

**General Election 2017:
Summary Report**

November 2018

General Election 2017 Summary Report

November 2018

Introduction

1. The 2017 General Election was the second in which IPSA participated from start to finish. As with previous years,¹ a number of evaluation exercises have been undertaken to review work on the General Election and improve the effectiveness of the support provided and the regulation of MPs.
2. These evaluations reviewed: (1) internal planning and administration, as well as the experience of IPSA staff of the election, (2) the experience of MPs and their staff, via individual research interviews and the Annual User Survey of MPs,² and (3) the business costs and expenses claimed by MPs in relation to the election.³ This summary report brings together all three reports and provides an overview of their findings.
3. The aims of the IPSA 2017 Election programme were to:
 - a. put MPs at the centre of our planning and work,
 - b. strive for excellence and continuous improvement in our ways of working, and
 - c. provide assurance that public money is well regulated.
4. This report summarises IPSA's work against the programme aims in relation to five topics: MPs' experience of IPSA; resourcing (staff and equipment); events; working with the House; and governance, assurance and budgeting.

Overview

5. Overall, IPSA successfully met its aims and objectives when delivering of the 2017 General Election programme. With just two months' notice, IPSA:
 - met all 99 newly-elected MPs at the New Members' Reception Area (NMRA) in the week following their election;
 - ensured all newly-elected MPs were registered on our payroll and expenses system by the end of June 2017;
 - provided 100% of the newly-elected MPs who asked for one with a payment card within two weeks of their election;
 - met 67 former MPs at the Departing Members' Area (DMA), and a further 31 who stood down at the election; and
 - paid a Loss of Office Payment (LOOP) to 76% of eligible MPs within four months of the election.
6. The aggregate General Election-related cost to IPSA was £5.9m. This includes all payments made to departing MPs, payments to their staff members, all winding-up costs and the additional start-up supplement available to newly-elected MPs. The assurance review of

¹ A copy of our administrative lessons report for the 2015 General Election can be found on our website at: <http://www.theipsa.org.uk/news/press-releases-2016/11-april-2016-ipsa-publishes-reports-on-annual-survey-and-2015-general-election-administrative-lessons>.

² A full copy of this report can be found on our website at: <http://www.theipsa.org.uk/publications/annual-user-survey>.

³ A full copy of this report can be found on our website at: <http://www.theipsa.org.uk/publications/assurance-reports>.

election-related spending notes broad compliance by MPs with the Scheme rules; some key findings are noted in the section below.

7. The factors that led to the positive outcomes included: the extensive preparatory work for a snap election undertaken in the wake of the 2015 General Election; the prior training and experience of IPSA's staff; the strong working relationships with the House of Commons; and changes to Scheme rules, informed by feedback from MPs and our experience of the 2015 General Election, designed to support MPs more efficiently.
8. Some issues were nonetheless more difficult for MPs and their staff. These included IPSA's need to modernise and streamline some core processes, modernise IT infrastructure and improve data quality. For example, information collected by one team wasn't always accessible to another, which means time was wasted internally duplicating simple tasks and the speed of service provided to MPs sometimes suffered. A new IT system will be introduced by IPSA for MPs and their staff in 2019.
9. We have also listened to feedback from departing MPs about their experiences of losing office, and made changes to the financial support available to MPs who lose their seats and MPs who stand down at a snap election. Further information on this can be found below.

MPs' Experience of IPSA

10. MPs generally considered the service offered by IPSA over the dissolution period and immediately after the election to be good. In addition to the extended opening hours, there was particular praise for arrangements at the Departing Members' Area (DMA), the advice provided at drop-in sessions, and the clarity and timeliness of IPSA's dissolution guidance. MPs interviewed were positive about the advice they received from IPSA staff and praised their knowledge of the Scheme rules.
11. In addition, lessons were learned on improving our support for property rentals and simplifying the financial support provided to departing MPs. IPSA staff commented that these internal process changes, including increasing the regularity of outgoing payments, allowed us to provide a swifter and more efficient service to MPs.
12. IPSA created a dedicated section on the website for all General Election-related communications. Bulletins were sent regularly to MPs, and sought to address issues commonly raised in the 2015 election. Most MPs commented that the Bulletin was a useful source of information, as long as it was kept short and to the point.⁴
13. IPSA's telephone opening hours were extended by two hours to 9am to 6pm for four weeks after the Election. In June and July, IPSA's MP Support Services team answered an average of 100 calls per day, compared to 60 calls per day in April and May. This was particularly well received by MPs and their staff.
14. MPs who are defeated at an election are entitled to a Loss of Office Payment (LOOP), equal to double statutory redundancy and paid once they have completed the process of winding up. However, as their salary ceases on the day of the election, defeated MPs are required to wind

⁴ All bulletins sent to MPs and their staff can be found on our website: <http://www.theipsa.org.uk/news/communications-with-mps>.

up their parliamentary business after the election without a salary. IPSA had listened to concerns raised at the 2015 election that some departing MPs suffered financial hardship during this period. In 2017, defeated MPs were therefore offered an advance on their LOOP entitlement to help with cashflow. This change received positive feedback. 33 MPs opted to receive, and received, the advance at the end of June 2017.

15. The actual cost of LOOP following the 2017 General Election totalled £582,100, with individual payments ranging from just under £2,000 to £29,300 for the 66 eligible departing MPs.
16. However, some former MPs remained frustrated at the lack of financial support provided after the election and in particular at the amount of their LOOP entitlement. Departing MPs were particularly negative at the reduction in the level of LOOP payments from their previous, higher levels in 2015 and previously. Departing MPs in 2017 received 71% less, on average, than departing MPs in 2015. In response to these concerns, in May 2018, IPSA consulted on introducing an additional payment equal to two months' net salary for former MPs who have lost their seat. This new payment will be introduced at the next General Election.
17. Some MPs said that they were confused about the specific remits of IPSA and the House of Commons' HR, Security and Digital teams. This led to frustration when advice provided by IPSA differed from that given by those in the House. We will continue to work with the House on ensuring consistency in areas of mutual interest.

Resourcing

18. Unlike in 2015, in 2017 IPSA did not have the time to employ additional temporary staff to assist with supporting MPs through the election period. Nonetheless, as a result of the changes to our processes and rules, mentioned above, most teams were well-enough resourced to cope with the demands placed on them. Fewer staff were needed to support the General Election than in 2015. This means that we can be confident that similar cost savings can be made in future elections.
19. A few IPSA staff who had been on secondment were recalled. Their contributions were invaluable. Some staff members were internally seconded to election teams. These staff were similarly instrumental in ensuring a high level of service to MPs.
20. IPSA's Payroll team nonetheless came under particular pressure, resulting in staff working long hours and over weekends. This did not significantly impact on the quality of the service provided to MPs. In future, we will ensure that the Payroll team can also benefit from internal staff redeployment from Finance team colleagues.
21. IPSA staff commented that their efforts were occasionally hampered by the inflexibility of our existing IT systems. Many of these issues are now being addressed, with early benefits from the IPSA improvement programme (including remote working) now being realised.

Events

22. In 2017, IPSA took part in the House's New Members' Reception Area (NMRA) as well as the DMA, as we had in 2015. IPSA also participated in a Returning Members' Area (RMA) and attended House of Commons' regional roadshows in the run up to the election. These events ran smoothly, were well resourced and received positive feedback from participating MPs.

23. Preparations for the NMRA began as soon as the election was announced. IPSA and the House worked well together to provide a seamless service for new MPs, using the same format as in previous years. IPSA saw all 99 new MPs in the week following their election. Of these, 73 were met on the Monday following the election.
24. All departing MPs were offered individual meetings with IPSA. We contacted MPs who had already announced prior to the election that they would be standing down, and wrote to all 67 defeated MPs on the morning after the election to invite them to make appointments at IPSA and House staff at the DMA. Appointments were available from the Saturday following the election for two weeks.
25. This period is often difficult for departing MPs and their staff. IPSA staff were trained to handle the issues with appropriate sensitivity, care and attention to detail, including in how to manage difficult conversations for those who may be distressed. IPSA's arrangements for supporting departing MPs at the DMA were praised by all who used them.
26. Nonetheless, some departing MPs noted that a lack of administrative support in their own offices meant they struggled to wind up their affairs on schedule. This was because some of their staff members quickly found new roles and were no longer available to support them. Similarly, some new MPs struggled with setting up their offices given the large volume of information they are required to absorb quickly from day one. IPSA is now working with the House to explore how to provide a temporary administrative support team to alleviate some of these pressures.
27. A further issue was that the House of Commons' regional roadshows were held during dissolution and at short notice. As such, they were not well attended. IPSA and the House will review the value of organising and attending such roadshows in the event of a future election.

Working with the House

28. As in 2015, IPSA was a full member of the House of Commons General Election Planning Group. This was a useful forum for ensuring a coherent and consistent approach between different organisations.
29. There was consensus among IPSA staff that the quality of the relationship and coordination with the House was strong, particularly in relation to the DMA. The working-level contacts between the House and IPSA were positive and constructive, allowing any issues to be swiftly resolved. IPSA staff commented that the House often went out of their way to offer to help, with the Parliamentary Digital Service and the House printers frequently singled out for praise. This improved outcomes for MPs. IPSA will continue this arrangement in future.
30. IPSA has also completed a positive lessons learned exercise with the House, and are taking forward actions arising.

Governance, assurance and budgeting

31. Upon announcement of the election, IPSA immediately established its own internal General Election Programme Board which brought together representatives from every team at IPSA. This structure worked well. Participants said that this allowed the meetings to take an IPSA-wide perspective, and for information to flow effectively.

32. In Parliament, the Speaker's Committee for the IPSA, which oversees IPSA's budget, swiftly approved an additional budget of £20 million to ensure IPSA was resourced appropriately to exercise its election-related functions and make the necessary payments to MPs and their staff.
33. MPs commented that they understood IPSA's election-related rules and found our guidance to be clear. In terms of compliance with the Scheme, IPSA's assurance review of MPs' business costs and expenses relating to the 2017 General Election found broad compliance both before and after the election. This was largely the result of rule simplifications which had come into effect in April 2017.
34. Some costs incurred were higher than expected, particularly sums paid in relation to the early termination of leases for former MPs' offices and accommodation. Many MPs had signed tenancy agreements with the expectation of a five-year parliamentary term. In some cases they were required to pay a fee to end the contract early or even pay the rent for the duration of the remaining contract. IPSA has now introduced new rules recommending that MPs negotiate a clause in their contracts to allow them to give two months' notice in the event of a change in circumstances, such as an unexpected General Election. The Scheme now also says that MPs will only be able to claim for rent and other office costs that are incurred during the two-month winding-up period and not beyond that, 'unless MPs can demonstrate that they were unavoidable'.
35. 82 per cent of the winding up costs incurred by departing MPs related to staffing costs. This includes salary and redundancy costs, pay for unused holiday, time off in lieu or overtime and pay-in-lieu-of-notice (PILON) for staff who are not required or not able to work their full notice period. 48 per cent of PILON payments to MPs' staff members, amounting to £205,900, was potentially avoidable had some former MPs given earlier notice of redundancy to their staff. In addition, £426,000 was paid to 387 departing staff members for untaken leave, with an average payment of £1,100. IPSA will continue to communicate clearly to MPs the importance of issuing timely notice to their staff once they have left office, in order to save public money.
36. A number of recommendations made by the assurance review are being incorporated into ongoing planning for future elections.

