

7 December 2011

## **REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES SCHEME – EXCEPTIONAL EXPENSES**

### **Executive summary**

1. The SPCB is invited to consider an application for exceptional expenses under paragraph 7.2 of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme to meet additional costs incurred as a result of moving office.

### **Issues and Options**

2. Under the 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 for exceptional expenses to meet the costs incurred as a result of relocating his local office.

3. Mr Macdonald is a regional MSP, having previously been a constituency Member. Following the election, Mr Macdonald decided to share a regional office in Aberdeen with another regional Member. The constituency local office he occupied prior to the election was not large enough to accommodate two Members and their support staff. It was therefore necessary for Mr Macdonald to move office. The other regional Member also had an office in the last parliamentary session but, like Mr Macdonald, this office was not large enough for two Members and staff.

4. It has taken several months for suitable new premises to be identified in Aberdeen, and as a result Mr Macdonald was required to extend the lease on the office he occupied at the time and, as well as the continuing rental and associated costs, it has also resulted in legal fees of £508.80 being incurred.

5. New office premises have now been identified and both regional Members have now moved into these new premises. Mr Macdonald has also incurred his half share of legal fees in relation to the new office totalling £1,502.

6. In addition, the relocation of the office has involved a number of non-recurring costs for signage and redirection of mail. These costs are in the region of £500. There are also a number of one-off costs associated with the new office such as installation of an alarm system and gas boiler safety check, of which Mr Macdonald's half share is anticipated to be in the region of £500.

7. Mr Macdonald anticipates he will have a shortage of between £2,000 and £3,000 in his Office Cost Provision in the current year and has made an application to have additional funds up to £3,000 to be made available. Mr

Macdonald has also advised that he expects to be able to fund the running of his office in subsequent years within the relevant provision limits.

8. Mr Macdonald has not incurred or had any rental deposit costs returned nor has he vired any funds from his Office Cost Provision to his Staff Cost Provision.

9. The SPCB is invited to consider whether this application is for exceptional circumstances. Should the SPCB agree, we would propose that reimbursement is limited, in the first instance, to £2,000 which could be reviewed towards the end of the financial year.

### **Resource Implications**

10. 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**

11. There are no governance issues.

### **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 for exceptional expenses to meet the anticipated shortfall in the Office Cost Provision

Allowances Policy  
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