliation on communications except for materials for an event or exhibition they are sponsoring at the Parliament. This is because events and exhibitions should not be used for party purposes (D9). **Is the SPCB content to continue with this policy?**

#### Section E – Newsletters and Annual Reports

(j) We have suggested expanding the paragraph on the purpose of newsletters and annual reports to re-emphasise that they should not be used to promote any person or organisation (E2).

(k) In section E5 we remind regional Members that circulation of newsletters and annual reports must be in accordance with the Code of Conduct regarding the way regional Members are expected to work by covering 2 or more constituencies over a period of time.

(l) We have expanded section E9 about the limitations of a newsletter/ annual report in respect of government or party policy. **A view from the SPCB would be welcomed on this.**

(m) E11 provides clarification on supporting local campaigns and/ or charities.

(n) We have re-emphasised that where reference is made to a government initiative it should be related to how it impacts in the Member's electoral area (E13).

(o) We have also introduced paragraphs about references to local councillors, MPs and MEPs and inserted a time limit on such references in advance of any election. We are suggesting 3 months prior to an election year (or immediately when a by-election is called). **We should be grateful for a steer from the SPCB on this issue** (E15 and 16).

(p) We have expanded the draft to cover joint newsletters (E17).

(q) The revised draft now also advises Members that parliamentary printers or photocopiers should not be used for newsletters and annual reports (E19).

#### Section G - Surveys

(r) In the section on surveys we have introduced a paragraph on joint surveys with local councillors, MPs or MEPs or references to these. **While this is drafted as permissible the SPCB may wish to offer a view on this?** (G5 and G7)

#### Section H – Websites

(s) This section replicates in more detail the guidance on newsletters, annual reports and surveys for consistency and completeness.

(t) A paragraph has been introduced to cover the situation where a Member has converted a parliamentary funded website into a personally funded site (H14).

#### **Resource Implications**

5. There are no resource implications.

#### **Governance issues**

6. Issues arising from these policies are covered by the Code of Conduct or Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme.

#### **Publication Scheme**

7. This paper may be published.

#### **Next steps**

8. Based on the discussion of this paper the policy will be finalised and prepared for issue to all Members.

#### **Decision**

9. The SPCB is invited to discuss and advise on the adoption of the proposed changes to the policies on the use of resources and external communications.

Allowances Policy  
May 2012