



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme – Use of Parliamentary Resources

18 February 2021

Reference: SPCB(2021)Paper 09

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider a complaint regarding the website of Miles Briggs MSP, which has been paid for using parliamentary resources.

Issues and options

2. A complaint was received on 19th January which raised concerns about some of the content on Mr Briggs' website as well as the content of a Facebook post by Mr Briggs, both of which indicate they were paid for from parliamentary resources and which contain party political material.
3. Under Section 7 of the Code of Conduct Members must abide by the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme and the policies of the SPCB. The SPCB's policy on Members' publications and the website guidance states that websites and publications funded through parliamentary allowances must not contain any material that promotes the political views of any person, political party, the government, or other organisation involved in political campaigning.
4. The Allowances office have looked into the matter and can advise that having reviewed the Facebook post and Mr Briggs' website that the content of the Facebook post does link to party-political materials and some elements of the website do not meet the requirements of the publications policy or website guidance in various ways including tweets of a political nature, press releases and standard responses that read as being Conservative and Unionist party releases and/or promote the party view and position on matters as well as more administrative issues such as referring to the Government as SNP Government which is not permitted.
5. Whilst set up and domain costs have been paid for the website of £878.12 no costs have been met in relation to the Facebook post. Having spoken to Mr Briggs about the matter he has confirmed that the Facebook costs have been met by him personally and that although Facebook have added that the costs have been met from parliamentary resources this is not the

case and is an administrative error by Facebook. Mr Briggs has advised that he will ensure Facebook do not include such a declaration in future posts of this nature.

6. The SPCB may wish to note that the options available to Mr Briggs in order to not breach the publication policy and website guidance are:
 - a. To bring his website into line with the publications policy and website guidance in order for the costs already paid, and any future costs, to be met from the Members' Expenses Scheme; or
 - b. To repay the monies already met for the website and meet all future costs personally and therefore use the website as a non-parliamentary funded personal website, for which the content does not need amended.
7. The SPCB is invited to determine whether they wish to take any action on the matter, and if so what action they would like to take.

Governance

8. The SPCB's policy on Members' publications and the website guidance states that a websites and publications funded through parliamentary allowances must not contain any material that promotes the political views of any person, political party, the government, or other organisation involved in political campaigning.

Resource implications

9. As mentioned above costs for the website have been paid out in a previous financial year. Should the SPCB give Mr Briggs the option to repay the monies this will be repaid into the wider Members Expenses budget for this financial year.

Publication Scheme

10. This paper can be published in accordance with the SPCB's publication Scheme.

Next steps

11. To inform the Member and the complainant of the SPCB decision.

Decision

12. The SPCB is invited to consider the complaint and decide what, if any action, it wished to take on the matter.

Allowances Office

18 February 2021