



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme – Exceptional Expenses request for office repairs

12 December 2024

Reference: SPCB (2024) Paper 76

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider the following application for exceptional expense from Kenneth Gibson MSP due to repairs needed to his constituency office as set out in section 8.2.1 of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme.

Issues and options

2. Over the summer it became apparent that there was a leak coming into Mr Gibson's office from the upstairs property and when contact with the upstairs landlord was finally made, the upstairs landlord discovered the roof was leaking. This has developed into a significant roof repair needing urgent attention and the upstairs landlord is seeking half the cost of repair is met by Mr Gibson. Further to this, the external walls of the property are in serious need of repair as it is believed the render is past its useful life and it is allowing damp into the constituency office. This repair is in the process of being arranged. Mr Gibson has contacted his landlord to ask if they would meet the repair costs, but it has been confirmed that the lease is a full repairing lease, and the Member is liable for them.
3. The roof repair has been arranged by the landlord of the upstairs property and 3 quotes have been provided to confirm good value for money. Initially it was thought the whole roof needed to be replaced due to the damage and a quote for £17,800.00 was received. Further investigation took place and quotes to repair the roof were provided for £7,800.00 and £6,500.00. The lowest quote for the roof repair of £6,500.00 has been agreed between Mr Gibson and the upstairs landlord. Mr Gibson will pay £3,250 from his

Office Cost Provision for his half of the repair costs. This repair has started due to its urgent nature and the fear of further work being needed if it was not fixed in a timely manner.

4. The external walls of the property have fallen into disrepair over a number of years with constituents regularly commenting on the dilapidated appearance of the property. Having reviewed the lease to see who was responsible for the exterior, it was discovered there was a clause stating that the exterior of the property should be painted every 5 years and this was the responsibility of Mr Gibson. This has not taken place since Mr Gibson moved into the property in 2007.
5. A large repair is now needed to replace the render on the exterior walls of the property and 3 quotes were sought. The quotes received were for £5,007.85, £8,760.00 and £19,812.00. The lowest quote has been deemed as unsuitable as the quote was created without any visit to the office or follow up questions from the office answered. The quote for £8,760.00 was provided without the provision of scaffolding and repeat attempts to clarify this cost, timescale and a number of other points have gone unanswered. The company which provided the quote for £19,812.00 visited the office, included the price of scaffolding and continue to clarify any issues raised, as a result this quote has been deemed as the most suitable.
6. Due to both the roof and exterior wall repair being sizable quotes it will not be possible for Mr Gibson to meet all of these costs from his Office Cost Provision. The combined cost of both repairs is £23,062.00 which will exhaust the Office Cost Provision and some of the £6,357 which can be transferred from the Engagement Provision for 2024/25.
7. Estimated running costs for Mr Gibson's office based on spend to date and the previous year are £12,500. Once the maximum of £6,357 is transferred from his Engagement to Office Cost Provision, his Office Cost Provision remaining balance will be £27,457, leaving a shortfall of £8,105 if both repairs are agreed. Due to the high cost of the repairs and the risk of additional work being needed once work begins, the Allowances Office suggest a contingency is added to the shortfall to allow for some unpredicted cost to be met should they arise. As a result, there are 2 options for the SPCB to consider:
 - a. **Option 1:** Exceptional expense for the known shortfall of £8,105 is considered for approval by the SPCB.
 - b. **Option 2:** Provide an exceptional expense of £10,000, £8,105 to cover the known shortfall plus a contingency of £1,895, which is 8% of the total repair costs, is considered for approval by the SPCB.
8. Mr Gibson is keen for the SPCB to note that he secured a rent reduction over 10 years ago which has resulted in his office claiming over £40,000 less in rent during that time. The SPCB may also wish to note that if 2023/24 Office Cost and Engagement Provisions were able to be brought

forward to 2024/25 over £16,500 would be available and this application would not be needed due to the underspend in the last financial year.

Governance

9. The Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme allows for a Member to apply to the SPCB for reimbursement of any exceptional expenses to be incurred by that Member in connection with the performance of parliamentary duties and specifically lease obligations.
10. It should be noted that per the Members' Expenses Scheme guidance that a Member should not incur any costs until the agreement of the SPCB has been obtained.

Resource implications

11. It is confirmed that there are sufficient funds in the overall expenses budget to meet the costs indicated.

Publication Scheme

12. This paper can be published in line with the publication policy.

Next steps

13. To advise Members of the SPCB decision.

Decision

14. The SPCB is invited to consider the application for exceptional expense to support Mr Gibson's repairs to his office roof and exterior walls and to confirm whether it feels option 1 or 2 is appropriate.

Allowances Office
December 2024