



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# **Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme – Travel Application**

**21 December 2023**

**Reference: SPCB (2023) Paper 81**

## **Executive summary**

1. The SPCB is invited to consider an application submitted by Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP to have the travel and overnight accommodation costs associated with a visit to Dublin, Ireland from 13th to 15th February 2024 to meet with a range of stakeholders involved in the resettlement of Ukrainian Refugees to be met under the provisions made at paragraphs 2.2.3 and 6.1.5 of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme.

## **Issues and options**

2. The Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme makes provision to meet travel costs associated with a Member undertaking their parliamentary duties. However, in relation to travel outwith the UK, Members are still required to make an application to the SPCB to have any associated costs met from the Scheme.
3. The criteria previously applied when determining such applications included where the reason for the journey was:
  - a. Directly related to a specific constituency matter, where the visit is necessary in order to address the issue;
  - b. Directly related to Parliamentary business;

- c. Something the SPCB considers the Parliament should be paying for;  
and
  - d. Provides value for money.
- 
- 4. The purpose of Mr Cole-Hamilton's visit is to meet with a range of stakeholders involved in the resettlement of Ukrainian Refugees in Ireland. The Member has been invited by Senator John McGahon, House of the Oireachtas, as Senator McGahon and Mr Cole-Hamilton have been collaborating on the shared issues facing both of countries on this matter since the start of the war. The Member has advised that the visit relates to work in his constituency, which is the principal reception hub for Ukrainians entering Scotland and Mr Cole-Hamilton has been invited to look at some of the innovative solutions they are adopting in Ireland with a view to seeing if these would work in Scotland. Mr Cole-Hamilton has raised concerns at the number of placements that are breaking down in the constituency, particularly given that his constituency has a disproportionately high number of host families operating under the homes for Ukraine scheme. Mr Cole-Hamilton has been working closely with stakeholders across the issue on the safe resettlement of Ukrainians since the scheme began.
  - 5. Senator McGahon has arranged a number of meetings over the two days with Ministers who have different responsibilities relating to assisting and support Ukrainian refugees in Ireland, the British Ambassador to Ireland, the Ukrainian Ambassador to Ireland and with organisations such as the Irish Red Cross who have several programmes designed to help and assist Ukrainian refugees.
  - 6. Mr Cole-Hamilton feels the visit is important to the work with refugees in his constituency and beyond and is keen to attend in an attempt to find solutions to stop the breakdown of placements and look for longer term solutions with stakeholders.
  - 7. The visit is planned for 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024 with Mr Cole-Hamilton proposes to fly from Edinburgh to Dublin on 13<sup>th</sup> and return on the 15<sup>th</sup> February. Flights are costing approx £100 return with Ryan Air at present and Mr Cole-Hamilton would require accommodation and evening meal for two nights with accommodation currently estimated at £256 for the 2 nights, which would be within current overnight limits. Other costs would relate to travel to and from the airport in Edinburgh, £9, and for taxis in Dublin from the airport to any accommodation at approx £30 each way.

8. The total cost would be approximately £425 plus any meal costs, up to the overnight limit.

## **Governance**

9. There are no governance issues as the Scheme provides for Members travelling abroad and applying to the SPCB for the costs to be met from the Scheme prior to travelling.

## **Resource implications**

10. Should the SPCB determine that the costs should be met it is confirmed that there are sufficient funds available within the overall Members budget for 2023-24.

## **Publication Scheme**

11. This paper can be published in accordance with the SPCB's publication scheme.

## **Next steps**

12. Advise the Member of the SPCB's decision and if the SPCB agree the travel costs can be met from the Scheme, support the Member in booking flights and reimburse the Member accordingly for any other expenses once visit has been undertaken.

## **Decision**

13. The SPCB is invited to consider the application from Mr Cole-Hamilton for the cost of travel and overnight accommodation to be met from the Members' Expenses Scheme for a visit to Dublin as detailed above

Allowances Office

December 2023