

## **REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS - TRAVEL**

### **Executive summary**

1. The paper seeks advance approval for overseas travel for attendance at meetings by the Parliament's nominees to the Committee of the Regions and the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities for the remainder of the current parliamentary session to 2021.
2. As the SPCB is aware, advance approval for such overseas visits means that travel on parliamentary business is not regarded as a registrable interest under the terms of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament. The Members of these bodies have been informed that this paper is being submitted to the SPCB for approval.

### **Background**

3. The Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Act 2006, [schedule, paragraph 7] and the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament requires Members to register and provide details of visits outwith the UK where the visit meets the prejudice test or where it relates to political activities. This provision does not apply if the travel is approved in advance by the SPCB.
4. The membership of MSPs of the UK Delegation to the Committee of the Regions and of the UK Delegation to the regional chamber of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is endorsed by the Parliament.
5. The Parliament endorsed the nomination of Mairi Evans (now Mairi Gougeon) MSP as full member, and Lewis Macdonald MSP and Andy Wightman MSP as alternate members of the Committee of the Regions on 1 September 2016 (Motion S5M-01265). The Parliament endorsed the nomination of Maurice Golden MSP as full member of the Committee of the Regions on 25 May 2017 (Motion S5M-05776).
6. The nominations to the Committee of the Regions then need to be approved by the UK Government and the appointments made by the EU Council of Ministers. It is expected that this process will shortly be concluded for Maurice Golden MSP (it is currently with UK Ministers), thus completing the process for the Parliament's four Committee of the Regions members.
7. The Parliament endorsed Christina McKelvie MSP as full member and John Scott as alternate member on the UK delegation to the regional chamber of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe for the remainder of the parliamentary session to 2021 on 1 September 2016.

8. Approval is now sought for overseas visits for the Parliament's two nominees and their alternates for the Committee of the Regions, and for the Parliament's Council of Europe member. It is proposed that these approvals run until the date of the dissolution of the Parliament at the end of the current session.

### **Frequency of meetings**

9. The Members concerned are fulfilling a role that they have been nominated to by the Scottish Government and endorsed by the Parliament. The frequency of the meetings is determined by the organisations to which they have been nominated and will vary from year to year.
10. As a minimum, the Committee of the Regions meets in plenary five or six times a year. The Scottish Parliament members of the Committee of the Regions may also participate in one of the Commissions of the Committee of the Regions and there may also be other meetings or conferences to which the members are invited.
11. The Scottish Parliament member of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities sits in the Chamber of Regions of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and is a member of the Governance standing committee. All full members attend the plenary sessions. Both the full and alternate member can participate in the Congress's work as rapporteurs, election and local democracy monitors, members of ministerial groups or as senior office holders within the Congress. The Congress also organises specialised conferences and colloquies to which a member may be invited.

### **Resource Implications**

12. Given that all the costs of the overseas travel are met by the institutions concerned, the only financial implications for the SPCB relate occasionally to travel within the UK before onward overseas travel (e.g. travel to a local airport).

### **Governance issues**

13. Advance approval by the SPCB will mean that no reference to Committee of the Regions or Council of Europe travel is likely to be contained in the Register of Interests.

### **Publication Scheme**

14. This paper will be published in line with the SPCB's Publication Scheme.

### **Next steps**

15. The relevant Members will be informed of the SPCB's decision.

## **Decision**

16. The SPCB is invited to give advance approval for overseas travel by the relevant Members in respect of their membership of the European Committee of the Regions and Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities until the dissolution of Parliament at the end of the current session.

**Clerk to the European and External Relations Committee**

20 September 2017