

PARLIAMENTARY PUBLICATIONS

Executive summary

1. The SPCB has recently agreed a revised policy on Members' publications. A further issue has arisen in relation to an inconsistency on the use of colour on printed parliamentary letter headed paper and other publications such as newsletters. This requires clarification and subject to the decision of the SPCB could usefully be incorporated in the publications policy.

Issues and Options

2. While this paper refers specifically to headed stationery and paid for publications the issue is a wider one and any proposed policy would cover all material (whether printed or electronic) which is funded by the Parliament centrally or by a capped provision. This would include headed paper, business cards, leaflets, newsletters, surveys, advertisements etc.

Headed Stationery

3. Headed stationery is provided to all Members centrally to support them with their parliamentary duties. The paper can be used to correspond with constituents, with third parties and for any other form of parliamentary business. While a Member is entitled to refer to their party affiliation and electoral status alongside their name, we do not consider that the paper itself, which incorporates the parliament's corporate identity, should be used to reflect a Member's party political affiliation.

4. We have been made aware that some Members wish to use a coloured strap line down the side of the headed paper or to overprint their contact details in the recognised colour of their political party. This appears to be at odds with the position just stated. However, the guidelines on the use of parliamentary stationery and the policy on the use of the corporate identity are silent on such matters.

5. The original policy on the use of the corporate identity stated that in respect of customising headed stationery:

"At their own expense, with costs being charged to their Local Office Costs Allowance, members may overprint Letterheads and Compliments Slips with the following details only:

Name
Address (constituency or regional)
Telephone Number
Email Address
Fax Number

- There should be no reference made to party affiliation.
- No other overprinting is permitted.
- Any overprinting must use black ink or the Parliament's purple (pantone 2607)".

6. When the policy was revisited this section was omitted, but we can find no decision taken by the SPCB to remove it. We would therefore invite the SPCB to consider that we incorporate into the current guidelines on the use of parliamentary stationery a section on customising headed stationery as per the original policy set out in paragraph 5, but updated to recognise social media. At the same time we can make some more general changes for the current guidelines to sit alongside the recently agreed policy on Members' publications. One of these changes would be to adopt the guidelines as the SPCB policy on stationery.

7. A copy of a revised policy is attached at Annex A with the changes highlighted. **Does the SPCB agree?**

Other publications

8. There are no limitations placed on the colours used on paid for publications with Members regularly printing publications using the background or headings associated with their respective political parties. It has been suggested that, as both headed stationery and paid for publications (annual reports, newsletters etc.) are required to include the Parliament's corporate identity there should be greater flexibility on overprinting of parliamentary headed stationery.

9. The argument is that, in the eyes of the public, whatever type of paper product they are looking at, if they see the Parliament's corporate identity they will know it is an official document. Why is it, therefore, that there is one set of rules for publications and another for letterhead?

10. We consider that there is a legitimate issue here and it is not consistent or helpful for Members to have different interpretations on what is issued using parliamentary resources. To address this we have outlined below 4 possible options:

11. Option 1. Should the SPCB agree that the overprinting of headed stationery be restricted to the use of black ink or the Parliament's corporate colour, an argument could be made that any other form of parliamentary publication should follow the same principle. This would clearly identify it as a parliamentary publication, the content of which should be in accordance with the recently agreed policy on publications and funded from parliamentary resources. The primary purpose of such publications is in relation to a Member's parliamentary duties and, as such, should be parliamentary in nature.

12. In practice, this would mean that annual reports, newsletters, surveys and other web based publications produced and issued using parliamentary resources would primarily have the Parliament's corporate colours (including tints and tones) as the background and header. This would also be more consistent with the use of the corporate identity. The use of photographs and decisions on content would remain entirely for individual Members, but it would mean that paid for publications could not be produced in other colours.

13. Option 2. This option would be for the corporate identity to appear on headed stationery but not on paid for publications. This would be a move away from the policy agreed recently on publications. We recognise that Members like the flexibility of the use of colours on newsletters. At the same time, we consider it is important that we are consistent with the use of parliamentary stationery and resources. The Parliament's corporate identity gives a publication the endorsement of it being linked with the Parliament.

14. This option would therefore provide a distinction between what is official parliamentary headed stationery, carrying the corporate identity and paid for publications which would not carry the corporate identity. Annual reports and surveys would still be required to include the statement that they have been produced using parliamentary resources but not including the corporate identity could provide flexibility on the use of colours, thereby separating the policy on stationery.

15. Option 3. If the SPCB does not accept the recommendation in paragraphs 11 and 13, this option could provide for both parliamentary headed stationery and other publications to be overprinted and designed in any colour.

16. Option 4. This is in effect the status quo with headed stationery de facto not being overprinted and with no restriction on colours for paid for publications. Both forms of publication would carry the Parliament's corporate identity.

Consideration

17. We consider that it is vital to uphold the integrity of the Parliament and ensure that 'official' publications using parliamentary resources reflect this and are not linked in any way to a political party. An obvious association with a political party is the use of colour.

18. It is potentially confusing to have a policy that is inconsistent in how it deals with different forms of publication/ use of paper. Should a letter or publication be prepared using parliamentary resources, the costs of which are met out of parliamentary funds then there is a strong argument that all such material should reflect the Parliament's identity, both by way of the use of the corporate identity and the Parliament's corporate colours.

19. It is acknowledged that Members use the Parliamentary headed stationery appropriately. It is also the case, however, that a number of

Members, in designing their annual reports or newsletter, use their respective party political colour as background. While the Parliament's corporate identity appears on such publications and a statement explains how the costs have been met there could be a perception issue if it is in the colours of a political party.

20. Option 1 is certainly the clearest. However, we do accept that it reduces the flexibility that Members may have on paid for publications.

21. Should the SPCB agree to implement option 1 we have prepared a revised policy document at Annex B to show how this would be incorporated into the recently agreed policy on Members' publications. **The SPCB is, however, invited to consider which option it considers the most appropriate.**

Resource Implications

22. There are no resource implications. To avoid bearing the cost of replacing any publications already in progress of being printed we could provide a lead-in period for this part of the policy to be implemented. This could be 1 January or 1 April for example.

Governance issues

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

Publication Scheme

24. This paper may be published when the policy has been agreed and circulated to Members.

Next steps

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

Decision

26. The SPCB is now invited to consider:

- Whether a section on customising parliamentary headed stationery should be incorporated into the policy on parliamentary stationery.
- How to make the policy more consistent on the use of parliamentary headed paper and other paid for publications.