



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme – Winding up costs 7 October 2021 Reference: SPCB (2021) Paper 61

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider an application by a former Member for additional monies to meet the projected overspend in their winding up provision in relation to dilapidation costs under the exceptional expenses provision of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme.

Issues and options

2. Maureen Watt stood down at the 2021 election and was subsequently entitled to a Winding up Provision to meet the costs of winding up her parliamentary business. This included meeting any dilapidation costs associated with ending the lease for her local office and her obligations within that lease in relation to the condition of the office.
3. Upon giving notice Ms Watt's landlord engaged the services of a company to survey the building to identify any dilapidation work required and assess the cost of the work. That initial survey identified a range of work required to bring the office back up to acceptable standards and with that work plus surveyor, solicitor and contractor fees the total initial bill came to £20,042. Given the high amount Ms Watt challenged the findings and sought alternative quotes for the work required with the aim of meeting her lease obligations but at a lower cost. Ms Watt and her staff have also undertaken some of the minor works themselves in order to reduce the cost.
4. Ms Watt's Winding up Provision limit is £7,258 and to date she has spent £6,519.24 on closing down her parliamentary affairs and paying final rent, utility bills etc leaving her with a balance of £738.76. She also has a total unused balance of £2,214.19 against her Office cost provision, Surgery Advertising Provision, Edinburgh Accommodation Provision and Telecommunications provision for the period of 1 April 2021 to 5 May 2021.
5. Ms Watt has two dilapidation bills outstanding for fees and electrical work to a total of £6,088.70. At present only £738.76 of these costs could be met from within current limits. Whilst Ms Watt has reduced her initial office dilapidation costs from £20k to £9,971.18 this is still more than her winding up provision limit without taking account of her other winding up needs.

6. Ms Watt has also been in dispute since June 2020 in relation to a water charge for the local office for £1947.10 due to the company stating water usage has increased whilst the office had been closed. The office continue to dispute this bill. This alongside the remaining unpaid dilapidation costs totals £8,035.80.
7. Ms Watt would currently have sufficient monies to meet the outstanding water bill in full should the amounts not be successfully disputed from her remaining office cost and other provisions if combined should the SPCB be content for us to do this in line with the approach taken on the new Expenses Scheme.
8. The SPCB is invited to consider Ms Watt's application for further financial support under the exceptional expenses provision for additional monies to meet these outstanding winding up and dilapidation costs at an additional cost of £5,349.94 (£6,088.70 of outstanding bills less current balance of £738.76).

Governance

9. The Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme allows application for additional costs to meet one-off exceptional expenses under the exceptional expenses provision.

Resource implications

10. The additional costs can be met within the overall Members' Expenses budget if agreed.

Publication Scheme

11. This paper can be published in line with the publication scheme.

Next steps

12. To advise the former member of the outcome and if the SPCB agree to meet the additional dilapidation costs from the Scheme pay the final invoices.

Decision

13. The SPCB is invited to:
 - Consider the application for additional monies under the exceptional expenses provision as details above.

Allowances Office
September 2021