

Consultation on the framework for setting MPs' budgets



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Foreword from the Chair

IPSA has worked in recent years to become a more modern and responsive regulator, supporting MPs and their staff while helping to maintain public confidence in the funding of the UK's parliamentary democracy.

Since 2022, a key part of this work has been improving the experience of MPs' staff, informed by feedback from MPs, staff and representative groups. Changes have included recognising past service with another MP, strengthening support for paid family leave, and helping to deliver the recommendations of the last parliament's Speaker's Conference.

Our recent engagement activities highlighted the dedication of MPs' staff, who support MPs and constituents amid rising caseloads and increasing complexity.

As the roles of MPs and their staff evolve, IPSA's funding framework must remain fit for purpose. It should support high-quality public service, reflect changing expectations, and promote professional, sustainable working environments.

We also recognise that funding alone is not the answer. At the SCIPSA public session on 4 March 2026, the Committee agreed IPSA's proposal to establish a joint working group to assess evidence of need and develop a practical plan to help MPs manage workloads and secure value for money beyond the 2026-27 budget package.

The working group includes IPSA, the Parliamentary Security Department, the Parliamentary Digital Service, and the Members' and Members' Staff Services Team, supported by an advisory board of MPs and MPs' staff.

The group has identified measures to improve working practices, including piloting AI, enhancing caseworker software training, expanding training on common constituent issues, and developing a pipeline of trained and vetted caseworkers for temporary and permanent deployment in MPs' offices.

IPSA must remain mindful of pressures on public finances and make funding decisions that deliver value for taxpayers. Our role is to balance the resources MPs and their staff need with public confidence in how those resources are used.

Your responses to this consultation will help shape IPSA's approach to parliamentary funding in the years ahead. We look forward to hearing your views and will consider all feedback carefully as we develop future budgets and funding arrangements.

Richard Lloyd OBE
IPSA Chair

Introduction

1. This consultation seeks views on the principles that should guide IPSA's budget decisions and whether the current framework for MPs' budgets remains appropriate. It also explains how IPSA is governed, scrutinised and makes decisions, in the interests of transparency.
2. IPSA was established under the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009 as the world's first independent regulator of MPs' pay, pensions and public funding for parliamentary duties. We are independent of Parliament and Government and must act efficiently, cost-effectively and transparently.
3. A core responsibility given to IPSA by Parliament is to ensure MPs have appropriate funding to carry out their duties in Parliament and their constituencies.
4. We recognise the dedication of MPs and their staff, and the pressures many offices face from rising and increasingly complex casework. We have received feedback from some offices about the impact this is having on the wellbeing of people who work in MPs' offices, and in response we have introduced additional, dedicated funding to support those offices facing particular pressures and a ring-fenced training and wellbeing budget.
5. IPSA must balance appropriate funding for MPs with public expectations that public money is used efficiently and cost-effectively. We take an evidence-based approach to budget-setting, drawing on spending, costs and the experiences of MPs and their staff.
6. The past few years have presented a challenging fiscal environment for public sector bodies with most required to make cost savings, and for ordinary working citizens, many of whom have not seen their pay rise in line with inflation. Against this backdrop, MPs and their staff are seeing increases in their workload, as greater numbers of their constituents seek their assistance.
7. IPSA considers these factors as part of budget-setting and is committed to explaining how decisions are reached. We are also working with House of Commons partners to identify practical ways to help MPs manage workloads, use resources effectively and secure value for money.
8. Your feedback will help shape IPSA's future approach to funding democracy well while maintaining public confidence in how resources are allocated.

How to respond

9. We welcome your views on this consultation. Please respond via the [online survey](#).
10. You may also respond by email to consultation@theipsa.org.uk. Please do not send responses by post.
11. We will summarise responses when we publish the consultation outcomes and may identify respondents or publish a list of those who responded. If you want your response to remain confidential, please state this clearly. We will not quote from, or attribute, confidential responses.
12. We will not publish email addresses or other contact details. Personal data will be handled in line with data protection law and our privacy notice.
13. Please send your response by 11.59pm on 4 September 2026.



Section 1: Framework for MPs' budgets

14. IPSA provides the funding MPs need to carry out their parliamentary duties in Westminster and their constituencies, including office running costs, staffing, travel and working from two locations. IPSA sets annual limits for each category of expenditure.

15. The current framework provides broadly the same core budgets for all MPs, with limited differentiation between London and non-London constituencies. This is simple, transparent and consistent, but may not fully reflect differences in costs, constituency needs or casework pressures.

16. The main budgets available to MPs are:

Staffing – Covers payroll and employment costs for staff supporting MPs in Westminster and the constituency, including salaries, national insurance, pensions, pooled research services and volunteer costs.

Staff development – Funds staff training and role-related support, including one-off health costs such as eye tests and flu jab vouchers.

Office costs – Funds the running of MPs' offices and constituency surgeries, including rent, utilities, business rates, equipment and stationery.

Accommodation – Covers overnight accommodation in London or the constituency so MPs can work from both Westminster and their constituency. This may include hotels, rented accommodation, or associated costs for a property an MP owns. London-area MPs are not entitled to this budget.

Travel – Covers work-related travel between Westminster and the constituency, travel elsewhere in the UK and Europe, and overnight hotel and subsistence costs where required for work. The budget is uncapped to reflect wide variation in travel needs across UK constituencies.

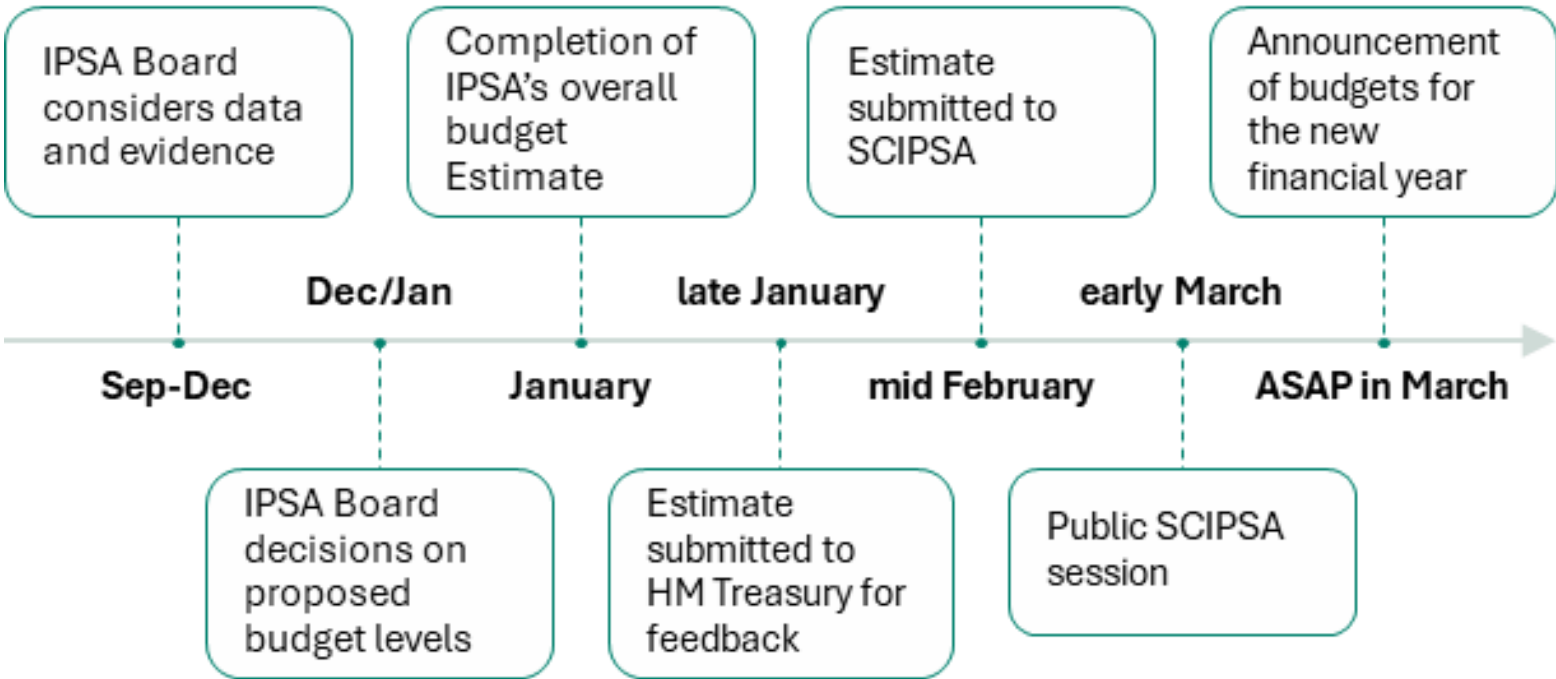
17. IPSA also administers centrally held funding for specific needs, including reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010, parental or long-term sickness support, additional staffing support for offices under pressure, and help where constituency offices face difficulties securing suitable and affordable accommodation.

18. MPs are accountable for managing their budgets and meeting IPSA's regulatory principles, including value for money.

Section 1: Framework for MPs' budgets

Budget setting process

19. The IPSA Board makes independent decisions on MPs' funding. IPSA is accountable to Parliament through the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (SCIPSA). [Read more about IPSA's Board and SCIPSA.](#)



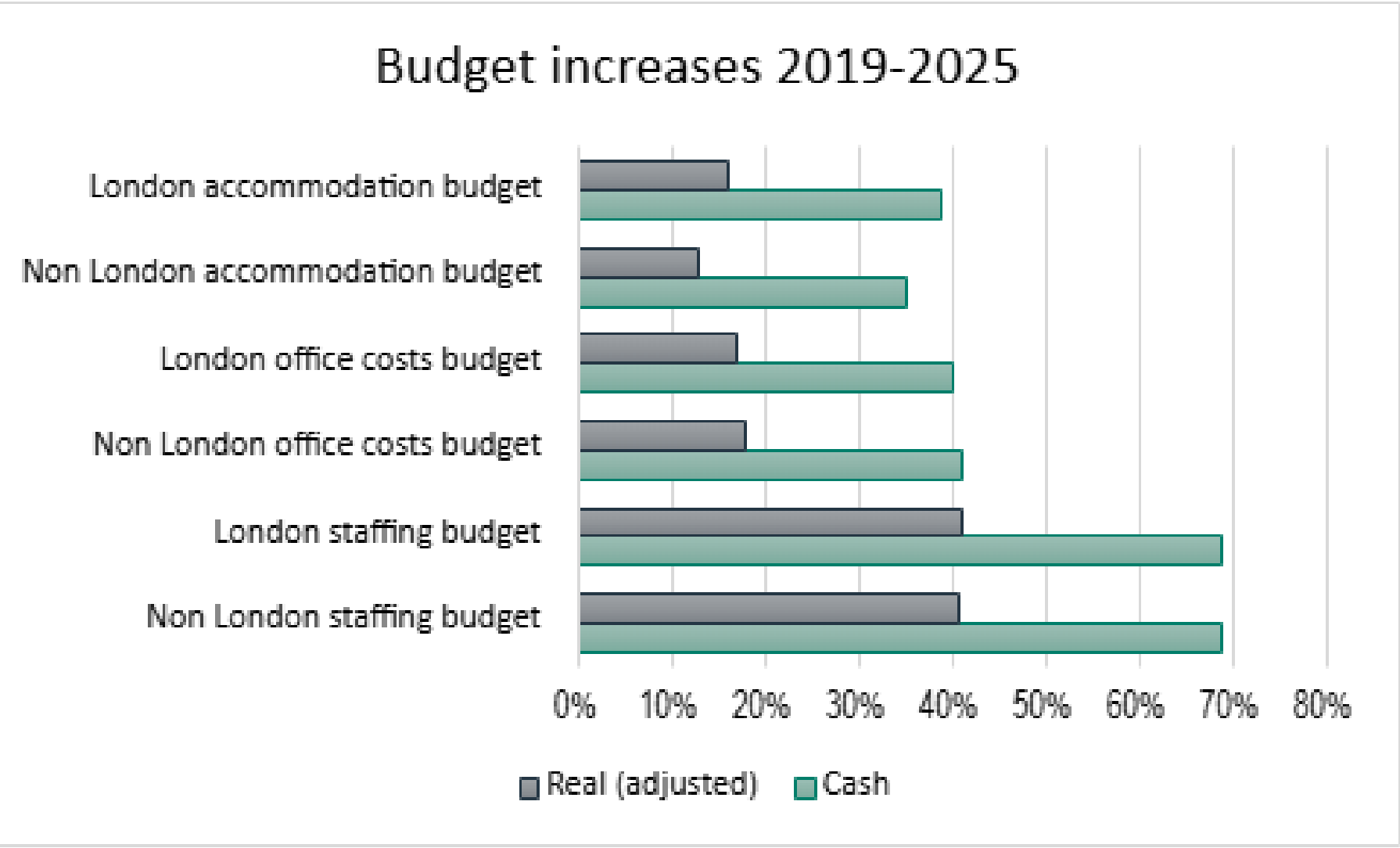
20. The annual budget-setting process takes around six months and begins in the autumn. IPSA considers evidence including spending trends, forecast expenditure, economic conditions, inflation, and feedback from MPs, staff and representative groups. [Read more about the evidence and information considered each year by the Board.](#) Proposed changes are included in IPSA's Estimate, which is scrutinised by SCIPSA.

21. IPSA's Estimate and annual business plan are usually discussed with SCIPSA in public in early March. They are shared with HM Treasury beforehand for feedback on proposed public expenditure. Once approved, the Estimate is laid before the House by the Speaker.
22. Budget levels for the new financial year are therefore usually confirmed in March, before the financial year beginning 1 April. We recognise this can make planning harder, but independent scrutiny helps ensure transparent, accountable and evidence-based decisions.
23. SCIPSA's process already takes place earlier than for many public bodies. The House of Commons' [MPs' guide to procedure](#) notes that main estimates are often published in April and approved in July.
24. We know MPs and staff need early information to plan. In recent years, with the Speaker's consent, we have shared provisional staffing budget figures ahead of the SCIPSA session, the largest area of funding for MPs' offices.

Section 1: Framework for MPs' budgets

Budget changes since 2019

25. Since 2019, the three main capped budgets available to MPs – staffing, office costs and accommodation – have increased in both cash and inflation-adjusted terms. Adjusting for CPIH shows how much of the increase reflects rising prices and how much represents a real-terms increase in budget capacity.



Section 2: Principles for decision-making

26. When setting MPs' budgets, IPSA must balance safeguarding public money with ensuring MPs and their staff have the resources needed to serve constituents effectively. IPSA also seeks to ensure that people from all backgrounds can become MPs and that Parliament is diverse and representative.

27. In 2012, IPSA set principles to guide decisions on MPs' pay and remuneration. We now propose to state the principles guiding MPs' budget decisions. These principles and outcomes are not new but have previously been implicit rather than consulted on and stated publicly.

Design principles

- Fair: Core budgets levels are the same for all MPs, with a transparent process for seeking additional funding.
- Flexible: Budgets are designed and administered in a way that reflects different needs and responds to exceptional circumstances.
- Grounded: Decisions on the level of budgets take account of the economic context facing working citizens and the wider public sector.
- Integrated: Budgets are designed to support the whole of an MP's parliamentary role and reflect the dual role in Westminster and the constituency.

Outcomes

- Funding enables people from all backgrounds to become MPs.
- Parliamentary work can be fully funded from the public purse, without the need for outside funding.
- MPs are supported by experienced, skilled and supported staff.
- Offices operate efficiently and effectively and achieve value for money.
- MPs can maintain their family lives and caring responsibilities while working across Westminster and their constituency.
- MPs have reasonable scope to decide how to run their offices.

Section 2: Principles for decision-making

Question 1: Do the proposed principles and outcomes provide an appropriate framework for IPSA's decisions on MPs' budgets?

28. Feedback from the last budget round indicated that some MPs and staff felt funding was insufficient to support parliamentary duties effectively. IPSA must balance this need with pressures on public finances and value for money for taxpayers. This is reflected in the proposed 'Grounded' principle, and we are seeking views about the extent to which IPSA should consider wider public sector funding decisions that are themselves approved by Parliament.

Question 2: Should annual decisions on MPs' budgets take account of funding decisions that apply to other public bodies, or is there exceptionality in parliamentary work?

29. IPSA must meet public sector financial accounting standards, ensuring spending stays within approved limits and is correctly allocated. While MPs remain responsible for managing spending within budget, IPSA's more proportionate, principles-based approach allows greater support and judgement where circumstances justify it. This balances strong financial control with appropriate flexibility.

Question 3: How could IPSA increase budget flexibility while maintaining accountability and proper use of public funds?

Question 4: What opportunities and risks would greater flexibility within an overall budget create?

30. For 2026-27, IPSA introduced a new framework for additional funding based on individual needs and circumstances, while maintaining its regulatory principles. This includes a staffing support fund to help offices facing increased workloads or other pressures.

31. IPSA has also introduced changes to help MPs make best use of their budgets, including allowing some costs to be allocated across more than one budget. With IPSA's agreement, funding may also be moved between office costs and staffing budgets in certain circumstances.

32. We welcome views on whether these changes provide the right level of flexibility while supporting effective financial management for MPs and IPSA.

Question 5: Are you aware of the staffing support fund?

Question 6: How effectively does the staffing support fund help offices facing additional pressures?

Question 7: What barriers, if any, affect access to the staffing support fund?

Section 3: Alternative frameworks

33. Under IPSA's current framework, core budgets are broadly the same for all MPs. London-area MPs receive slightly higher office costs and staffing budgets to reflect higher costs in and around the capital. Staffing budgets for non-London MPs include funding for at least one Westminster-based staff member. IPSA also provides additional support, such as staffing support funding and reasonable adjustments, based on specific needs.

34. We believe this approach balances a clear, simple and transparent framework with responsiveness to different constituency needs. However, views may differ on whether IPSA should move further from a "one size fits all" model.

35. We have also received feedback on whether the London/non-London distinction remains appropriate. While some costs are higher in London, the evidence is more mixed. Average costs in other parts of the UK, including major cities, can be comparable, and data shows average office rents funded by IPSA are lower in London than in most other regions. Not all London MPs request funding for a constituency office.

36. We welcome views on whether alternative budget-setting approaches would better support MPs' parliamentary duties while delivering value for money and meeting IPSA's objectives.

Question 8: Does IPSA's current approach to setting budgets balance simplicity and transparency with support for individual circumstances?

Question 9: Is the distinction between London and non-London constituency budgets still appropriate?

Question 10: What other factors should IPSA consider when setting constituency budgets?

Section 4: Equality impact assessment

37. The framework for MPs' budgets should be flexible enough to reflect diverse working patterns among MPs and their staff and should not deter people from any section of society from becoming MPs. This supports IPSA's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

38. We welcome views on whether the proposals in this consultation could have positive or negative impacts on equality and diversity for MPs and their staff.

Question 11: What equality impacts could arise from the issues and proposals in this consultation?

