

REIMBURSEMENT OF MEMBERS' EXPENSES SCHEME – USE OF PARLIAMENTARY RESOURCES

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider a complaint regarding Neil Findlay MSP's use of parliamentary resources to issue a party political related email in January 2018.

Issues and Options

2. A complaint was received on 15 January 2018 raising awareness of an email issued by Mr Findlay to all MSPs and MSP Researchers on 14 January 2018 using the Parliament email system. The email asked "all MSPs to advise which seats they are going to Campaign in this Saturday which is a national campaign day" and linked to the Labour Party events webpage where MSPs could find information on their nearest event. A copy of the email is attached at Annex A.
3. The SPCB's policy on the use of parliamentary resources states that parliamentary resources are provided by the SPCB to support Members with their parliamentary duties and must not be used to any significant extent for any other purpose including any party political purposes. The policy states that IT and mail systems are considered parliamentary resources.
4. The SPCB's guidance on Political Party Affiliation states that a communication issued using parliamentary resources must relate to a Members' parliamentary duties and that parliament email addresses should not be used for any non-parliamentary event.
5. Whilst looking into the matter the complaint was discussed with Mr Findlay. During these discussions Mr Findlay advised that he had been working that day on a number of applications and had several different ones open at the same time. Mr Findlay had meant to issue the message only to Labour MSPs and researchers through the Labour WhatsApp group but had mistakenly used the wrong open application and sent it to all MSPs and MSP Researchers through the Parliament email system instead. Mr Findlay fully accepts responsibility for the email being issued in error through the parliamentary email system.
6. The SPCB is invited to determine whether the email issued breaches the SPCB's policy on the use of parliamentary resources and political party affiliation guidance. If the SPCB determine the email does breach the policy it is invited to determine the appropriate remedy.

Resource Implications

7. There are no identifiable costs in relation to the use of parliamentary resources in this matter.

Governance issues

8. The SPCB's policy on use of resources and political party affiliation guidance specifically do not allow the use of parliamentary resources for party political purposes.

Publication Scheme

9. This paper can be published in accordance with the SPCB's publication Scheme.

Next steps

10. To inform the Member and the complainant of the decision.

Decision

11. The SPCB is invited to consider the complaint and decide whether the email complained about breaches the policy on the use of parliamentary resources and the political party affiliation guidance as set out above. If the SPCB determines a breach has occurred it is invited to determine the appropriate remedy.

Allowances Office
February 2018

From: Findlay N (Neil), MSP

Sent: 14 January 2018 16:22

To: DL MSP Researchers <DLMSPPresearchers@parliament.scot>; DL MSPs
<DLMSPPs@parliament.scot>

Subject: Please advise

Hi there can all MSPs advise which seats they are going to Campaign in this Saturday which is a national campaign day. The plan isn't to target key seats.

Info of your nearest event here - events.labour.org.uk - It's time for #RealChange

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