



Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body
Thursday 11 December 2025 (Session 6)

MSPs: Use of parliamentary resources policy

Executive summary

1. In September 2024, the SPCB commissioned work from officials to review all SPCB policies that comprise the bank of policies applicable to Members as part of the Code of Conduct, to ensure they are fit for purpose ahead of Session 7.
2. The MSPs: use of parliamentary resources policy was reviewed as part of this commissioned work. As a result, the SPCB is invited to agree the proposed updated policy at Annex B.

Issues and options

3. The use of parliamentary resources policy has until now been very concise in its form, see the current policy attached at Annex A. It was felt that this did not always necessarily provide clarity for Members or parliamentary officials on what is considered a parliamentary resource under the policy, what Members responsibilities were and what the potential consequences were of being in breach of the policy.
4. Parliamentary officials have therefore looked to expand the content of the policy to provide better clarity; include information on what is covered by the policy; and highlight the implications for Members of breaching the policy.
5. The basis of the policy has not changed in that it continues to place a responsibility on Members to only use parliamentary resources to support them in carrying out their parliamentary duties and that any personal usage should not be to any significant extent. However, the SPCB may wish to consider whether they are content with this approach or whether they wish to update the policy position to simply say there should be no personal use of parliamentary resources rather than Members and officials defining what “significant extent” is as this could be interpreted differently by Members and officials.
6. Changes the SPCB will wish to note when considering the proposed new policy are:
 - The inclusion of an interpretation section which provides information on what is meant by parliamentary resources, the Scheme and Members' duties in the policy;

Reference: SPCB (2025) - Paper 71

- How the policy applies to Members when making use of parliamentary resources and what Members should have regard to including:
 - the Nolan principles
 - the need for value for money
 - observance of the SPCB's financial and governance arrangements
 - equality of opportunity for all people
 - sustainable development
 - maintaining the reputation of the Parliament, and
 - the limitations of the overall resources made available to all Members.
- Reiteration of the personal accountability placed on Members in using parliamentary resources and in claiming any expenses whether they do this themselves or task others to do so.
- Examples of activities that would breach the policy if they involved the use of parliamentary resources to any significant extent:
 - permitting a third party to use parliamentary resources for activities other than the member's parliamentary purposes
 - personal, business, or commercial activities or communications;
 - party political activity such as seeking to effect support for a political party
 - work which is conducted for or at the behest of a political party
 - the organisation, publicising of or attendance at party political meetings
 - maintaining the internal organisation of a political party
 - campaigning to achieve a particular result in an election to any public office, or in a referendum; and
 - activities resulting in financial gain to the Member or any other person.
- Information on the complaints process as detailed in the Code of Conduct; and
- Contact point information for any queries on the policy.

7. The SPCB is invited to consider the changes made to the policy and if it is content to agree the recommended updates to the policy.

Governance

8. The SPCB is responsible for setting all SPCB policies that are applicable to Members and to review these as they see fit to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Whilst in this instance the substantive purpose of the policy has not changed, the policy content has been expanded to ensure better clarity for all.

Resource implications

9. There are no resource implications of this change that cannot be covered by current parliamentary resources and processes. Allowances Office will continue to investigate any complaints and report to SPCB as usual on the outcome.

Publication Scheme

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

Next steps

11. If agreed, officials will update the policy online with immediate effect and advise all Members of the review and changes accordingly.

Decision

12. The SPCB is invited to agree the attached updated policy as detailed at Annex B of this paper.

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Annexe A: Current Use of parliamentary resources policy:

MSPs: use of parliamentary resources

Parliamentary resources are provided by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to support MSPs in undertaking their parliamentary duties and include items such as office equipment and furniture, IT and mail systems, meeting rooms and the [Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme](#). It also includes [financial assistance to non-Scottish Government parties](#). These resources are provided by the SPCB to support MSPs with their parliamentary duties and must not be used to any significant extent for any other purpose including any party-political purpose.

The SPCB appreciates there can sometimes be a fine line between something that is parliamentary and party political and Members have to use their judgement accordingly. Where there is any doubt, MSPs are encouraged to seek advice from the contact points provided in the various policies and guidance.

Annexe B: Proposed new Policy on the Use of parliamentary resources:

MSPs: Policy on the Use of Parliamentary Resources

Introduction

1. Parliamentary resources are provided by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) to support Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) in undertaking their parliamentary duties.
2. This policy is issued by the SPCB with the purpose of ensuring the regularity and propriety of the management of public money and resources, which the SPCB is accountable for under the Scotland Act 1998.

Interpretation

3. In this policy, the following expressions are to be interpreted as follows:
 - “parliamentary resources” – means any resource whether financial or otherwise provided to Members by the SPCB, either pursuant to the Scotland Act 1998 (and any subsequent changes to that Act) (provision of property, staff and services to the Scottish Parliament) or in accordance with the Scheme, including items such as office equipment and furniture, IT and mail

systems, meeting rooms and financial assistance to non-Government party groups;

- “the Scheme” – means the Reimbursement of Members’ Expenses Scheme approved by the Scottish Parliament. Where parliamentary resources are provided in accordance with the Scheme, this policy is to be applied alongside the Scheme; and
- “Member’s duties” – means activity in relation to the business of the Scottish Parliament and constituency or regional business, wherever undertaken, in the public office of a Member of the Scottish Parliament.

Application

4. The policy applies to Members whenever they make use of parliamentary resources, and compliance with the policy is required under [Section 7, paragraph 3](#), of the Members’ Code of Conduct.
5. In making use of parliamentary resources Members must act prudently and have regard to:
 - the Nolan principles of standards in public life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership) and how these are reflected in the principles of this policy;
 - the need to secure value for money in the expenditure of public funds and observe the SPCB’s finance and governance arrangements in relation to spending of public monies;
 - the SPCB’s obligations in discharging its function in relation to securing equality of opportunity for all people and the promotion of sustainable development;
 - maintaining the reputation of the Parliament and public confidence in the use of SPCB resources; and,
 - the limitations of the overall resources made available to Members where these are provided through a central service, and the need for these services to be distributed fairly and reasonably among Members.

Personal Accountability

6. Members are personally accountable for the use of parliamentary resources made available to them, all expenses they incur, and for any parliamentary resources used in their name.
7. Members may delegate the organisation and carrying out of activities to others, such as members of their staff, but Members should bear in mind that when they

put in place such arrangements, they remain accountable for the use of parliamentary resources provided to them and their staff.

8. The following are examples of activities that would breach the policy if they involved use of parliamentary resources to a significant extent:
 - permitting a third party to use parliamentary resources for activities other than the member's parliamentary duties;
 - personal, business, or commercial activities or communications;
 - party political activity such as seeking to effect support for a political party;
 - work which is conducted for or at the behest of a political party;
 - the organisation, publicising of or attendance at party political meetings;
 - maintaining the internal organisation of a political party;
 - campaigning to achieve a particular result in an election to any public office, or in a referendum; and,
 - activities resulting in financial gain to the Member or any other person.
9. The SPCB appreciates there can sometimes be a fine line between activity that is parliamentary and party political, and that maintaining a strict separation between business that properly relates to Members' duties and party-political activity can sometimes be difficult. Members must use their judgement accordingly and where there is any doubt, Members are encouraged to seek advice from the relevant parliamentary official. Regardless of whether advice is sought or followed, Members remain responsible and accountable at all times for their own assessment of whether use of a parliamentary resource falls within what is permitted by this policy.
10. This position is intended to be strictly observed, whilst an incidental occurrence of or reference to something party political during the otherwise proper conduct of a Member's duties may not amount to a breach of this policy, a series of otherwise incidental occurrences would amount to a breach.
11. Members should also bear in mind that elections and referendums are periods of heightened political sensitivity and special provisions may be applied during such periods in addition to the provisions in this policy. Such measures will be notified to Members.

Complaints Process

12. Under the Code of Conduct, complaints about the use of SPCB facilities, resources and services and breaches of SPCB policies are to be made to the SPCB.
13. The SPCB may refer any complaint relating to the use of parliamentary resources, facilities and services and breaches of any SPCB policies to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

Contact Point

Reference: SPCB (2025) - Paper 71

14. Should you have any questions about this policy, or its application please contact Mairi Pearson, the Head of Allowances Office on 0131 348 6609 or by email at Mairi.Pearson@parliament.scot

Allowances Office
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