



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Reimbursement of Members Expenses Scheme – Publication of Members’ Expenses Hotel Information

2 May 2024

Reference: SPCB (2024) Paper 36

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider a proposal to amend the data published in relation to hotels used by Members elsewhere in Scotland, the UK and abroad to remove the name and location of the hotel for security reasons in line with the published data for hotels in Edinburgh.

Issues and options

2. At present when publishing Members’ Expenses information, the name of the hotel in Edinburgh where Members and their staff stay when attending Parliament to carry out their parliamentary duties is withheld for reasons of security and safety. This has been the case since publication of data started. However, in doing so the decision was taken to continue to publish information on hotels elsewhere in Scotland, the UK and abroad given that this did not form the same regular pattern as Edinburgh hotels and was seen as less of a security risk.
3. As the SPCB will know the risks in relation to the security and safety of Members and their staff has changed significantly over the years since that decision was taken and we now feel that it is no longer appropriate to release this information about where Members and their staff stay when travelling around the constituencies/regions as well as elsewhere in Scotland, the UK and abroad. This is in part due to the more frequent nature of such stays but also due to the increased level of threat to Members and their staff’s security and safety.
4. We would therefore propose that all such data no longer be published from the next planned publication of Q1 of 2023/24 in the next couple of weeks, and that data already published be amended to remove the name of any

hotel and its location for the 6 years plus current year's data that we hold and publish.

5. This would still provide an acceptable level of transparency on Members spend in relation to any overnight stays as we would still publish the dates of any stay, the cost of the stay and each entry would be categorised using the current system into stays within the constituency/region, elsewhere in Scotland, elsewhere in the UK , London or abroad and so would still provide the public with clear information on the broader geographical area or type of stay being incurred by Members and their staff without being specific to a small village or island location for example where hotels could be limited or there be only one hotel.

Governance

6. The Scheme states at paragraph 1.3.1 that the SPCB shall publish information on expenses reimbursed to members under the Scheme in such form and at such intervals as the SPCB may determine.
7. It is therefore for the SPCB to determine what information in relation to Members Expenses should be published and how that will be undertaken. As the SPCB will recall they did at the beginning of the session change how travel details were published in response to the security and safety concerns for Members at that time.

Resource implications

8. The Allowances Office will take manage the amendment of data within current resources.

Publication Scheme

9. This paper can be published in line with the SPCB's publication policy.

Next steps

10. To action removal of data for new quarter and advise Members of change to data being published in this regard.

Decision

11. The SPCB is invited to agree to stop publishing information showing hotels where Members and their staff stay overnight and claim the costs from the Scheme and remove previously published data accordingly.

Allowances Office
22 April 2024