



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme – Travel Application

By Correspondence

Reference: SPCB (2023) Paper 67

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider an application submitted by Foysof Choudhury MSP to have the travel costs associated with a visit to India to attend meetings and do research connected with the Cross Party Group on India from 7th to 13th October 2023 met under the provisions made at paragraphs 2.2.3 of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme.

Issues and options

2. The Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme makes provision to meet travel costs associated with a Member undertaking their parliamentary duties and in 2012 the SPCB agreed this could include Members' travel in relation to Cross Party Groups to carry out research related to parliamentary business. However, in relation to travel outwith the UK, Members are still required to make an application to the SPCB to have any associated costs met from the Scheme.
3. The criteria previously applied when determining such applications included where the reason for the journey was:
 - a. Directly related to a specific constituency matter, where the visit is necessary in order to address the issue;
 - b. Directly related to Parliamentary business;
 - c. Something the SPCB considers the Parliament should be paying for;
 - d. Provides value for money.
4. The purpose of Mr Choudhury's visit was to meet with government officials and businesspeople to discuss each countries approach to meeting net zero

and providing education. The meetings also considered ways to strengthen links between India and Scotland and how to learn from each other in these and other areas. The majority of Mr Choudhury's costs relating to the visit are being met externally and it is only the cost of travelling to and from the airport and parking for the duration of the visit that are being requested from the Scheme.

5. Costs related to driving from Edinburgh to Glasgow airport and return and parking for the period of the journey. This equates to approx. £51 in mileage and £115 in parking, totalling £166.
6. Mr Choudhury was unaware until the night before travelling that he would require SPCB approval for these costs to be met from the Scheme, particularly given all other costs were being met external to the Parliament.
7. The SPCB will wish to note that we are also aware that at least two other Members also undertook the visit but we have yet to be approached by those Members in relation to any claims being met from the Scheme.

Governance

8. There are no governance issues as the Scheme provides for Members travelling abroad and applying to the SPCB for the costs to be met from the Scheme prior to travelling.

Resource implications

9. Should the SPCB determine that the costs should be met it is confirmed that there are sufficient funds available within the overall Members budget for 2023-24.

Publication Scheme

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

Next steps

11. Advise the Member of the SPCB's decision and if the SPCB agree the travel costs can be met from the Scheme reimburse the Member accordingly.

Decision

12. The SPCB is invited to

- a. consider an application from Mr Choudhury for the cost of travel to be met from the Members' Expenses Scheme for a visit to India as detailed above; and
- b. If costs are agreed in principle, delegate approval of any further travel claims associated with this visit to the Head of Allowances, provided they are deemed reasonable and only relate to travel costs within Scotland.

Allowances Office

24 October 2023