



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body
Friday 17 April 2026 (Session 6)

Use of Parliamentary Resources – Members parliamentary funded communications policy

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider the findings in relation to a complaint under the Use of Parliamentary Resources policy and the SPCB's policy on parliamentary funded communications about a former Member, Jeremy Balfour, who has issued a contact advert using parliamentary resources during the campaign period.

Issues and options

2. Officials have received three complaints about a front-page advert in the Edinburgh Evening News on 31 March 2026 which advertised the contact details for Mr Balfour as a Lothian Region MSP and included his contact details, the parliament identity and a statement on costs being met from parliamentary resources.
3. In looking into the matter, and discussing it with the former Member, evidence shows that this advert along with others were placed by Mr Balfour in January for the period 1 February to 31 March 2026 for a total of £825. The invoice for all adverts was paid at the beginning of February from the Members' Expenses Scheme. Mr Balfour advises that out of the total invoice cost the advert in question on 31 March cost £86. This was the only advert issued after the start of the campaign period.
4. Mr Balfour apologised for this error and advised that he had mistakenly thought the end date for contact adverts was the end of March and hence the final advert was arranged to go out on 31 March 2026 rather than the start of the campaign period on 26th March 2026.
5. SPCB will wish to note that all Members have had a range of communications setting out when such adverts were required to stop including the Election Guidance documents towards the end of 2025 and direct emails from the Travel and Expenses Office as reminders prior to the start of the campaign period.
6. The Travel and Expenses Office have also responded to queries direct from Members and their staff on the dates the various forms of communications and adverts were required to end under the Election Guidance and parliamentary

REFERENCE: SPCB (2026) - Paper 36 – by correspondence

processes. Indeed, we answered such a query from Mr Balfour's staff in January and advised in that correspondence on the date surgery and contact adverts must end as being 25th March.

7. Given the findings we would recommend that Mr Balfour be reminded of the rules again to ensure no such further adverts are issued prior to the election and that he is asked to repay the £86 for the advert issued after the start of the campaign period.

Governance

8. In terms of the Members Expenses Scheme the SPCB may investigate any claim and under the SPCB's policy on Members' communications the SPCB can take action in relation to any breach of the policy.

Resource implications

9. The resource implications only relate to the cost of the advert £86, which if agreed by the SPCB will be refunded to the Scheme.

Publication Scheme

10. The paper can be published in line with the SPCB publication policy.

Next steps

11. The former Member will be advised of the outcome following SPCB consideration of the matter and if SPCB agree, reminded of the rules and advised of the requirement to repay the money for the advert.

Decision

12. The SPCB is invited to consider the recommendation in paragraph 7 that:
13. Mr Balfour be reminded of the rules again to ensure no such further adverts are issued prior to the election; and
14. asked to repay the £86 for the advert issued after the start of the campaign period.

Travel and Expenses Office
April 2026