



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

SPCB Policy on Members' Publications

Revision

13 June 2024

Reference: SPCB (2024) Paper 46

Executive summary

1. This paper invites the SPCB to agree proposed updates to the Policy on Members' Publications and to consider its position on the restrictions placed on Members relating to the issuing of parliamentary funded communications in the period prior to Scottish local authority elections and national referenda.

Issues and options

2. The SPCB policy on Members' Publications outlines the specific requirements that publications must meet in order for costs to be met from Parliamentary resources.
3. Members may only use parliamentary resources to meet the costs of producing and distributing publications which inform constituents about the work of Parliament or the way in which they have carried out their parliamentary duties in the Parliament or locally within the constituency or region for which they were elected.
4. While the responsibility rests with the Member to comply with the policy, should any Member wish to seek advice on the content of any publication a draft of this can be submitted to the Allowances Office who will review it in line with this policy prior to it being issued.
5. The current policy was last reviewed in April 2021 to update the Parliament Identity and add new requirements on the format for a header section. A minor change was further made to the policy in May 2024 to reflect the SPCB's decision at its meeting on 2 May 2024 to change the rules relating to the period when publications cannot be issued prior to a UK General Election.

6. The updates made to the policy seek to ensure that this now reflects the wider variety of communications and formats issued by Members and provide further clarity on acceptable content and the format of these and ensure consistency across the Parliament's related policies and guidance documents.
7. The SPCB will wish to take note of the following proposed changes:
 - a) The title of the policy has been changed from Policy on Member's Publications to Policy on Member's Parliamentary-funded Communications to reflect the wider variety and format of communications now being issued.
 - b) Greater clarity has been given on the acceptable layout and use of the corporate identity within communications and further examples showing this have been added to the Annex within the policy.
 - c) The section on surveys has been updated, to be in line with Parliament's current Data Protection and GDPR guidance.
 - d) Greater detail on the use of social media feeds within Parliamentary-funded websites has been added
 - e) A section has been added clarifying the specific requirements for video communications.
 - f) A section has been added on the Use of SPTV clips, in line with the new SPCB Guidance on the Use of SPTV clips on social media agreed by the SPCB on 18 April 2024.
 - g) Further detail has been given on those communications which can be issued during a UK pre-election period i.e. Surgery and contact communications.
8. As mentioned above at its meeting on 2 May 2024 the SPCB agreed to change restrictions to the timeframe for issuing parliamentary funded publications prior to a UK election, to state that no publications can be issued from the date of the UK Parliament dissolution to the date of the election inclusive. In May 2024 the policy was updated to reflect this, and the change communicated to Members.
9. The SPCB also decided at this meeting that the timeframe restrictions prior to Scottish Parliament elections would remain at 4 months. However, the policy also currently states that no publications may be issued within 3 months of the date of Scottish local government elections or any national referenda or in the event of a Scottish parliamentary by-election or UK parliamentary by-election in a Scottish constituency, no publications prepared under this policy may be issued in the relevant constituency area between the date the by-election is called and the date of the by-election.
10. The SPCB is invited to consider whether they wish to make any changes to this part of the policy or if they are content to leave this at 3 months in relation to Scottish local government elections and between the date the by-election is called and the date of the by-election itself for UK or Scottish by-elections.

Governance

11. The SPCB is responsible for ensuring that the Members' Expenses Scheme is administered in line with the Scheme Principles and for issuing and making any changes to any guidance or policy that relates to the operation or use of the Scheme.

Resource implications

12. There are no additional costs associated with the changes made to this policy.

Publication Scheme

13. This paper can be published under the SPCB's publication policy.

Next steps

14. If the SPCB decides any changes to the timeframe restrictions relating to the period prior to Scottish local government elections and national referenda or UK or Scottish by-elections this will be updated in the revised policy.
15. If agreed by the SPCB, the Allowances Office will issue the updated policy to all Members and make this available on the Parliament's website and intranet.

Decision

16. The SPCB is invited to:
 - a. Approve the updated Policy on Members' Publications, now called the SPCB Policy on Members' Parliamentary-funded communications, provided in Annex A.
 - b. Consider and agree any changes to the rules relating to the issuing of parliamentary-funded communications in the period prior to Scottish local authority elections and national referenda and UK and Scottish by-elections.