

Officeholders - contingency funding requests

5 March 2020

Reference: SPCB(2020)Paper 13

Executive Summary

1. This paper invites the SPCB to consider two contingency fund applications; one from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and one from the Scottish Human Rights Commission. Both are for funding to cover maternity leave.
2. The officeholders Contingency Fund for 2019/20 was £300,000 but following a number of adjustments including for example the Information Commissioner surrendering funding for a post which has been funded by the Scottish Government and the Standards Commission surrendering expenses won following a legal action, the total for 2019/20 is £386,525.
3. Contingency funding of £177,444 has been previously approved by the SPCB leaving a balance of £209,081 of which £100k was surrendered in January 2020 to the SPCB for projects that could be completed by the end of this financial year, leaving £109,081 in the Officeholders' Contingency Fund.
4. There is therefore sufficient funding in the Contingency Fund to meet these two requests.

Issues and Options

5. Individual officeholders' budgets do not contain contingency funding. Instead, the SPCB has established a separate central Officeholders' Contingency Fund for exceptional one-off expenditure which cannot be met from an officeholder's approved budget for any given year. This arrangement also prevents an officeholder's budget baseline increasing due to one-off costs in any given financial year.
6. Contingency funding may be requested for costs such as defending legal actions and for temporary staff cover for maternity absences etc.
7. Requests for contingency funding can be made at any time of the year but we would not expect an officeholder to draw down the funding until it is clear that the additional expenditure cannot be met in full or part from savings made throughout the year.
8. The officeholders have kept officials informed of potential calls on the Contingency Fund throughout the year.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

9. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is seeking contingency funding of £47,820 for maternity cover for seven posts.

10. The Ombudsman has absorbed £13,815 of the total costs reducing the amount from £61,635 to £47,820. A copy of the Ombudsman's application is attached at Annex A.

Scottish Human Rights Commission

11. The Scottish Human Rights Commission is seeking contingency funding of £6k to meet the cost of maternity cover. A copy of the Commission's application is attached at Annex B.

Resource Implications

12. As mentioned above, the Officeholders Contingency Fund for 2019/20 is £386,525. £177,444 has already been committed and £100k has been surrendered to the SPCB leaving funding of £109,081 available. There is therefore sufficient funding to meet these two requests

Governance issues

13. As these are requests for additional funding, the SPCB's approval is required.

Publication Scheme

14. This paper can be published in line with the SPCB's disclosure policy.

Decision

15. The SPCB is invited to approve the contingency fund applications.

Officeholder Services