

Rules for the use of stationery and postage-paid envelopes provided by the House of Commons, and for the use of the crowned portcullis

1. A cash-limited provision of House stationery and postage-paid envelopes is provided by the House for Members. The present annual limit is £9,000 per year per Member. This provision is in addition to any stationery and postage costs which Members may have reimbursed under IPSA's Expenses Scheme.

Principles

2. The rules cannot be expected to cover every eventuality; Members should therefore always behave with probity and integrity when using House-provided stationery and postage. Members should regard themselves as personally responsible and accountable for the use of House-provided stationery and postage. They must not exploit the system for personal financial advantage, nor (by breaching the rules in paragraph 3 below) to confer an undue advantage on a political organisation.

Rules

3. House-provided stationery and pre-paid envelopes are provided only for the performance of a Member's parliamentary functions. In particular, this excludes using stationery or postage:

- in connection with work for or at the behest of a political party (including fund-raising for a political party, advocating membership of a political party or supporting the return of any person to public office);
- for business purposes;
- for newsletters (including annual reports or general updates to constituents on a range of issues);
- for birthday or other greetings cards;
- in a way that can be construed as campaign expenditure within the scope of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

4. In addition:

- Items which may not be sent in pre-paid envelopes on their own, such as newsletters or cards, must not be attached to correspondence legitimately sent using pre-paid envelopes.

- House stationery, House emblems and pre-paid envelopes should not be used during the period of dissolution.
 - Pre-paid envelopes should not be used for internal mail, or for mail sent from the House of Commons to Government Departments within the M25—this should be marked “VIA IDS” and posted as internal mail.
 - Pre-paid envelopes may only be used for correspondence sent by or on behalf of Members. They should not be sent to others to facilitate a reply. Members should set up an individual Freepost account with the Royal Mail for surveys and other such requirements.
 - Pre-paid envelopes may not be over-printed in any way, other than with a return address: the front of the envelope should include only the name and address of the intended recipient.
5. Modest use of stationery (but not pre-paid envelopes) for personal correspondence is permitted.
6. When a Member is replying to correspondence, party-political references are allowed in House-provided stationery or in correspondence sent in pre-paid envelopes, subject to the restrictions in paragraph 3 above.
7. Party political logos or emblems may be used on House-provided stationery (but not pre-paid envelopes).
8. Examples of the proper use of stationery and pre-paid envelopes include:
- administrative correspondence enabling Members to run their offices, such as current working documents sent between Westminster and the constituency;
 - correspondence with Members or staff of either House (but using pre-paid envelopes only where correspondence cannot be sent using the internal mail system);
 - correspondence with public bodies such as Government Departments, Agencies and NDPBs, devolved legislatures, local authorities and international organisations (but using pre-paid envelopes only where correspondence cannot be sent using the IDS, and only for UK bodies);
 - correspondence with constituents, including contact by Members about a specific issue with people who have not previously contacted them and questionnaires and surveys (but not newsletters, annual reports or general updates on a range of issues);
 - correspondence with bodies or individuals outside the constituency in pursuance of parliamentary activities;
 - correspondence by a Member or on behalf of a Member in connection with All-Party Parliamentary Groups and delegations to international parliamentary assemblies.

Use of the crowned portcullis

9. The principal emblem of the House is the crowned portcullis. It is a royal badge and its use by the House has been formally authorised by licence granted by Her Majesty the Queen. It should not be used where its authentication of a connection with the House is inappropriate, or where there is a risk that its use might wrongly be regarded or represented as having the authority of the House. It may be used by Members on their stationery provided by the House or used for their parliamentary functions; by registered All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) on their official stationery, reports and websites (provided that it is appropriate to demonstrate a connection with the House in this way and that there is no risk that its use might suggest that the Group or its communications have the authority of the House^[1]); and by organisations that have a direct association with the House and have obtained permission to use it. It may not be used by unregistered APPGs, by ex-Members during the Dissolution of Parliament, or in an inappropriate form. Websites of APPGs and other organisations using the crowned portcullis must carry a disclaimer to make it clear that the House of Commons does not take responsibility for the content of that website.

Publication

10. The costs incurred by each Member on House-provided stationery and postage are published annually by the House.

Administration

11. The present annual budget limit is £9,000 per year per Member and when a Member has been provided with 80% of their annual budget the Member will then receive monthly statements of their account; once the annual maximum of £9,000 is reached no further House of Commons stationery or pre-paid envelopes will be issued during that financial year.

12. Members requiring additional House of Commons stationery once the annual maximum is reached may purchase it. However, pre-paid envelopes cannot be purchased.

Breaches of the rules

13. Any allegations of breaches of the rules may be investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.

14. These rules supersede all previous rules and guidance.

^[1] All-Party Parliamentary Groups who wish to use the crowned portcullis must use the bespoke APPG portcullis emblem, as specified in the Guide to the Rules on All-Party Parliamentary Groups. Unregistered groups must not use the crowned portcullis in any form.

Document owner: Members' Accommodation Manager, Department of Facilities

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For advice on House-provided stationery and postage contact: Members' Accommodation Manager; accommodationservices@parliament.uk or 020 7219 3080

For advice on the crowned portcullis contact: Design Manager, Print Services 020 7219 6208

For advice on All-Party Parliamentary Groups and their publications: the office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards; groupsregister@parliament.uk or 020 7219 0401.