

Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme – Use of Parliamentary Resources

23 March 2021 by Correspondence

Reference: SPCB(2021)Paper 23

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The SPCB is invited to consider a complaint regarding the use of parliamentary resources by Peter Chapman MSP.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS

2. A complaint was received on 2nd March 2021 which raised concerns about an email containing a Conservative and Unionist Party press release, attached at Annex A, which was issued by a member of staff employed through the Reimbursement of Members Expenses Scheme using their parliamentary email account and also using a party focused job title "Press manager, Scottish Conservative North East region media". The content of the majority of the press release is parliamentary in nature but some areas could be considered as party political and/or campaigning. The news release was issued on behalf of Peter Chapman MSP.
3. Under Section 7 of the Code of Conduct Members must abide by the rules of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme and the policies of the SPCB. The SPCB's policies on the use of parliamentary resources and the Scheme state that parliamentary resources must not be used for party political purposes or political campaigning.
4. The Allowances Office has looked into the matter and can confirm that the email was issued by a member of staff employed as part of a pool that supports Mr Chapman. Mr Chapman has advised that this was a release about his parliamentary duties which was inadvertently sent out using the incorrect headings. Mr Chapman stated that it was not a party press release.
5. The SPCB will wish to note that parliamentary resources and staff time paid for from the Members' Expenses Scheme were used to issue the email. The SPCB will wish to that as the cost is so small it is not possible to determine the costs associated with the issuing of the email.
6. The SPCB is invited to determine whether a breach has occurred, and if so, whether they wish to take any action on the matter.
7. Given the limited financial implications, we suggest that a course of action would be for the Presiding Officer to write to the Member seeking assurances that this will not happen again. We would also suggest that this paper is also published (alongside other SPCB papers) on the website this week. The SPCB will be aware

that we would normally publish papers following a meeting of the SPCB, but that it is unlikely there will be another meeting this session.

GOVERNANCE

8. The Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme and the SPCB's policies on use of parliamentary resources state that parliamentary resources must not be used for party political purposes or for political campaigning.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9. Any cost to parliamentary resources would be incalculable due the small amount of usage.

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 if it considers a breach has occurred, agree that
 - The Presiding Officer, on behalf of the SPCB, writes to Mr Chapman seeking his assurances this will not happen again; and
 - This paper is published on the website this week.

Allowances Office
23 March 2021

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party press office

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

FAO: all newsdesks

Embargo: for immediate release

A held-up review of Scotland's education system must be published before May's election, according to a local MSP.

North East region MSP Peter Chapman made the call after a Holyrood vote to release the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development review, after the SNP delayed its publication by three months.

Scottish Conservative Mr Chapman said parents and teachers deserve to see the report's findings and the verdict they will deliver on the SNP's record on education.

He said: "By refusing to release this report prior to May's election, John Swinney and the SNP Government are running scared of its findings.

"This report is sitting on Mr Swinney's desk right now, but it is clear he doesn't want to be transparent with voters ahead of the election.

"The Scottish Conservatives have demanded this report is published immediately and secured cross-party support for this in parliament. If the SNP refuse to do so, it is typical of their arrogant attitude.

"I am also supporting our party's proposals to set up an immediate and urgent national catch-up and tutoring scheme to avoid a lost generation of pupils including many in Aberdeenshire who have had to endure such disruption.

"We have lobbied the First Minister directly over this and are pushing for urgent meetings to get this off the ground.

"The SNP pretend that education is their number one priority when they are busy focusing on drafting plans for another reckless independence referendum.

"Parents and pupils deserve better than this distracted government."

Mr Chapman is also backing plans by the party for a national catch-up plan to prevent a lost generation of pupils who have had schooling disrupted due to Covid.

Even before the pandemic, Scottish schools slipped to their lowest international scores in science and maths under the SNP.

After 13 years in charge, the SNP have failed to cut class sizes for Primary 1-3.

Ends

Notes

- **The SNP have used the COVID-19 crisis to postpone a crucial curriculum review.** The publication of the OECD review of the

SNP's failed curriculum reform was meant to take place in February 2021, however, this has now been pushed back to June 2021 - after the next Holyrood elections (Herald Scotland, 28 April 2020, [link](#)).

- **Under the SNP, Scottish schools have slipped to their lowest international scores in science and maths.** Scotland's science and maths scores in the international PISA rankings have dropped below those of England and Wales and are now lower than at any time since the rankings were introduced in 2000. The score for reading improved slightly on the previous results but is still only at 2012 levels. (OECD, PISA 2019, 3 December 2019, [link](#)).
- **After 13 years in charge, the SNP have failed to cut class sizes for Primary 1-3.** In their 2007 manifesto the SNP promised 'We will reduce class sizes in Primary 1, 2 and 3 to eighteen pupils or less to give children more time with their teacher at this vital stage of their development.' But in 2020 only 14 per cent of P1-3 pupils were in classes of 18 or fewer and the average class size was 22.9. (SNP Manifesto 2007, Page 52, [link](#); Scottish Government, Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland 2020, 15 December 2020, [link](#)).
- **The architect of the SNP's curriculum reforms has said that the way they were implemented has narrowed young people's education.** The Commission on School Reform, chaired by Keir Bloomer, said: 'There has been a substantial decline in the number of examination subjects that the individual pupil can study across the country...This restriction of choice entails an obvious adverse effect on those pupils seeking passes in several sciences or modern languages. More generally, it reduces the number of qualifications pupils hold at the point of leaving S4 and can thus restrict subject choice in S5. The curriculum has been narrowed'. (Commission on School Reform, Submission to OECD review of Curriculum for Excellence, 7 November 2020, Page 5, [link](#)).

Press manager

Scottish Conservative North East region media

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