

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Sent: 14 July 2017 12:12
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Yesterday's meeting

Thanks [REDACTED]. I will arrange for a letter to [REDACTED]

On extended travel, that's a helpful clarification. I note that although the list is gone, the reference to "opposition front bench and shadow ministerial travel" as a possible reason for extended travel is still there, in the box after para 9.6. That's a clear and helpful indication that such travel is not regarded by IPSA as party political. Can we take it that it applies to all parties, and not just to the Official Opposition?

Thanks, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Chief of Staff
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Sent: 13 July 2017 13:11
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Yesterday's meeting

Dear [REDACTED]

Many thanks for meeting with [REDACTED] and myself yesterday to discuss our pooled services assurance review. Thank you also to [REDACTED] for taking the time. We found the meeting interesting and productive, and we hope we were able to answer some of your queries.

As discussed, we would be grateful if you could set out in writing (in a letter to [REDACTED] for example) the assurances you gave us about the circumstances which make the SNP Research Team unique and which in part explain the relatively high annual subscription fee. I will tell the Board today about our conversation and suggest that the drafting in the report (particularly around the conclusions drawn) be revisited.

Regarding your query about the Scheme rules for extended UK travel, the Scheme previously included a list of reasons for which an MP could claim, which included 'opposition and shadow front bench travel'. The new Scheme for 2017/18 no longer includes this list; this was part of simplification of the Scheme and

to allow a greater degree of discretion for MPs. Extended travel is now eligible so long as it complies with the fundamental principles and general conditions of the Scheme: that is, as long as it is for parliamentary (rather than party political or campaigning) purposes, and could not be funded from another source, it is claimable from IPSA.

I trust this is useful, and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards



Head of Policy and Assurance

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[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Sent: 11 July 2017 16:48
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Pooled services review

Happy to meet you at Central Lobby. My mobile number in case of need: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk]
Sent: 11 July 2017 15:36
To: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Subject: RE: Pooled services review

Hi [REDACTED]

Yes that is fine, and I will be attending as well if that's alright. Unfortunately neither of us has a pass, so you would need to meet us somewhere convenient past the visitors entrance (Westminster Hall or Central Lobby?)

Many thanks,
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk}
Sent: 11 July 2017 07:50
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Pooled services review

Thanks [REDACTED] and sorry for the delay in responding. 2pm tomorrow would be fine. Is [REDACTED] able to come to the Palace of Westminster?

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk]
Sent: 06 July 2017 17:09
To: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Subject: RE: Pooled services review

Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks for your email [REDACTED] asked me to try to arrange a meeting for next week. Would Wednesday 12th July at 2pm suit?

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk]
Sent: 05 July 2017 19:28
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Pooled services review

Thanks [REDACTED] I'd be happy to meet and I think [REDACTED] MP would like to join the discussion too.

How about Wednesday or Thursday next week, or Tuesday / Wednesday of the week after? Outside sitting hours would be less risky for [REDACTED] of course.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Date: Tuesday, 4 July 2017 17:20
To: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Subject: RE: Pooled services review

[REDACTED]

We won't be publishing anything on assurance reviews before November. Current plan is to publish an annual assurance report at that time, but obviously timing will be subject to any further developments at Westminster.

It would be good if we could meet before the recess to discuss the recommendations we made in the review – both the questions of content and the amount that is charged to SNP MPs. Could you suggest some dates that would work for you?

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

Director of Regulation
Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority
4th Floor
30 Millbank
London SW1P 4DU

Tel: 020 [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk
Website: www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk
General queries: info@parliamentarystandards.org.uk
Twitter: @ipsaUK

From: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk]
Sent: 04 July 2017 13:27
To: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Subject: Re: Pooled services review

Hi [REDACTED] – when we spoke in March you indicated that there hadn't been a decision on publication of details of the assurance review of pooled services (or indeed of other reviews).

I wondered if there had been any decision since then?

Thanks, [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Date: Friday, 3 March 2017 11:58
To: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Subject: RE: Pooled services review

I'll call next week.

[REDACTED]
Director of Regulation
Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority
4th Floor
30 Millbank
London SW 1 4DU

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Website: www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk
General queries: info@parliamentarystandards.org.uk
Twitter: @ipsaUK

From: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk]
Sent: 03 March 2017 11:33
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Pooled services review

Hi [REDACTED] — thanks for your email.

I spoke to [REDACTED] last week and my main questions were on publication and timing. Specifically, when will IPSA be publishing the outcome of its review of the scheme of expenses, and what will you be publishing at that point about pooled services (SNP and others)? Then my second question was what is the plan (timing and content) for any other publication of material about the assurance reviews of pooled services?

I'm out of the office today but we could speak next week.

Thanks, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Date: Thursday, 2 March 2017 at 10:25
To: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Subject: Pooled services review

Dear [REDACTED]

I called last week to talk about the pooled services review. Very happy to discuss, either on the phone, or in person. I can come over to Portcullis House if that would help.

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Director of Regulation
Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority
4th Floor
30 Millbank
London SW 1 4DU

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SNP Westminster Group

SNP

House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

15 September 2017

Director of Regulation
IPSA
30 Millbank
LONDON SW1P 4DU

Dear [REDACTED],

POOLED SERVICES

Thank you for [REDACTED] email of 13 July. I apologise for the delay in replying over recess.

As [REDACTED] and I explained when we met you and [REDACTED] on 12 July, there are a number of factors which need to be taken into account in any assessment of the SNP pooled research service:

More than 90% of the SNP's MPs were new to Parliament in 2015, when the pooled service was established. Such a high proportion of new MPs inevitably generated a higher demand for research support than needed by MPs of other parliamentary parties

Unlike other parties, the SNP has no headquarters office in London. SNP MPs have therefore placed more emphasis than other parties on the need for an effective research team at Westminster.

It is more difficult and more expensive for Scottish MPs to arrange for their own staff to work at Westminster than it is for MPs whose constituencies are closer to London. The decision to devote a higher proportion of staffing budgets to a pooled research team reflects this.

As discussed during the meeting, we do not accept the conclusions in paras 62-65 of the report and indeed we find them inconsistent with other statements by IPSA:

- The report on SNP pooled services acknowledges that the parliamentary duties of an MP are naturally and traditionally political. IPSA states that materials produced by pooled services are eligible for IPSA funding "as long as they are not aimed at producing a

- campaigning advantage for the MP or party" (*para 182, Review of the Scheme and IPSA's publication policy – Consultation report March 2017*).
- The report also points out that one of the principal duties of an MP is to hold the Government to account. Briefing which failed to identify critical information and comment on the Government's performance would not support an MP's work, whether the briefing was produced by a pooled service or by their own directly-employed staff.
- Actions and policies of the Scottish Government are a natural point of comparison with UK Government policy. They should be referenced in briefings, particularly but not only for MPs representing Scottish constituencies. Moreover, SNP MPs are routinely challenged in parliamentary debates to say what the Scottish Government is doing on the matter under discussion. A briefing which did not include that information would not support an MP's parliamentary work.

In short, the nature of the material provided by the research team responds to the requirements and requests of the MPs who pay for the pooled service, and falls within the needs of their parliamentary duties. That these requirements go beyond what, for example, the House of Commons Library provides demonstrates the need for pooled services not only for the SNP but for other parliamentary parties.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of the Chief of Staff.

Chief of Staff

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Sent: 18 September 2017 13:26
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Yesterday's meeting
Attachments: 20170915 Letter.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Please see letter attached.

[REDACTED]
Chief of Staff
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Date: Thursday, 13 July 2017 13:11
To: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>, [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Subject: Yesterday's meeting

Dear [REDACTED]

Many thanks for meeting with [REDACTED] and myself yesterday to discuss our pooled services assurance review. Thank you also to [REDACTED] for taking the time. We found the meeting interesting and productive, and we hope we were able to answer some of your queries.

As discussed, we would be grateful if you could set out in writing (in a letter to [REDACTED] for example) the assurances you gave us about the circumstances which make the SNP Research Team unique and which in part explain the relatively high annual subscription fee. I will tell the Board today about our conversation and suggest that the drafting in the report (particularly around the conclusions drawn) be revisited.

Regarding your query about the Scheme rules for extended UK travel, the Scheme previously included a list of reasons for which an MP could claim, which included 'opposition and shadow front bench travel'. The new Scheme for 2017/18 no longer includes this list; this was part of simplification of the Scheme and to allow a greater degree of discretion for MPs. Extended travel is now eligible so long as it complies with the fundamental principles and general conditions of the Scheme: that is, as long as it is for parliamentary (rather than party political or campaigning) purposes, and could not be funded from another source, it is claimable from IPSA.

I trust this is useful, and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]
Head of Policy and Assurance

Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA)

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[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Sent: 29 September 2017 09:24
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Yesterday's meeting

Thanks [REDACTED] Please could you let us see the revised conclusions in the report? It would also be helpful to have an indication of when you might expect to publish it.

Best wishes, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Chief of Staff
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Date: Thursday, 21 September 2017 12:01
To: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>, [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Subject: RE: Yesterday's meeting

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter. As you will understand, it is important in order for us to fulfil our regulatory responsibilities, to be able to demonstrate that we have raised our questions/concerns with the SNP Research Team and that you have responded to them.

Following our discussions in the summer, and your recent letter, we have revisited the conclusions in the assurance report about the eligibility of the research briefings. While we continue to have concerns about the party-political nature of some of the language used, we also accept that this can sometimes be a 'grey area' because of SNP MPs' role in holding the government to account. We have therefore tempered our original conclusions in the report.

We have also added to the 'actions taken' section a summary of the discussions we had regarding the level of the subscription fee, and the reasons you have given for why you feel it is an appropriate amount which reflects the value that SNP MPs obtain from the research services.

As mentioned, we expect to publish the full report later on in the autumn.

Thanks again for your constructive response to this matter.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Head of Policy and Assurance

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Sent: 18 September 2017 13:26
To: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>; [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Subject: Re: Yesterday's meeting

Please see letter attached.

[REDACTED]
Chief of Staff
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Date: Thursday, 13 July 2017 13:11
To: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@parliament.uk>, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@theipsa.org.uk>
Subject: Yesterday's meeting

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Kind regards

[REDACTED]
Head of Policy and Assurance

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