

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

4 November 2025

Board Members: Richard Lloyd OBE (Chair)
Dame Laura Cox
Helen Jones
Will Lifford
Lea Paterson CBE
Andrea Spataro (Boardroom Apprentice)

See Annex for record of attendees.

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 16 December 2025

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interest

1.1 The Chair invited attendees to declare any interests not previously recorded, with none being declared. The Board congratulated Karen Lacey on her recent appointment as Director, MP Services.

2. Actions and Minutes

2.1 The minutes of the Board meeting of 23 September were approved.

2.2 The Board noted the completed and outstanding actions. The Chief of Staff provided an update in relation to the completed action concerning implementation plans for the introduction of inter-office loans and externally-funded secondments, noting that although a query had been raised with HMRC regarding the application of VAT, these were still on track to be delivered by the end of November and the end of December respectively. The Board discussed several other outstanding queries where clarification had been sought from HMRC and agreed that it would be helpful for the Chair to have a strategic conversation at a senior level.

3. Annual Publication

- 3.1 The Director, Standards and Information and the Head of Strategic Communications jointly presented an update on annual publication, including the draft Supporting Trust in Democracy report. This would be the third year in which a contextual report was issued alongside the publication of MPs' budget and spending data, and the document was like previous years. It was noted that MPs found the myth-busting fact-boxes particularly useful in responding to media and constituent queries on their data, and a focus on utilities costs and MP work accommodation reflected recent media coverage. The Director, Standards and Information also looked ahead to future years, stating that work would continue to make annual publication more meaningful and accessible to the public, and that opportunities to utilise artificial intelligence would be explored in tandem with the development of a new website.
- 3.2 The Board welcomed the accessible and easy-to-understand language deployed in the report, recommending some minor textual changes. The Board asked for a clearer plan as to when other aspects of the annual publication process would be improved. The Director, Standards and Information noted the changes that had recently taken place regarding the publication of small-value claims and rent payments and indicated that plans for further changes would need to be developed in coordination with work to provide MPs with more centralised services.
- 3.3 The Board delegated sign-off of the report to the Chair, and whilst Board members recorded their thanks for the progress made in changing the approach to publication, they asked for clear plans and deliverables to be included within the 2026-27 Business Plan reflecting a desire for increased ambition in the pace of change.

4. 2026-27 Business Plan

- 4.1 The Director, Standards and Information, presented the draft 2026-26 Business Plan, asking for the Board's views on the strategic intent and priorities embedded within the document. It was also noted that following a recent request from the Speaker's Committee for IPSA (SCIPSA), work was underway to develop a more granular five-year plan to accompany the annual business plan.
- 4.2 The Board expressed an appetite for a reconsideration of IPSA's Business Plan format and the purpose of the document. There was broad agreement that the plan in its current form was attempting to cover too much ground and please multiple audiences, thereby losing clarity. It was asked that the Business Plan focus on its narrow purpose of enabling Parliament to understand the costs associated with next year's projected deliverables, linking across to the Main Estimate, and ensuring sufficient granularity of detail. The Board was open to changes being made to the format of the document, with its structure based around IPSA's strategic objectives to be reconsidered. The Board suggested that a report on IPSA's performance could be a stand-alone document separate from the Business Plan.

- 4.3 Further to this work, the Board asked that the language and tone of the Business Plan and any supporting documents be reviewed, to convey conviction without over-promising delivery. There was broad agreement that a ‘test and learn’ approach was sensible, but that this should not be communicated in a tentative language. An effort should also be made to emphasise how IPSA’s work was rooted in the feedback received from stakeholders and exercises such as the recent Citizens’ Forum.

5. 2026-27 Budgets (the Economic Context)

- 5.1 The Director, Standards and Information, presented a paper outlining the economic context within which decisions regarding 2026-27 MP budgets would need to be considered at the December meeting, providing the Board with the opportunity to reflect on current data and to consider their approach.
- 5.2 The Board discussed IPSA’s response to reports from some offices of increased volumes of casework and the possible need for additional support. The Director, Standards and Information noted how support was currently being offered through the contingency funding application process alongside advice and guidance from the MP Staff Policy Advisor. It was suggested that in 2026-27, IPSA develop this tailored approach through the creation of a staffing support fund, access to which would be determined on a case-by-case basis upon assessment of need; and increased provision of advice and support from experienced Office Managers. The Head of Standards and Transparency highlighted how offices had been asked to provide IPSA with data relating to casework volumes so IPSA could take a more evidence-based approach. The Board expressed support for a staffing support fund but was clear that the priority should be increasing MPs’ staff retention rates through greater professionalisation of roles and the re-benchmarking of salaries. When offering support, a range of other solutions could also be considered such as virtual office arrangements and enabling the viring of funds between the Office Costs and Staffing Budgets. The Board was clear in asking that IPSA’s recommended approach be based on as much feedback and data as was possible.
- 5.3 The Board discussed the outstanding recommendation arising from the 2023 Speaker’s Conference Report relating to the ‘backfilling’ of MPs’ staff roles where staff are undertaking work ‘which benefits Members’ staff as a whole’. It was asked that the Business Plan and Main Estimate explicitly demonstrate IPSA’s response to both the 2023 and 2025 Speaker’s Conference Reports, and that a proposal relating to this final recommendation of the earlier report be considered in December.

6. Supplementary Guidance to the 2026-27 Scheme

- 6.1 The Head of Standards and Transparency presented examples of draft supplementary guidance intended for publication alongside the Scheme in April 2026. These examples were provided to

illustrate the new format for guidance, the type of information intended to be included, and improvements made to version control. The latter point was recognised as being of particular importance given the increased significance of supplementary guidance to IPSA's new regulatory approach. A review of over five hundred items of guidance had commenced, with more significant areas and those subject to change being prioritised.

- 6.2 The Board was complimentary on the new format for guidance but asked that more work be done to reduce the number of guidance notes where possible and to ensure that the content of guidance notes was succinct. The Director, Standards and Information confirmed that this was the intention, but that guidance may also need to be scaled back over time given that MPs and their staff may need more detail to begin with while adapting to IPSA's new regulatory approach. The Chief Executive asked that the MP Services directorate also be involved in the review of guidance to ensure that operational impacts were considered. The Board also asked that examples of new guidance be shared with a group of Office Managers to ensure that their feedback was considered and that what was produced was user centric. Finally, the Board asked that testing of the searchability and summarisable nature of guidance be tested using artificial intelligence software to provide greater assurance that were MPs to use AI tools to search IPSA's guidance, summaries would be meaningful and accurate. The Head of Standards and Transparency confirmed that a project was already underway to explore opportunities for developing an AI tool to work alongside IPSA's web guidance to support MPs and their staff.

7. MP Remuneration Consultation Responses

- 7.1 The Head of Standards and Transparency presented a report on the responses received in relation to the recent consultation on MP remuneration, highlighting that more analysis of the data would be undertaken ahead of the December Board meeting, at which recommendations would be made with regard to a determination of the mechanism for MPs' pay decisions for the remainder of the current Parliament. The consultation received forty-three responses, and respondents were generally found to have been supportive of the proposals made. There had been a wide range of suggestions put forward in relation to comparator professions against which MPs' remuneration could be benchmarked and there had been some concerns raised regarding the potential for IPSA to apply flexibility to the timing of annual pay decisions. It was also noted that a few respondents had criticized the accessibility of the consultation document, and that this feedback would be considered in relation to future consultations.
- 7.2 The Board noted the update with thanks, acknowledging that comparison of MPs' pay with that of a broad range of professions was probably required, and that more thought was needed on whether flexibility should be applied to the timing of pay decisions. The Board agreed that MPs' pay needed to keep up with economic changes and pay progression in other sectors.

8. Report from the Audit, Risk, and Assurance Committee

- 8.1 The Acting Chair of the recent Audit, Risk, and Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting provided a summary of discussion, noting that there had been a focus on cyber risk and an update on a recent incident management scenario, that the Committee had looked again at the strategic risks following on from the item at the September Board meeting, and that details had been provided with regard to the development of IPSA's Commercial Strategy, with a full written update expected at December's ARAC meeting. Further to this, the Committee considered an audit report on debt management and an advisory report on rail travel expenditure.

9. Chief Executive's Report

- 9.1 The Chief Executive presented her report to the Board, highlighting two updates for particular attention. The recent SCIPSA private session had primarily focused on IPSA's draft Annual Report and Accounts and the Committee had agreed that a decision on whether IPSA's probable supplementary estimate could be agreed via correspondence would be made by the Speaker once further clarity had been provided on the nature of the requirement. The process to identify a new payment solution for MPs had commenced and IPSA was engaging with several suppliers, with the intention of deciding in the coming months. In addition to the Chief Executive's report, the Chair provided a verbal update on the recent meeting of the UK Chairs Network and the newly established Ethics and Integrity Commission; and noted that SCIPSA had agreed to the appointment of two new IPSA Board members, Cliff Rana and Sir Charles Walker, whose five-year terms would start on 1 January 2026.
- 9.2 The Chief Executive summarised the contents of the KPI dashboard, highlighting the high compliance rates despite recent changes to IPSA's regulatory approach, the positive customer service metrics indicating timely responses to emails and phone calls, and a reduction in the average time taken to reimburse MP funding requests to two days.
- 9.3 The Chief Executive presented an update on IPSA's Transformation Programme, noting that development of the IPSA Online front-end portal was being considered in conjunction with plans to undertake a discovery exercise with respect to IPSA's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software; and that progress was being made regarding the procurement of a centralised broadband service for MPs, with a further update to be provided at the December Board meeting. The Chair of the Improving IPSA Assurance Group noted that with changes having been made to the oversight of the Transformation Programme, the way in which updates were reported to the Board would be refreshed.
- 9.4 The Board noted the formal response of the Parliamentary Contributory Fund (PCPF) to the recent consultation on changes to the MPs' pension scheme, and confirmed their decision made in September to proceed with the changes proposed in the consultation.

10. Financial Report

10.1 The Director, Finance and Commercial, presented the Financial Report and provided an update on the Annual Report and Accounts (ARA). It was noted that the ARA was still awaiting sign off from the National Audit Office but that once received, it would be sent to the Board to approve via correspondence as agreed at the previous Board meeting. The Chair of ARAC confirmed that he would conduct a detailed review of the ARA to provide Board colleagues with further assurance. In summarising the Financial Report, the Director, Finance and Commercial, confirmed that IPSA would require a supplementary estimate with respect to Subhead A due to a higher-than-expected run rate against MP budgets and due to costs associated with the McCloud remedy. The draft supplementary estimate and main estimate would be presented to the Board at the December meeting. It was highlighted that although spending against Subhead B revenue projects was currently behind projections, this should increase by the close of the financial year. Finally, the Director, Finance and Commercial, noted the costs that would be recorded against the capital expenditure budget due to IPSA trialling taking responsibility for lease arrangements on behalf of MPs. The Board noted the importance of clearly explaining the projected cost of IPSA taking responsibility for more MP office lease arrangements, particularly given that the full cost of a lease needed to be capitalised up-front in the accounts.

11. Board Programme of Work

11.1 The Board noted the forward plan, with the Chair highlighting that in line with upcoming changes to Board membership, decisions would be made at the next meeting in relation to the appointment of a new Senior Independent Director, a new Chair of the People Committee, and a new Chair of ARAC.

Annex One

In attendance: Karen Walker, Chief Executive
Lee Bridges, Director, Standards and Information
Thomas Fitch, Director, Finance and Commercial
Karen Lacey, Director, MP Services
Chief of Staff
Head of Standards and Transparency
Head of Strategic Communications (Item 3)
Standards Officer (Item 5)
Remuneration Policy Specialist (Item 7)