

## SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

### Executive summary

1. The SPCB strategic plan 2011–16 proposes the need for a new public engagement strategy for session 4. This Paper sets out the draft high level strategy for discussion with the SPCB.
2. The draft strategy is attached at **Annex A**. The foot of this diagram, “plans and activities for 2012-16”, sets out the ideas about how to continue to develop public engagement by 2016 with a significant focus on Parliament Days.
3. To help the SPCB get a feel for where these proposed developments fit in with what we are doing currently **Annex B** provides an overview of ***existing public engagement activities*** across the Parliament by type, fuller detail on each of these is provided in **Annex C**.
4. In particular, at this meeting, officials would welcome the SPCB’s agreement on the proposed activities and plans to develop public engagement during session 4.

### Issues and Options

5. This strategy draws upon experiences at Holyrood over the last 12 years and on more recent work we have carried out with a cross section of the public, looking at what they expect the Parliament to do to help them find out more about the Parliament, improve their knowledge about how to engage and the opportunities to do so.
6. The SPCB was presented with the results of the public attitudinal research last year. In summary it showed that:
  - The majority, of those surveyed, thought that the Parliament’s work is important and that they would be interested in finding out more and that mainly Parliament was open and did encourage people to get involved in issues affecting them.
  - However there were much more polarised views about whether the Parliament reaches out to all of Scotland about its work; and there was much more to be done about increasing general understanding about the Parliament’s role and mixed views about how easy it is to make contact and actually get involved.
  - It also showed that younger people and those from households with lower incomes were least likely to know about the Parliament, think it reached out to them or believe they could get involved.

7. Based on this the SPCB had previously agreed that the public engagement strand of the SPCB strategic plan should be focussed on **building understanding** about the Parliament's role and work; being **open** about what we are doing and the decisions we make; making an effort to **reach out** to all of Scotland - places and people; and encouraging people to **participate** or take action.

8. But how do we do this? Our own experience backed up by research from others in this area, such as the Hansard Society, suggests that it's a blend of different but connected activities that's most likely to have the greatest impact to achieve the above.

9. We propose that this blend of activities should focus on 5 key areas – these cover all our current engagement activities (see **Annex B**) – and what we propose for the remainder of this session. They are:

1. Supporting MSPs' engagement activities, as appropriate
2. Communicating externally about the Parliament's role, work and decisions using media, social media, the website
3. Providing information about how the Parliament works and how to engage: onsite at parliament, in people's local communities and online spaces
4. Providing educational activities and materials
5. Helping people to participate in parliamentary activities at the Parliament and in their communities and online where appropriate.

10. We will focus our efforts on people in Scotland who are or who will become voters. We will aim to target different sections of the public with a mix of general and specific activities – for example the schools programme is a specific activity focused on young people in formal education whereas tours is a general activity aimed at the visiting public. We also propose that we try to ensure that some of our engagement efforts are directed at those who are most hard to reach either geographically or for socio-economic reasons.

**The SPCB is invited to agree the overall strategic approach for public engagement.**

11. The bottom section of the strategy at **Annex A** sets out the high level ideas proposed to develop our approach to engagement in session 4. They are set out under the five key areas of activity namely – supporting MSPs, external communications, information, education and participation. A short description of each idea is summarised below.

#### Parliament Days

12. The idea of **Parliament Days** previously discussed and approved by the SPCB, will be central to the delivery of the strategy over session 4. It's a new way of working which integrates all the activities above i.e. MSP involvement (specifically committees), communication, information, education

and participation in a concentrated effort in local communities. We will focus on delivering Parliament Days as a new way of working going forward.

13. The ideas below support Parliament Days as well as engagement in general.

#### Supporting MSPs' engagement

14. Extend the availability of **video footage** of parliamentary business and other useful material so that Members can make use of it for their own websites and social media.

15. Review the effectiveness of the current **travelling exhibition**, due to conclude this financial year, and look at whether and how we might use an exhibition to support Parliament Days in local communities.

#### External communications

16. Develop our **reporting role** – packaging parliamentary news into short interesting video/audio clips that can reach a wider range of audiences via the web and social media. For example doing a small package at the start of a committee enquiry outlining what it's about, its relevance to specific groups/areas etc. and how they can participate, and placing this on our website, making it available to Members, and sharing it in relevant online spaces/communities.

17. Develop a **web and social media plan** to promote parliamentary engagement on our own website and in online spaces and communities e.g. promoting Parliament Days, supporting committees to use twitter to promote their work programmes and to engage specific groups.

#### Information

18. Open up **parliamentary data** for others to access, share without undue restriction, reuse and mash up innovatively to extend its use. For example on other sites like BBC Democracy Live etc.

19. Review and develop a plan to target accessible **parliamentary information** via Parliament Days, in the Parliament's public spaces, MSPs' local offices, and other local community spaces (physical and online such as mumsnet), where it is most visible and accessible to the public in their day to day lives.

#### Education

20. Based on feedback, pilot the successful **communities' conference**, which aims to help local groups and networks practically learn more about how to engage with Parliament, beyond Holyrood into a region, as part of Parliament Days.

21. Increase uptake from **under represented schools** in the inward and outward education programme. This will include geographical and socio-economic factors. Again Parliament Days provide an opportunity to do this.

### Participation

22. Offer support to committees and Convenors' Group considering new initiatives and best practice for the promotion and delivery of the public engagement aspects of **committee business**.

23. **The SPCB is invited to provide an early steer on whether the high level ideas to develop public engagement in session 4 are suitable for further development, and to be brought back to SPCB as worked up papers.**

### Resource Implications / Next steps

24. All offices involved in delivery of the public engagement strategy have undergone reviews to achieve staff and non-staff savings, as part of the change management programme. This has meant a reduction in engagement activities and in staffing levels.

25. As budget and staffing levels are now at a fixed level post the cuts, the Public Engagement Board will need to consider carefully how to implement the strategy. Papers on each initiative will be brought forward to the SPCB for discussion in session 4. Each proposal will include financial analysis of how it can be delivered within existing resources.

### Governance issues

26. The Public Engagement Strategy will be monitored and reported as part of the delivery of the SPCB strategic plan for session 4.

27. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out for the strategy. We recognise that the SPCB Public Engagement Strategy has an important role to play in ensuring the Parliament continues to reach out to all sectors of Scottish society including those who are considered protected groups under the Equalities Act.

### Publication Scheme

28. The engagement strategy should be published once approved by the SPCB.

### Decision

29. **The SPCB is invited to agree the overall strategic approach for public engagement.**

**30. The SPCB is invited to provide an early steer on whether the high level ideas to develop public engagement in session 4 are suitable for further development, and to be brought back to SPCB as worked up papers.**

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