2016 ELECTION PLANNING BOARD: ORIENTATION FOR NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS

Executive summary

1. This paper sets out proposals for supporting newly elected Members after the election on 5 May 2016 and seeks guidance from the SPCB on the scope and content of such support.

Issues and Options

2. Following previous elections, the focus of official support for newly elected and returning Members has been on ensuring that Members have all of the facilities they require to operate, such as office allocation, IT provision, and support with employing staff. The Parliament has largely left support and orientation on parliamentary and political aspects of a Member’s role to political parties. Discussions with current Members have demonstrated that there is a demand for more structured orientation and ongoing support following election. This paper, therefore, proposes a programme of orientation for newly elected Members which aims to give those Members a substantial introduction to parliamentary processes and procedures to assist them in performing the role to which they have been elected. This will be delivered alongside the more practical support referred to above.

3. The Presiding Officer has held informal discussions with the current Business Managers, all of whom support the development of such a programme. In order to facilitate the programme, the Presiding Officer is currently minded to call the first meeting of the Parliament following the election on Thursday, 13 May. This will allow for registration of all MSPs, orientation of new MSPs and the Kirking of the Parliament to take place on Monday 10 to Wednesday 12 May.

Scope and Content

4. There is a balance to be struck between the volume of new information that newly elected Members can be expected to absorb and the demands on their time following the election. However, it is incumbent on the Parliament to provide the necessary information and support to allow Members to begin their parliamentary roles as well-informed as they can be.

5. Current plans for the programme remain at a broad level for now, but will be worked up by the Election Planning Board following input from the SPCB, Business Managers and others. A rough outline, which takes into account feedback from current Members, is set out in Annex A to assist discussion.
6. It is proposed to appoint Orientation Guides from the parliamentary staff to support individual newly elected Members in the first days and weeks of the new session. Guides will be given training in the basics of a wide range of parliamentary services in order to provide Members with a single source of information and advice as they become more familiar with their new roles. Guides will be available to Members for as long after the election as Members see fit.

7. Alongside the central aim of the programme, it is hoped that new Members will be provided with an opportunity to establish contacts across party lines and to begin to build networks with other Members and parliamentary officials. The inclusion of lunch, a group photo and an evening reception in the programme is designed to facilitate these developments. The reception, to which it is intended to invite partners, will be hosted by the Presiding Officer and will be attended by parliamentary staff.

8. In order to ensure high participation levels in the programme and to further enhance these benefits, it is proposed that accommodation in Edinburgh be provided for the Sunday to the Wednesday night for those who require it. As Members will not at that point have access to the Edinburgh Accommodation Allowance, it is proposed that these costs be met by the Parliament. Doing so may serve to further underline the commitment the Parliament is making to the new intake.

9. Finally, the SPCB may wish to note that the orientation programme is not being viewed in isolation. As the SPCB will recall, plans are at an advanced stage for a programme of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for all Members to be rolled out in Session 5 and it is intended that the orientation programme will be delivered as an introduction for new Members to CPD. The Election Planning Board has as one of its members a member of the CPD for Members Working Group in order to provide a natural link between initial orientation and ongoing personal development in the longer term.

**Practice elsewhere**

10. Close contact has been established with those responsible for running the induction programme for newly elected MPs following the election to the House of Commons in May. As with the Scottish Parliament, this was the first time that the House of Commons had attempted to provide direct induction to Members following an election. The programme consisted of registration followed by an initial overview delivered by the Clerk of the Parliament and former Members, and then a series of briefing sessions delivered by a mix of former Members and relevant senior officials. The programme was praised widely by new Members and others and generally held to be very successful and we are keen to learn from that experience. Contact has also been made with the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly and Dáil Éireann, all of which will have elections next year. Ideas and approaches have been and will continue to be shared among our institutions in the run-up to those elections.
**Resource Implications**

11. The main cost attaching to the programme is the cost of overnight accommodation referred to in paragraph 8. Not all newly elected Members will require or desire accommodation but a working assumption of around 30 Members at 4 nights each at a local hotel would require £15,000 of funding. There will also be costs attaching to the evening reception on the Monday, which are estimated at around £2,000. The proposed lunch on the Monday between registration and the first session in the Chamber would cost around £840. All of these costs and the costs of the Kirking of the Parliament can be met from the Corporate Events and Exhibitions budget. The costs for running the programme itself largely consist of officials’ time and can be met from existing office budgets.

**Governance issues**

12. The programme will be developed and delivered by the 2016 Election Planning Board which was established in June. The Board has a full programme plan for all activity relating to the election and associated risk register to which orientation for newly elected Members will be added. It is also intended to run an equalities impact assessment for the whole programme and for the orientation programme more specifically.

**Publication Scheme**

13. This paper will be published.

**Decision**

14. The SPCB is asked to consider and discuss the proposal for a formal orientation programme for newly elected Members following the 2016 Election. A general steer on scope and content is sought and specific advice on delivery methods such as oral presentations or electronic delivery and the use of former or returning Members to deliver sessions would assist in further developing plans.

15. The SPCB is also asked to agree:

- the costs of overnight accommodation for newly elected Members for the orientation programme (para 11);
- the costs of lunch and evening reception on the first day of the programme (para 11); and
- the proposal to appoint Orientation Guides from among Parliamentary staff to assist new Members in the first days and weeks of the new Session (para 6).

David McGill
September 2015
Draft Programme

**Monday 9 May**

- From 9am: Registration\(^1\) **Garden Lobby**
  - Introductory tour of the building (optional)
- 12.30pm: Lunch **Members’ Room**
- 2.00pm: Group Photograph **Garden Lobby**
- 2.15pm: Session 1: Chamber Business **Chamber**
  - Standards and Interests
- 4.30pm: Finish
- 6.30pm: Evening reception **Garden Lobby**

**Tuesday 10 May**

- 2.00pm: Session 2: Setting up an office **Garden Lobby**
  - The role of SPICe
- 4.30pm: Close

**Wednesday 11 May**

- 2.00pm: Session 3: Committee and Committee Business **Garden Lobby**
  - An Introduction to Legislation
- 4pm: Close
- 6.00pm: Kirking of the Parliament (all Members) **St Giles’ Cathedral**

**Thursday 12 May**

- 10am\(^2\): First Meeting of the Parliament, Session 5 **Chamber**
  - Oath Taking
- 2pm: Election of Presiding Officer **Garden Lobby**
  - Election of Deputy Presiding Officer

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\(^1\) includes issuing of Parliamentary passes, initial allocation of offices, allocation of IT equipment, appointment of Guides etc.

\(^2\) Timings subject to PO discretion