

# Guidance on the Correction of inaccuracies of information provided in Parliamentary Proceedings

1. Members (including ministers) have a personal responsibility to be accurate and truthful in their contributions during Parliamentary proceedings. ("Parliamentary proceedings" includes answers to oral questions, statements and debates, in the Chamber and in committees).
2. This guidance sets out steps that may be taken by members to correct inaccurate information provided during proceedings.
3. It also advises members of actions to take if they consider that another member has provided inaccurate information.

## Correcting information during proceedings

4. If a member realises during proceedings that an error has been made, he or she should correct it as soon as possible.
5. If a member realises after an item of business has ended that a significant error has been made – for example, one which may affect the conclusions which listeners would draw from the debate – the member may ask to make a statement during the next available plenary session (or at the next committee meeting). The member must also take the steps outlined in paragraph 9 below.

## Corrections added to the Official Report

6. The Official Report is required by its remit to prepare a substantially verbatim report of Parliamentary proceedings. If a member supplies incorrect information during proceedings, the *Official Report* cannot be changed, either before or after publication, because such a change would not reflect what happened during the meeting or accord with the understanding by those who were present of what was said.
7. However, at the member's request, a note of the correct information can be added to the *Official Report*, and reflected alongside the original contribution.
8. The procedure for requesting that a correction be added to the *Official Report* is set out in the Annexe to this guidance.

## Publicising where a correction has been added

9. Where a member has included a correction in the *Official Report*, they must take the following steps to make the correction widely known—
  - write to the Presiding Officer and, where relevant, the member to whom the inaccurate information was originally given (for example, in answer to a question or a debate intervention) or the member who drew attention to the need for a correction;

- place a copy of the correction in the SPICe library;
- copy any correspondence to all business managers and any members who are not represented on the Bureau.

10. If a correction, by means of an annotation to the *Official Report*, has been approved it will be published as soon as possible on the members' corrections page of the Scottish Parliament website with a hyperlink to the *Official Report* of the meeting which will also be updated to include the correction.

11. Corrections will also be published in the Business Bulletin.<sup>1</sup>

## Seeking a correction from another member

12. Where a member believes that any member (including a minister) has been inaccurate during parliamentary proceedings, he or she may consider taking the following steps—

- *Resolution during the proceedings:* Where a member believes that there has been an inaccuracy during parliamentary proceedings, that member should seek to intervene during the proceedings, inviting the member to reflect on the accuracy of what has been said.
- *Resolution through correspondence:* If it has not been possible to raise the matter at the time, the member can raise the matter in writing with the member in question.
- *Seek action through other parliamentary processes:* If resolution during proceedings or in correspondence does not prove possible, members can pursue the point through —
  - written questions/follow-up questions;
  - lodging a motion calling for a debate on the policy matter in question.
- *Make a complaint under the Ministerial Code:* where the incident involves a minister, the member can write to the First Minister or lodge a motion urging the First Minister to refer the complaint to the independent advisers established under the Scottish Ministerial Code. The Ministerial Code states that—

“It is of paramount importance that Ministers give accurate and truthful information to the Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity. Ministers who knowingly mislead the Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the First Minister.”

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<sup>1</sup> A change to the Business Bulletin template to include a new section for corrections is being taken forward and the new section will be introduced as soon as possible.

## Annexe: requesting the addition of a correction in the Official Report

### How to request a correction be added

A member can request that a correction be made to their own contribution in plenary or committee proceedings by contacting the Official Report and supplying the text that is incorrect and the correction that is requested. This can be done by:

- contacting the editor, Rob Littlejohn, in person in room T2.24 or by phone on 0131 348 6230; or
- emailing [official.report@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:official.report@scottish.parliament.uk) or calling 0131 348 5447.

Emails must come from the member's own parliamentary email address – requests from third parties cannot be accepted.

The Official Report will determine whether the error can be corrected within its remit to produce a substantially verbatim report.

### Admissibility criteria

If the Official Report cannot make the change under its remit, the editor will refer the request to the Parliamentary Business Team. Additional details may be requested at this stage.

The business team will accept corrections:

- to factual information only: for example, dates, figures or names of organisations; and
- that are submitted within 20 working days of the publication of the original Official Report.

Corrections that provide new information or continue an argument are not admissible.

### Disputes about admissibility

If the member disagrees with the business team's decision, the matter can be referred to the Group Head of Legislation and Parliamentary Operations. If the member is still dissatisfied, the final decision rests with the Presiding Officer.

### Publication of corrections

The correction will appear in the body of the *Official Report* as follows:

**James Brown:** The project will cost £100,000. [*James Brown has corrected this contribution. See end of report*].

The correction will also be published at the end of the *Official Report* as follows:

## Correction

James Brown has identified an error in his contribution and provided the following correction.

**James Brown:**

*At col 12345, paragraph 2—*

*Original text—*

The project will cost £100,000.

*Corrected text—*

The project will cost £200,000.

Finally the correction will be published on the members' corrections page of the website as follows:

### **Correction** ***Official Report, Date***

James Brown has identified an error in his contribution and provided the following correction.

**James Brown** *At col 12345— Original text—*

The project will cost £100,000.

*Corrected text—*

The project will cost £200,000.

Corrections will be listed on the members' corrections page of the Scottish Parliament website until the end of the session in which the correction was made. After that the correction will still be available in the Official Report of the relevant meeting.