



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# **Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme – Edinburgh Accommodation Application**

**24 February 2022**

**Reference: SPCB (2022) Paper 12**

## **Executive summary**

1. The SPCB is invited to consider an application from Natalie Don MSP whose main residence is in a constituency listed in Group 2 of Annex A of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme to be considered as falling into Group 3 of Annex A and thereby having the ability to lease a flat as Edinburgh Accommodation for the remainder of the parliamentary session instead of only being able to use hotel accommodation.

## **Issues and options**

1. Under Section 2 of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme, paragraph 2.1.2 enables a disabled Member or a Member with caring responsibilities for dependents whose main residence is in a constituency listed in Group Two of Annex A, to apply to the SPCB for reimbursement of the costs to lease a residential property as detailed in paragraphs 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 of the Scheme.
2. This change was introduced to the Scheme from the start of this session with the aim of improving support to both disabled Members and those with caring responsibilities for dependents following feedback from Members on this matter during the review of the Scheme.
3. Ms Don's application seeks SPCB consideration for her to be considered as a Group 3 Member thus enabling her to lease a flat and more easily fulfil her current caring responsibilities for two young children, one of whom requires to be with or near Ms Don the majority of the time, whilst also enabling Ms Don to carry out her parliamentary duties in Edinburgh. Since the start of the session Ms Don has been making use of hotels when she has been in Edinburgh but this is now more difficult with the need to bring her children with her and carry all the clothes and equipment that such travelling and staying overnight requires. If the SPCB

were to agree Ms Don's application this would allow her to leave the clothes and equipment she needs for her and her children in Edinburgh and to travel and attend Parliament whilst fulfilling her caring responsibilities much more easily.

4. If agreed the lease would be for the remainder of the current parliamentary session with Ms Don's ongoing needs reassessed in time for the start of the next parliamentary session as appropriate or necessary.

## **Governance**

5. The Members' Expenses Scheme does provide for such applications in Section 2, paragraph 2.1.2 and was amended to enable the SPCB to consider the provision of such support for qualifying Members on application by exception.

## **Resource implications**

6. Ms Don will not be entitled to any additional monies under the Edinburgh Accommodation than she would be as a Group 2 Member and would be entitled to costs only up to the annual limit in line with other Group 2 and Group 3 Members.

## **Publication Scheme**

7. This paper can be published under the publication scheme.

## **Next steps**

8. If agreed Allowances Office will advise the Member of the decision and the Member will seek appropriate accommodation in Edinburgh.

## **Decision**

9. The SPCB is invited to consider the application from Ms Don to be considered as a Group 3 Member for the purposes of Edinburgh Accommodation to enable her to lease a flat in Edinburgh for use in relation to attending parliamentary business.