# Election planning programme: 2021 election guidance
# 17 September 2020
# Reference: SPCB(2020)Paper 40

## Executive summary

1. As we have done for recent Scottish Parliamentary elections, a Programme Board has been set up, led by Callum Thomson, to oversee all aspects of the work required to prepare for the 2021 Election and for postelection functions such as the Members' induction.  The Board will provide regular updates to the Corporate Body.

2. This paper invites the Corporate Body to discuss and agree draft guidance to issue to all Members and their staff in relation to the use of parliamentary resources during the 2021 Scottish Parliamentary Elections. The guidance takes the form of two related documents:

   - Guidance for Members and their staff during a Scottish parliamentary election campaign; and

   - Guidance for Members who are not standing at the 2021 Scottish parliamentary election.

3. A third document will be provided for Members who are not returned following the election.  This will be presented to the SPCB nearer the end of the session.

4. We propose to circulate the guidance to all Members and their staff prior to the October recess in order to allow time for Members to undertake the required election planning.

## Issues and Options

5. Much of the guidance is substantively unchanged from 2016.  The two guidance documents maintain the question and answer format that has been used previously and has been well received by Members and their staff.  The documents are divided chronologically to cover the periods before dissolution, during dissolution and after the election, and are further subdivided by service area.

## Changes from 2016 guidance/specific aspects to highlight

### Access to Holyrood and local offices

6.  Arrangements for accessing Holyrood and local offices have been significantly impacted by covid-19.  While restrictions have eased over recent weeks, we are unable to predict what will be in place as we approach the election.  We have therefore written the guidance on the basis of 'business as usual' with a general

caveat in the introduction that any specific access arrangements that are required to be implemented during the period of the election and immediately after will be notified to MSPs and staff at the time.

## Security

7.  As agreed by the SPCB, two-factor authentication arrangements for entry into the Parliament will be compulsory for all passholders from the start of session 6.  Any Members who are returned (and their returning staff) who have yet to register for two-factor authentication, will be required to enter Holyrood via the main public entrance initially before attending the Pass Studio to have their finger template taken.  This will then enable access through the turnstiles at Queensberry House and Canongate entrances.

## Furniture and equipment

8.  In addition to the standard provision of furniture and IT equipment for Holyrood and local offices, Members and their staff have been provided with items to support home working during the covid restrictions.  The advice for these items is in line with items issued routinely:

> IT equipment – where items have been purchased using the Members' Expenses Scheme, these belong to the Member.  (In the case of laptops, Members will need to contact BIT to remove the Parliament's software from the device.)

> Items provided centrally belong to the Parliament and should be returned to Holyrood or arrangements made with BIT to have them uplifted from local offices.  Members may choose to purchase a mobile device that was supplied centrally as part of their MSP provision, however laptops provided centrally as part of the MSP allocation are not available for purchase since the software licences are provided on a subscription basis and not bought outright.

> Furniture – chairs and tables that were provided for MSPs and their staff for homeworking were originally purchased using a central budget  however, these costs are now being transferred to Members' Ancillary budgets and therefore they belong to the Members.

# Resource Implications

9.  There are no resource implications specific to this paper. Resource implications for the services listed in the guidance have been factored into local operational planning.

# Governance issues

10. All areas of the organisation have contributed to the content of the guidance and the Chief Executive's Office has provided a co-ordinating role.  The Election Planning Programme Board has had sight of the draft documents.

11. As at previous elections, we intend these to be living documents.  We will update the documents as appropriate based on any questions raised by Members and will advise

Members accordingly. The monthly messages from the Clerk/Chief Executive to Members, which are due to commence in January 2021, provide a suitable vehicle for recirculating links to the guidance if necessary to draw Members' attention to any changes. Substantive changes will, of course, be drawn to the Corporate Body's attention prior to circulation and SPCB approval sought where required.

12. Governance issues such as equalities and legal requirements have been considered as part of the drafting of the individual elements of the guidance.

# Publication Scheme

13. Once agreed, the election guidance will be published on the Scottish Parliament website. This cover paper will also be published in line with the SPCB Publication Scheme.

# Next steps

14. If the SPCB is content with the guidance, we will publish and circulate to Members and their staff by email. These documents will also be circulated to all parliamentary staff for information.

15. A link to the guidance will also be made available through the MSP Portal.

# Decision

16. The Corporate Body is invited to agree the attached election guidance documents.


**Clerk/Chief Executive's Office**

**September 2020**