



BOARD PAPER	
Paper ref:	IPSA/160922/7
Agenda item:	9

TO: IPSA Board **DATE:** 22 September 2016

FROM: [Named redacted], Head of Policy and Strategy

TEL: 020 7811 [...]

SUBJECT: **COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE SCHEME: EMERGING FINDINGS FROM THE CONSULTATION**

ANNEXES: **A. List of all questions in the consultation document**

B. Excerpt from *The Good Parliament* report about “diversity sensitive principles” to consider for the Scheme review

Issue

1. To update the Board on the emerging findings from the consultation as part of the comprehensive review of the *MPs’ Scheme of Business Costs and Expenses* (the Scheme) and IPSA’s publication policy.

Timing

2. Routine. For consideration at the 22 September Board meeting.

Recommendation

3. That the Board notes:
 - a. the contents of this paper, which provides an update on the emerging findings of the consultation; and
 - b. that the consultation runs until 24 October and we will come back to the Board in the coming months to discuss the proposed changes to the Scheme.

Background

4. On 11 May, IPSA launched its consultation on the Scheme and IPSA's publication policy. The consultation remains open until 24 October.
5. The consultation covers several key themes: the way we provide financial support to MPs with families (including the employment of connected parties); the possible simplification of the Scheme (particularly the travel rules); the boundary between parliamentary and party political activity for the purposes of IPSA funding; MPs' residential accommodation; the financial regulation of MPs' staffing; as well as numerous other minor issues. It also includes proposals as part of a review of IPSA's publication policy, including whether IPSA should proactively publish receipts and other supporting evidence submitted by MPs.
6. The consultation itself is a substantive document that sets out relevant facts and figures and background information about each area of expenditure, a range of possible options on each topic and then asked 38 consultation questions (including a catch-all question seeking general comments or suggestions on the Scheme). Appended to the consultation document was a data annex, and assurance reports on General Election expenditure and MPs' employment of connected parties.

Argument

7. This paper summarises the feedback we have received so far, broken down by the relevant chapter headings from the consultation document. This feedback has been received through a number of forums - formal consultation responses, meetings between IPSA and individual MPs as well as groups of MPs, meetings with groups of MPs' staff, IPSA's qualitative survey of MPs, general correspondence received from MPs, and externally-produced reports that referred to IPSA's rules. As the consultation is still open until 24 October, this paper simply provides the emerging findings, for the Board's information. We will report back to the Board in the coming months to discuss any proposed changes to the Scheme in more detail.

[...]

9. We have so far received 23 formal written responses to the consultation - 15 from members of MPs' staff (including one letter that was co-signed by 220 staff members regarding redundancy payments), 6 from MPs and 2 from members of the public. Several more individuals have committed to submitting a response before the consultation closes.

[...]

Financial support to MPs' families

39. There has been a fair amount of discussion and media coverage in relation to the support available to MPs with families, both in terms of IPSA funding and wider House facilities and parliamentary culture.

[...]

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43. Several MPs have complained about IPSA's requirement that an MP's dependant must be "routinely resident" for an MP to receive a budget uplift. Most argued it was too confusing and open to too many different interpretations which made adhering to it more "difficult", and MPs requested that we either remove this wording or provide clearer supporting guidance. "That vagueness means that MPs inadvertently but honourably claim outside the rules, or worse choose not to claim for something for fear of falling foul of the rules despite it being allowable". One MP, [named removed], argued that we should go further in ensuring whether MPs are complying with this "routinely resident" requirement, suggesting IPSA undertake checks on MPs' accommodation arrangements involving dependants (but it is not clear how she envisages this working in practice).
44. A member of the public felt that more could be done to make life easier for MPs with families, particularly women, but noted that this was not necessarily within IPSA's remit – "I am not sure that this is as a result of the funding, more the culture".

[...]

[Head of Policy]

9 September 2016