



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Officeholders – Contingency Fund Application 18 March 2021 Reference: SPCB(2021)Paper 21

Executive summary

1. This paper invites the SPCB to consider a contingency fund application from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.
2. The Officeholders' Contingency Fund for 2020/21 is £400k of which £79,740 remains available.

Issues and options

3. Individual officeholders' budgets do not contain contingency funding. Instead, the SPCB has established a separate central Officeholders' Contingency Fund for exceptional one-off expenditure which cannot be met from an officeholder's approved budget for any given year. This arrangement also prevents an officeholder's budget baseline increasing due to one-off costs in any given financial year.
4. Contingency funding may be requested for costs such as defending legal actions, IT projects and for temporary staff cover for maternity absences etc.
5. Requests for contingency funding can be made at any time of the year but we would not expect an officeholder to draw down the funding until it is clear that they are unable to meet the costs, in full or part, from their approved budget.
6. The officeholders have kept officials informed of potential calls on the Contingency Fund throughout the year.

Contingency Application

7. Three of the SPCB supported officeholders are co-located at Bridgeside House. The officeholders all share the meetings rooms which are also made available to other public sector organisations. Given the increasing demand for video conferencing facilities, to help reduce the environmental impact from travel and for increased efficiency, the Ombudsman is seeking contingency funding of £25k for video conferencing equipment for the shared meeting rooms at Bridgeside House.

8. Colleagues in BIT have confirmed that the approach taken by the Ombudsman was correct and that the equipment she is proposing to buy is of good quality. BIT also confirmed that given the increasing use of video conferencing to facilitate business requirements that it would be appropriate for the Ombudsman to fitout the rooms as proposed.

9. The Ombudsman's application is attached at Annex A.

Governance

10. The SPCB has a statutory duty to approve the officeholders' funding. As this request is for contingency funding, SPCB approval is required.

Resource implications

11. The Officeholders' approved Contingency Fund for 2020/21 is £400k of which £320,260 has already been committed (e.g. SPSO and SHRC staffing, ESC restructuring and SIC and SCS legal costs).

12. As there is £79,740 still available, there is sufficient funding to meet this request.

Publication Scheme

13. This paper can be published.

Decision

14. The SPCB is invited to approve the contingency funding application from the Ombudsman.

Officeholder Services

March 2021