

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

15 July 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 23 September 2025

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Chair invited attendees to declare any interests not previously recorded, with none being declared.

2. Actions and Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the Board meeting of 20 May were approved, with one minor amendment.
- 2.2 The Board noted the completed and outstanding actions. The Head of Policy confirmed that work to enable inter-office loans would be completed by September, but that a process for enabling secondments from other organisations would take longer given that an assessment needed to be made as to what costs associated with such secondments should be funded. The Head of Policy also confirmed that changes to the way in which small-value claims were published would be implemented from the next bi-monthly publication cycle onwards and that operational guidance had been updated.

3. Equalities Data on MPs' Staff

- 3.1 The Head of Policy noted how the 2024 Scheme Consultation had included a question on whether IPSA should collect additional personal data on MPs' staff to ensure its policies were applied equitably and did not introduce any discrimination. Though there had been support from most respondents, there had also been several questions and concerns raised which had now been considered. Whilst very limited data on sex and age was already collected from MPs' staff for payroll and tax purposes, it was recommended that IPSA trial the collection of additional equality and diversity data from MPs' staff, and to ultimately assess the usefulness of the data collected in ensuring that IPSA policies did not inadvertently result in any structural inequalities.
- 3.2 Though the Board noted the risks involved in collecting equalities data from MPs' staff given that IPSA was not the employer and it could not be guaranteed that a sufficient number of MPs' staff would respond in order to render the data useful, it was recognised that IPSA had a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that its policy decision-making was adequately informed with regard to potential impacts on protected characteristics. It was also noted that IPSA should seek where possible to enable MPs to be good employers. Given the risks involved, the Board agreed to a trial, provided that this was designed in collaboration with MPs' staff groups and the Human Resources team at the House of Commons. Careful thought also needed to be given to action that would be taken should the data collected identify an issue.

4. MPs' Staff Pay and Career Progression, & Approach to Budgeting

- 4.1 The Remuneration Policy Specialist presented recommendations aimed at providing the tools to support MPs' staff to achieve pay and career progression, as well as increasing fairness and consistency across pay structures, and addressing staff health and wellbeing concerns. It was recommended that a phased approach be taken to the implementation of such changes.
- 4.2 The Board were supportive of improvements being made to enable greater MPs' staff pay and career progression, and were in favour of a phased approach that provided MPs with flexibility within the system. The Remuneration Policy Specialist provided assurances that a training programme was being developed in collaboration with the Members' and Members' Staff Services Team at the House, that the transition to a spine point pay system would at first be voluntary, and that a competency-based career progression framework would be developed which took into account the variation in competencies which different MPs required. In supporting MPs in the use of this framework, the Board were supportive of greater engagement being undertaken with MPs including support from MP Services Account Managers.
- 4.3 With regard to short-term changes to existing pay bands to be implemented from April 2026 and subject to consultation and further discussion, the Board agreed in principle to pay levels being updated in line with market benchmarking with figures to be provided at the Board meeting in September, a reduction in the width of the current pay bands, for a policy to be

developed regarding the bottom of the pay range, and the creation of a new 'leadership' level across all job families. The creation of a ring-fenced budget for MPs' staff training, health, and welfare was agreed, with spend to be published in aggregate across all MPs. It was requested that the way in which IPSA published MPs' Staffing Budget spend should also be considered as part of this work, for example by aggregating spend. The Board agreed that the recommendation to create a default working week of 37.5 hours full-time equivalent (FTE) should be subject to open consultation. The Board also asked that a small number of pay policy models be trialed and ultimately offered to MPs, with accompanying guidance on how IPSA would assist them in implementing these, with an emphasis on ease of adoption including defaults. It was agreed that more specific proposals would be brought to the Board meeting in September, but that an additional session may be required to consider the sequencing and pace of changes.

5. MPs' Remuneration

- 5.1 The Head of Policy presented the Board with research findings regarding comparators for MP's pay which considered the characteristics of other national parliaments. Purchasing power parity analysis had been undertaken to improve the accuracy of comparisons. Though the Board recognised the difficulties involved in undertaking international comparisons of the salaries of parliamentarians, they noted the research with interest.
- 5.2 The Head of Policy also presented research findings with regard to the MP pension scheme, and consideration of whether to enable MPs to take a tax-free lump from their normal retirement age, while still an active MP – amending the current scheme which only allowed this from the age of 75. It was noted, however, that MPs would need to be advised that the relative benefits of taking a tax-free lump sum depended on individual circumstances. The Board agreed to consult on whether to make such a change to the MP pension scheme, noting that any changes needed to be proportionate, represent value for money, and ensure that the pension scheme reflected the experience of working people as much as was possible.
- 5.3 The Head of Strategic Communications and the Communications and Engagement Manager provided the Board with an update on the 'What's Democracy Worth?' initiative, highlighting how in partnership with the New Citizen Project, invitations had now been sent to 10,000 households, with the intention of convening a citizens' forum of twenty-five people in September. Stratification criteria had been agreed to ensure that forum participants were representative of the UK population, and an independent advisory group would be established to ensure that the forum process was managed appropriately. Engagement with key stakeholders, MPs, and their staff had been extensive, and it was intended for IPSA to host an event in the autumn to discuss the results of the citizens' forum. The Board welcomed the update, asking that media engagement, social media activity, and general communications continue to be effectively utilised over the summer.

6. Artificial Intelligence Strategy, Risks, and Opportunities

- 6.1 The Head of Technology presented an assessment of the strategy, risks, and opportunities associated with artificial intelligence (AI), noting how there was some limited and controlled use of permitted AI tools by IPSA people to aid, for instance, in the composition of emails, but that greater use would only be encouraged once adequate assurance that the data to be entered into AI tools was accurate, consistent, and secure. The Board professed an open risk appetite to introducing greater use of AI in a controlled way and in targeted areas such as the review of funding request data, asking that opportunities for IPSA's people to experiment and innovate in the use of AI tools be embedded within the workplace culture. It was clarified that whilst the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) would maintain oversight of AI risk assurance, the Board wanted to receive regular updates on AI strategy implementation. It was asked that the Head of Technology return to the Board with an update in January 2026.

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

- 7.1 The Chair of ARAC summarised the recent work of the Committee, confirming that a review of strategic risks had been completed, resulting in three previous risks being combined to form a new 'trust in democracy' risk, and two new 'governance' and 'regulatory' risks being established. Work was underway to align causes and impacts, and an update would be provided to the Board in September. The Committee had reviewed internal audit reports focused on support provided to MPs following constituency boundary changes, the faster payments process, cyber and information security controls, and commercial management. Finally, the Committee had been presented with a draft internal audit opinion, a draft SIRO report, and the ARAC draft annual report.

8. Report from the Improving IPSA Assurance Group

- 8.1 The Chair of the Improving IPSA Assurance Group (IIAG) provided an update on recent activity, noting that the composition of IIAG had been revised following the progression of the Improving IPSA Programme (IIP) into its delivery phase. All Board members, the Head of Internal Audit, and the Compliance Officer were now able to attend meetings. The Group was mainly focused on work concerning principles-based regulation, the IPSA Online front-end portal, and support provided to MPs in sourcing constituency offices.

9. Report from the People Committee

- 9.1 The Chair of the People Committee updated the Board on the recent work of the Committee, noting its review of pulse survey results, the approval of IPSA's 2025-28 People Strategy and its focus in year-one on the implementation of a principles-based approach, and the appointment of two internal audit apprentices. The Committee had also met recently to appoint IPSA's new Chief Executive.

10. Chief Executive's Report

- 10.1 The Chief Executive presented his report to the Board, which was received with thanks. The Board discussed MPs' ability to recognise trade unions and to provide trade union representatives with reasonable paid facilities time, and it was agreed that this was within an MP's discretion as the employer of their staff provided that they were satisfied that they could justify doing so in relation to the principles set out in IPSA's Scheme.
11. The Head of MP Services summarised the data contained within the KPI dashboard, noting that 100% of freedom of information requests had been responded to within the statutory time limit, that the increase in unreconciled payment card expenditure would be a temporary one while IPSA implemented a more tailored approach to card reconciliations, and that call volumes had now decreased to pre-General Election levels. The Board queried the decline in the website hit rate, which was found to be the result of a short-term issue which had resulted in an absence of data.
- 10.2 The Head of MP Services presented an update on the IIP, outlining ways in which IPSA had been aiding MPs who were struggling to secure suitable office accommodation through the application of targeted flexibility; the first iteration of the IPSA Online front-end portal had now been launched to a pilot group of eighteen MPs' offices; and work continued to prepare both IPSA's people and MPs and their staff for the application of a principles-based regulatory model. The Board requested that an update be provided on progress regarding the alternative reimbursement project given that the creation of a mileage pilot had been deemed unworkable due to tax implications and elements which could make the process more burdensome for MPs.
- 10.3 The Board noted with thanks the annual user survey report and the update on actions taken against recommendations made by the Compliance Officer.

11. Compliance Officer's Quarterly Report

- 11.1 The Compliance Officer presented his 2024-25 quarter four report, noting that during this period there had been thirty-two new cases opened. Several of these cases were highlighted for the Board's attention and an update was provided on all open police investigations. The Board discussed reasonable and proportionate action following the conclusion of any police investigations where a case was handed back to the Compliance Officer.
- 11.2 The Board considered several areas highlighted by the Compliance Officer where his office could benefit from greater powers. It was agreed that these would be referred to the clerk of the House of Commons Modernisation Committee for consideration.

12. Finance Report

- 12.1 The Director, Finance presented a report to the Board updating them on the most recent management accounts position. It was noted that post-election, MPs' run-rate against capped budgets continued to be higher than the run-rate seen in the last Parliament, with MPs currently on track to spend an average of 92% of their capped budgets in 2025-26. On subhead B, a considerable underspend against the capital budget was forecast given the savings made through IPSA's new office lease. The uncertainty around McCloud costs meant that there was a higher likelihood of IPSA requiring a supplementary estimate in 2025-26. An update was provided on MP debt, which had been considerably reduced since the General Election.

Annex One

In attendance: Ian Todd, Chief Executive
Lee Bridges, Director, Policy and Engagement
Thomas Fitch, Director, Finance
Chief of Staff
Head of MP Services
Head of Policy
Remuneration Policy Specialist (Item 4)
Head of Strategic Communications (Item 5)
Communications and Engagement Manager (Item 5)
Head of Technology (Item 6)
Matt Walker, Compliance Officer (Item 11)

Apologies: Karen Walker, Director, MP Services, Strategy and Change