

**Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority**

# **General Election 2015: Administrative Lessons**

**April 2016**



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## 1. Background and purpose of document

- 1.1. The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) was established by the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009 to regulate and administer the public funding available to MPs to support them in carrying out their parliamentary functions.
- 1.2. The Act gives us two main responsibilities. We independently regulate MPs' pay, pensions, business costs and expenses. And we also administer the payment of business costs, expenses and salaries to MPs and their staff. We receive our funding from Parliament, on the basis of an annual Estimate agreed by the Speaker's Committee for the IPSA (SCIPSA). This enables us to provide financial support to MPs and also fund our own running costs.
- 1.3. IPSA started regulating and administering MPs' business costs and expenses on 7 May 2010, the day after the 2010 General Election. At that Election, the House of Commons was responsible for helping departing MPs to wind up their affairs. IPSA had the task of introducing 650 MPs to the new *MPs' Scheme of Business Costs and Expenses*<sup>1</sup> ("the Scheme"), the document which sets out the framework and rules relating to financial support which MPs can access to support them in their parliamentary functions.
- 1.4. As such, IPSA had previous experience of inducting new MPs. But the General Election in May 2015 was the first at which IPSA was responsible for enabling new MPs to understand and access the necessary financial support, while at the same time supporting departing MPs in winding up their financial affairs.
- 1.5. In May 2015, 182 MPs stood down or were defeated at the Election and a further 182 MPs were elected for the first time. This report outlines our approach to planning and managing the General Election, identifies what went well and what went less well, and summarises the lessons learned. As an organisation committed to transparency and continuous improvement, we want to build on our successes in 2015 for the next Election, and put right anything which could have been done better.
- 1.6. This report is focused on the planning and administration of IPSA's work on the General Election, and the effectiveness of the support we provided to new, departing and re-elected MPs. As such, it is aimed at:
  - the public, so that they can see what was achieved with the money we spent on their behalf;
  - current and former MPs, so that they can comment on or add to our assessment;
  - current staff at IPSA who are working to improve our services in the short to medium term;

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<sup>1</sup> Then called *The MPs' Expenses Scheme*

- future staff at IPSA who will manage the next General Election and need a summary of what we did in 2015; and
- the House of Commons, with whom we worked closely in 2015 and with whom we will work again at future General Elections.

1.7 This report does not cover any regulatory issues identified during the General Election. These will be considered as part of a wider review of the Scheme on which we will be consulting later this year.

1.8 The report takes into account the views of IPSA's staff (including the temporary staff recruited to provide additional support during the Election), and reflects quantitative and qualitative feedback from new, departing and re-elected MPs and their staff, obtained through surveys and interviews carried out in the autumn of 2015.

## 2. Summary

- 2.1 We believe that the planning and delivery of the programme of work relating to the General Election was a success for IPSA.
- 2.2 Our planning for the General Election started in 2013 and got fully under way in 2014. From the start, we aimed to put the needs of new and departing MPs at the centre of our planning, and early on we decided to provide a single point of contact for each MP in these groups.
- 2.3 In advance of the Election, we communicated with MPs in a number of ways, including through one-to-one meetings with all those who were standing down. We also issued guidance on how MPs should avoid using public funds for campaigning. Immediately after the Election, we had initial meetings with new and defeated MPs. We then followed these up with further meetings, and support by telephone and email.
- 2.4 The outcomes from this programme of activity were positive. New MPs were put on the payroll by the end of May and supported quickly to understand the Scheme and access the financial support they needed (including for travel to and accommodation in London). Nearly all departing MPs had wound up their financial affairs by September 2015, including by making their staff redundant, giving notice on their accommodation, repaying any debts, putting in final claims and, if they were defeated, receiving Resettlement Payments.
- 2.5 Three factors contributed to these successful outcomes: first, we had a well-planned programme which put the requirement to meet MPs' needs at its heart; second, we put effort into recruiting and training the temporary staff we needed; and third, we provided a single point of contact for each MP.
- 2.6 But not everything went well. Section 5 of this report sets out where we would like to see improvements for the next Election. That said, most of the issues which arose had the same root cause: the need to modernise and streamline some of our core processes. The extra pressures of the Election brought this into sharper focus.
- 2.7 In response, we have already established and received funding for a comprehensive improvement programme. This is a fundamental review of our processes and IT systems, with an implementation date of April 2017. More immediately, and reflecting the success of the single-point-of-contact approach we used during the Election, we have already introduced an account management model for the provision of support to all MPs.
- 2.8 In terms of the funding required to support our work during the General Election, we received additional funds of £34.0 million to cover the additional costs relating to MPs themselves. These included redundancy costs for departing MPs' staff, Resettlement Payments and new MPs' start-up costs. We calculated the budget on a prudent estimate of 245 MPs leaving Parliament and an additional 245 new MPs as a consequence. The actual turnover of 182 MPs meant that we underspent our budget by around £21 million

and thus did not need to draw down this money. The exact figures will be published in our Annual Accounts later this year.

- 2.9 The Speaker's Committee for the IPSA also gave us an additional £2.983 million for our running costs over two years to prepare for and provide support during the General Election. We spent an estimated £2.382 million of this. This was sufficient to allow us to operate effectively. After we have implemented our planned improvements, we anticipate that the sums required to support IPSA's work during the next General Election will be substantially lower.
- 2.10 Our improvement programme, known as 'IPSA 2017', is now well under way, and will greatly improve the support that we provide to MPs, and the assurance that we can give to the public. Improvements to our core processes will be in place before the 2020 Election. These improvements, and the other lessons that we learned in 2015, as reported here, will enable IPSA to repeat what worked well at the last General Election while addressing any residual weaknesses.
- 2.11 In the remainder of this report, Chapter 3 describes what we did, Chapters 4 and 5 set out what went well and what needs to improve, and Chapter 6 has conclusions and next steps.

### **3. What we did**

- 3.1. This section sets out what we did to plan and deliver IPSA's programme of work for the 2015 General Election. The account is thematic, but also tries to give a sense of the overall chronology.

#### ***Initial planning***

- 3.2. After the 2010 General Election, we reviewed the lessons learned and, in 2011, produced a high-level plan for the next Election. In 2013, we started to look in more detail at our plans (including resourcing requirements). We concluded that we needed to appoint a dedicated Director of General Election planning. An operational and change management specialist joined us in February 2014 to take up this post. She established our Election planning work more formally as a programme to raise its profile within the organisation. She subsequently became the General Election Programme Director and was supported by an internally-appointed Programme Manager.

#### ***Securing the funding***

- 3.3. In early 2014, we submitted a bid to the Speakers' Estimate Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (SCIPSA) for £1.497 million to fund additional running costs in 2014-15. The bid was supported by a business case and assumptions about the turnover of MPs, and drew on earlier detailed financial modelling. We made it clear in the bid that this was a two-year programme and that we expected to need similar levels of additional funds in 2015-16. The funding was approved in June 2014.
- 3.4. In autumn 2014, we prepared our bid for funds for 2015-16. We revisited our earlier figures in light of changes to our plans and assumptions, and requested an additional £1.486 million for our running costs in 2015-16, and additional funding for MPs of £34.0 million. These figures assumed a turnover of 245 MPs at the General Election. These funds would cover MPs' winding-up costs (eg making their staff redundant) and the costs of Resettlement Payments and a smaller amount of the start-up costs for new MPs. This funding was also approved by SCIPSA.

#### ***Creating and managing the General Election Programme***

- 3.5. We structured our General Election Programme around the three main groups of MPs: new MPs, departing MPs and re-elected MPs. These were established as the three primary 'workstreams' within the programme, with seven other cross-cutting workstreams in support (covering Policy, Communications, HR, IT, Funding, Testing and Working with the House of Commons).
- 3.6. In mid-2014, the General Election Programme Director also became IPSA's Director of Operations. At this point, positions as full-time Team Leader and Deputy Team Leader for



the three MP workstreams were advertised and filled internally. Internal leaders were designated for each of the cross-cutting workstreams, which they ran on a part-time basis, alongside their other duties. Once this had happened, the Workstream Leaders created their own delivery plans and these were considered in a planning workshop. The output from the workshop was a programme plan. This formed the baseline against which we monitored progress.

- 3.7. Workstream Leaders provided monthly reports through to the Election. The Programme Manager drew on these to provide monthly reports to the General Election Programme Board which was chaired by the Chief Executive. The Programme Board reviewed progress against the plan, issues, risks and expenditure against budget. These meetings provided the basis for monthly reports to IPSA's Board.

### ***Planning to meet the needs of MPs***

- 3.8. From the beginning, we put the requirement to meet the needs of new and departing MPs at the centre of our planning.
- 3.9. We classified MPs' needs within three broad categories. First, they needed to understand what financial support they were entitled to under the *MPs' Scheme of Business Costs and Expenses* ("the Scheme") in order to carry out or wind up their parliamentary functions. Second, they needed to understand how to comply with regulatory requirements specific to the Election (such as the prohibition on using public funds for campaigning). Third, they needed practical guidance on how to access support (such as login and security arrangements for the online system for claiming expenses) and to comply with the Scheme (such as how to ensure that staff of defeated MPs received redundancy payments).
- 3.10. Within this framework, Workstream Leaders set out IPSA's processes so that we could review them from the perspective of an individual MP. We then identified what teams within IPSA needed to do to deliver the processes. We focused initially on General Election-specific processes (such as putting new MPs onto the payroll). We also aimed to review and streamline our main core processes (such as dealing with renting a constituency office) but we did not have the time to review all these processes in depth. In looking at our processes, we had the goal to make them as simple as possible to operate for both MPs and our own staff.
- 3.11. Another early decision was to provide new and departing MPs with a single point of contact over the Election period, akin to an account manager. This differed from the 'next available agent' model which was our standard way of providing support to MPs. We decided to call these roles 'IPSA Election Contacts', or IECs. Our funds allowed for a ratio of around 18 MPs per IEC.
- 3.12. To support effective delivery of service before and after the Election, in autumn 2014 we started a project to improve our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which we use to record and store information.

3.13. Following the Election, in autumn 2015, we carried out a quantitative survey of new, departing and re-elected MPs and their staff, and conducted in-depth one-to-one interviews with new, re-elected and departing MPs. The survey and interviews covered MPs' experiences of dealing with IPSA during the Election and their views more generally on the services that we provided. We received responses from 44 MPs and interviewed a further 60 MPs. This provided valuable specific feedback about various aspects of the way in which we managed and delivered the General Election programme.

### ***Communication and support to MPs***

#### *Before the Election*

- 3.14. In May 2014, we produced Dissolution Guidance for MPs. This was split into sections for MPs standing for election and those standing down. It was included as an Annex to the House's Dissolution Guidance which was put on the House's intranet.
- 3.15. We then sent a 'one year countdown' letter to all MPs. This set out what would happen when, and what support was on offer. It drew attention to our Dissolution Guidance. Tailored versions were sent to MPs standing for election and those standing down.
- 3.16. The letters to MPs standing down offered one-to-one meetings to go through what they needed to do to wind up their financial affairs with IPSA. These meetings got under way immediately, and continued up to the Election (by which time we had met all but one of the 90 MPs who were standing down). We met these MPs jointly with the Members' HR Advice Service in the House ('Members' HR'). While it is IPSA's role to meet MPs' financial needs within the terms of the Scheme, Members' HR provides advice to MPs on HR issues, including recruitment of staff and how to make staff of departing MPs redundant. By holding joint meetings, we could provide MPs with co-ordinated support.
- 3.17. For the remainder of 2014-15, most of our written communications with MPs were in the form of emailed Bulletins. These included the regulatory guidance described below and, in February 2015, the final version of our Dissolution Guidance (which was again included as an annex to the House's guidance). We and the House also attended each other's regional roadshows.
- 3.18. We also communicated individually with MPs who had taken out loans earlier in the Parliament to ensure that they were repaid by the end of the Parliament, in line with the rules of the Scheme. All loans were repaid by April 2015 apart from three cases where deductions from the MPs' salary were put in place.
- 3.19. On 1 December 2014, we turned on our General Election website, which was separate from the main site. We created this to ensure that there was a single place where MPs and their staff could access all the information they needed.

*After the Election (including the New Members' Reception Area and Departing Members' Area)*

- 3.20. The initial focus for communication with new MPs was the New Members' Reception Area (NMRA), which the House established in Portcullis House and which they invited us to use. The plan was for this to be open for a week but, in the event, 170 out of the 192 new MPs attended on Monday 11 May. Details about the NMRA were in the Returning Officer's pack which was given to all new MPs upon their election. This included an introductory letter from IPSA, setting out what they needed to bring to the NMRA, and summarising the induction support that we would provide them.
- 3.21. IPSA's Programme Manager and IT Team started working with the House on planning for the NMRA in early 2014. On appointment in summer 2014, the Head of the New MPs' Team took over responsibility for this work and continued to work closely with the House and IPSA's IT Team on all elements of the process. The House arranged a number of rehearsals, culminating in a full dress rehearsal in April 2015, which we prepared for with several internal rehearsals.
- 3.22. We worked on the basis that we would get about 15 minutes with each new MP at the NMRA, given the number of other things that they had to do on the day. Our goal was to outline our role, input their personal and bank account details into our database so that they could be put on the payroll, and give them some critical information about the Scheme and the support on offer from IPSA. We also planned to let them know who their IEC was, and to tell them that this individual would be in touch to arrange a longer session with them (and their staff/potential staff, if they had any).
- 3.23. IPSA was also invited to participate in the House's induction event for new MPs in the week after the Election. IPSA's Chief Executive, Policy Team and IPSA's Compliance Officer all gave presentations to new MPs, which focused mainly on our approach to regulation.
- 3.24. There was a corresponding arrangement for departing MPs. In the second half of 2014, we worked with Members' HR on the processes for this group. Initially, we focused on the joint meetings with standing down MPs, and the process for providing Members' HR with redundancy calculations (which they then used to provide MPs with advice on the process of making their staff redundant, and any associated HR issues). We then shifted focus to the processes for the planned Departing Members' Area (DMA), the counterpart for defeated MPs to the NMRA.
- 3.25. On the day after the Election, we wrote to all 92 defeated MPs to invite them to the DMA and to explain the next steps. We saw all but one of the defeated MPs at the DMA over the following week. In contrast to the NMRA, the flow of meetings was fairly even through the week. We told these former MPs who their IEC would be and explained what they needed to do to wind up their financial affairs. This involved making their staff redundant, terminating rental leases, submitting final claims and making any repayments needed. We also explained that they would not receive the Resettlement Payment to which they were entitled until all their business with IPSA had been concluded.

- 3.26. Following the NMRA, we focused on training new MPs (using training materials that we had developed before the Election) and on getting them set up on our systems. By September, we had met 92 per cent of new MPs for an extended induction session, more than once in most cases. (Those whom we had not met had generally taken on staff who had previously worked for an MP and who could therefore advise them.) We devoted significant resources to supporting new MPs in finding constituency offices and accommodation to rent: by the end of August we had processed 187 new leases, often at great speed. In the same time-frame, we had also put 1,084 new MPs' staff members on the payroll.
- 3.27. After the DMA, we helped departing MPs to wind up their affairs, and aimed to make Resettlement Payments as soon as possible after this process had been concluded. We completed the administration for 1,467 MPs' staff who departed, which included making 625 redundancy payments.
- 3.28. Face-to-face and other communications for both new and departing MPs were complemented by the General Election website, and we turned on the post-Election version of this the day after the Election.
- 3.29. We also established a 'Returning Members Area' in the House of Commons in the second half of May. This had a much lower profile than the NMRA and DMA although we did reach 10 per cent of MPs' offices at this event. We extended our telephone opening hours by two hours to 9am to 6pm for four weeks after the Election. In May and June, in addition to calls to IECs from new and departing MPs, we answered an average of 170 calls per day to our central phone line, mostly from re-elected MPs and their staff.
- 3.30. All MPs need to be sworn in before they can receive a salary. The Journal Office in the House provided us with daily bulletins of who had taken the Oath and this helped to ensure that we were able to put 640 MPs on the payroll by the end of May. The six others who took the Oath were then paid through an advance in early June. The remaining four MPs were from Sinn Fein. They did not take the Oath and so do not receive a parliamentary salary.
- 3.31. The majority of IPSA's temporary staff, including the IECs, left at the end of August 2015. The New and Departing MPs' teams were dissolved at this point and responsibility for supporting these MPs passed from IECs to IPSA's existing MP Support and Payroll Teams. In September 2015, we decided to restructure the MP Support Team, implementing an account management approach to build on the benefits seen during the General Election.

### ***Regulating General Election spending***

- 3.32. IPSA's Dissolution Guidance described a number of restrictions (principally relating to travel and the use of offices for party-political activity) which would be applied during the Dissolution period to ensure that MPs and their staff did not use public funds to support campaigning.

- 3.33. In October 2014, we issued more specific guidance on our rules in this area. This reinforced the message that MPs must not use taxpayer-funded accommodation, equipment or staff to campaign, and made it clear that to do so may be a criminal offence. If MPs' staff did want to participate in campaigning, they were required to do so in their own time or take unpaid leave. We issued more detailed operational guidance on how to comply with these rules in January 2015.
- 3.34. At the end of September 2014, we also applied controls on capital spending by MPs. From this point to the Election, MPs had to make a case in advance if they wanted to make any capital purchases.
- 3.35. In 2012 IPSA had introduced a standard contract for MPs' staff so that there would be consistent terms and conditions among all employees of MPs. It was optional for staff to switch to an IPSA contract. Many opted to do so as it contained more generous redundancy terms than many staff had in their existing contracts with MPs. In the summer of 2014, we set a 30 November 2014 deadline for MPs' staff to switch from a non-IPSA to an IPSA contract. We set this deadline both so that we could manage our workloads in the run-up to the Election and to mitigate the risk that staff would transfer from one contract to another just before the Election simply to take advantage of more generous redundancy terms.

#### ***Additional staffing***

- 3.36. Once we had defined our main processes for delivery, we could finalise our precise requirements for additional staff. Following a competitive tender, we appointed a recruitment agency to recruit most temporary staff. The recruitment was carried out in autumn 2014, and 36 temporary staff joined us in January or February 2015. The majority of these were either IECs or Payroll Officers. We also recruited additional validators, IT and finance staff.
- 3.37. We delivered a comprehensive training programme for all temporary staff. This was a mixture of contextual information about IPSA's role and functions, and more specific job-related training (such as how to manage initial meetings with new MPs at the NMRA).

#### ***Monitoring progress and performance after the Election***

- 3.38. We worked throughout 2014 on the development of 'trackers' for each group of MPs, identifying a number of indicators to allow managers to track the progress being made by each group before, during and after the Election, as well as our own performance. Indicators included the number of standing down MPs who had had a one-to-one meeting with IPSA and the House, and the time taken to get new MPs their Payment Cards.
- 3.39. After the Election, the General Election Programme Board no longer met and was replaced with temporary operational arrangements for reporting and management, which drew on the management information in the trackers. Initially, there were daily meetings of the Chief Executive, Directors and managers, which then grew less frequent.

By July, they were incorporated into IPSA's regular arrangements for monitoring and managing performance across the organisation.

### ***Working with the House of Commons***

3.40. The House established its General Election Planning Group (GEPG) in 2013 and invited IPSA to join it. Meetings were held monthly (increasing to fortnightly in January 2015 and then weekly from March). IPSA, like teams in the House, provided a written report for each meeting. The Group provided an opportunity for IPSA to share its plans and raise issues with the House, and vice versa.

3.41. The main working-level contacts between the House and IPSA were between the Programme Director and the Chair of the GEPG, and between the Programme Manager and the Projects Officer for the GEPG. In particular, the Programme Manager and the Projects Officer were responsible for revising the Election-related sections of the House-IPSA Protocol, which was signed by IPSA's Chief Executive and the Clerk of the House.

3.42. The main specific areas of joint working with the House were:

- inclusion of IPSA's Dissolution Guidance as an annex to the House's guidance;
- planning and delivering the New Members' Reception Area; this included IPSA's sharing with the House the data it collected from MPs (with MPs' approval), to avoid multiple requests for data;
- participation in the House's induction event for new MPs in the week after the Election;
- jointly meeting standing-down MPs before the Election, and then defeated MPs at the Departing Members' Area;
- using information from the Journal Office about which MPs had been sworn in to enable us to put MPs on the payroll;
- attending each other's roadshows;
- the provision of space by the House on the Parliamentary estate for the Returning Members' Area and other IPSA 'drop-in' events.

3.43. Other significant areas of joint working were as follows:

- The House's Communications Team regularly invited IPSA to contribute to publications for MPs and their staff, eg the Members' Handbook;
- We worked closely with the House's travel provider, Chambers, and a number of teams in the House, on the plan to pre-book hotel accommodation in the first fortnight for new MPs. We also worked with Chambers on setting up the arrangements to allow MPs to use their services to purchase IPSA-funded hotel accommodation and travel.
- We worked with the House's Digital Service to communicate the arrangements to MPs about the provision or purchase of IT equipment, and also about the arrangements for removing House-provided equipment from departing MPs' offices.

- The House's Pass Access Unit provided passes for IPSA's temporary and permanent staff who needed them over the Election period, and arranged security clearances.

***What it cost***

3.44. Over 2014-15 and 2015-16, we spent £2.382 million of the £2.983 million additional running costs authorised by SCIPSA, and £13.3 million of the additional £34.0 million of funding to cover the costs relating to MPs. Final figures for General Election expenditure in 2015-16 will not be known until after the end of the financial year and will be published in IPSA's Annual Report and Accounts.

## 4. What went well

### *Key achievements*

4.1. On the basis of our comprehensive review of lessons learned and feedback from existing and former MPs, we believe that our General Election Programme successfully delivered the following key outcomes:

- **new MPs** were supported quickly to access the financial support they needed;
- **departing MPs** made their staff redundant, gave notice on their accommodation, repaid any debts, put in final claims and, if they were defeated, received Resettlement Payments in good time;
- **all 640 MPs who had taken the Oath were paid at the end of May**, with the six who took the Oath later paid through an advance in early June;
- **re-elected MPs** and their staff had the opportunity to meet us and understand our offer of enhanced service, and receive refresher briefings on the Scheme where needed.

### *Overall cost-benefit assessment*

4.2. Our business case for nearly £3 million of additional running costs over two years (2014-15 and 2015-16) set out the benefits that we would deliver for MPs and the taxpayer. The additional funds were mainly for staffing and we found the funding to be adequate. On the basis both of this and of the very positive outcomes of the General Election programme, we believe the additional funds provided good value for money for the taxpayer.

### *The detail*

4.3. This section provides a more detailed account of what went well. It outlines why certain activities were successful, and their impact. These approaches are those which we will consider repeating for the next General Election.

### *Planning, design and governance*

4.4. At a broad level, establishing a high-profile General Election Programme with three workstreams built around the three main MP 'client groups', and taking the MPs' perspective into account in the design of the programme, meant that we built in quality and relevance from the start. We used visual methodologies to identify MPs' involvement in each business process. This ensured that we put the needs of users (ie MPs and their staff), as well as our regulatory needs, at the heart of our plans.



- 4.5. Starting detailed planning about 18 months out was right: any earlier and we would not have got engagement; any later, and we would have put ourselves under too much pressure.
- 4.6. Having a clear and highly-visible plan that all key staff had designed themselves allowed Workstream Leaders, the Programme Team and senior managers to identify any planning gaps, manage contingencies and risks, monitor progress and quickly take any corrective action in response. The plan was also an effective communication tool.
- 4.7. Recruiting the Team Leaders for the three main MP groups as soon as the planning process began, and appointing them from within, meant that our processes were designed by those who knew IPSA and users very well. It was also a morale-booster in a small organisation that cannot offer significant opportunities for career progression.
- 4.8. Ensuring that the bulk of the planning and decision-making was done by those who would be in the front line of delivery meant that decisions were owned, and therefore more likely to be implemented.
- 4.9. Given the intense operational pressures created by the Election, the roles of General Election Programme Director and Director of Operations were vested in one person; this made operational delivery more likely to be aligned to the General Election and be successful.
- 4.10. Finally, the arrangements for joint working which the House of Commons and IPSA put in place were very successful. These paid big dividends in terms of improved outcomes for MPs, and provided a good platform for further joint working in the future. It took longer to finalise the arrangements for preparing for the Departing Members' Area than either the House or IPSA would have liked, but they were completed in time and did not affect the experience of MPs.

#### *Policy and Regulation*

- 4.11. The post-Election reviews by the Policy Team identified and assessed a number of policy and regulatory issues which arose during the Election. These will inform the comprehensive review of the Scheme which will be concluded later in 2016. Such reviews, which contribute to the process of providing assurance about the use of public money, should continue to be a feature of future General Election plans.

#### *Communicating and support to MPs – general*

- 4.12. The account management model – ie creating teams of dedicated, named contact points to support new and departing MPs – was essential to achieving our overall goals for each group. In particular, the IECs were able to smooth some of the rough edges in our core processes. The model was inherently good but success also depended on the quality of our recruits, the training we gave them and the skills of the Team Leaders. We put

considerable effort into finding the right recruitment agency and designing an effective training programme.

- 4.13. The New Members' Reception Area and Defeated Members' Area were both very successful ways of communicating with new and defeated MPs respectively. An important positive lesson is that we should put the same amount of effort into the NMRA and DMA for future Elections. In practice this means recruiting good quality temporary staff, training them well, working closely with the House, planning the data-collection arrangements in advance, and organising many role-plays and rehearsals.
- 4.14. We were successful in paying all 640 MPs who had taken the Oath at the end of May, with the six who took the Oath later paid through an advance in early June. We achieved this by focusing closely in advance on the precise arrangements for getting all MPs paid as soon as possible after they had taken the Oath, and working closely with the House of Commons to get daily lists of those taking the Oath as soon as they were available.
- 4.15. Regional Open Days and Westminster-based drop-ins throughout the Election planning and delivery period worked well and were another example of where we worked closely with the House so that we could each maximise our communications to MPs. The events provided an opportunity for two-way feedback: we were able to answer questions and provide information to MPs and their staff, while also getting feedback on some lower-order issues which would not necessarily have surfaced through regular phone calls and emails.
- 4.16. Meeting the political parties on a regular basis (both the party management and groups of MPs) before and after the Election also worked well for similar reasons. The events we held were popular with MPs, and meetings with both MPs and party officials allowed us to give and receive important messages about the support we could offer.
- 4.17. We had a Testing Workstream which helped promote the testing and piloting of products and processes. We could have done more in this area but this work should definitely be retained and expanded for the next Election.
- 4.18. We successfully secured the return of MPs' £4,000 advance loans by the deadline of the end of the Parliament. From October 2014, we started to send monthly financial statements to MPs, which complemented the self-service budget reports accessible on the online expenses system. We also communicated regularly with relevant MPs in the first quarter of 2015.
- 4.19. The General Election website looked better than our main site, and had better structure and content. Feedback during the Election suggested that MPs and their staff found it helpful, although some MPs and their staff criticised the main website and the difficulty of finding information. Usage of our website peaked at 3,000 unique visitors in March and May 2015.

### *New MPs*

- 4.20. Despite the fact that 170 out of the 182 new MPs turned up on a single day, the NMRA ran like clockwork. This was due to excellent overall planning of the event by the House which fully involved all participants, our own intensive planning (including lots of rehearsals and role-plays), and the quality of our IECs, who presented a friendly, professional impression of IPSA to MPs. Small things also contributed to an effective performance, such as one suggestion that we pre-load onto our systems new MPs' home addresses which were publicly available on Nomination Papers on Local Authorities' websites. These innovations saved MPs and us time on the day. Survey results confirm that the NMRA went well, with 13 out of 16 new MPs expressing their satisfaction with their experience.
- 4.21. In advance of the Election, we carefully planned the precise arrangements for getting all MPs paid as soon as possible after they had taken the Oath. The effectiveness of the NMRA data-collection arrangements, combined with the flow of information from the House about who had taken the Oath, allowed us to get nearly all new MPs on the payroll by the end of May.
- 4.22. Our one-to-one training sessions with new MPs (and actual or prospective staff members) went well and helped to establish positive relationships. 12 out of 16 MPs who responded to our survey found it useful or very useful to have an IEC. There were other positive comments about IECs in the survey results.
- 4.23. Our one-to-one training sessions with new MPs (and actual or prospective staff members) went well and helped to establish positive relationships. 12 out of 16 MPs who responded to our Survey found it useful or very useful to have an IEC and there were a number of positive comments about IECs (and the IEC model more generally) in the Survey. It became clear after the gap of the Summer Recess however that many MPs would need 'top-up' training. On the other hand, many new MPs had appointed staff by this point, who were able to take over some of the practical aspects of making claims for business costs and expenses.
- 4.24. Survey results show that three-quarters of MPs' staff with whom we liaised, known as their proxies, quickly gained high levels of understanding of the Scheme and confidence with our systems. The success of the training was due to the calibre of the IECs, the quality of the training we gave them, and the effort we put into planning the training of new MPs and their staff. By contrast with staff, only a quarter or less of MPs expressed the same confidence in our Scheme in the survey results.
- 4.25. We produced 'Quick Guides' and other material on aspects of the Scheme. These were very well-received by MPs and helped them rapidly to understand what financial support we offer.
- 4.26. The arrangements that the House put in place to provide new MPs with a hotel room and stress-free travel arrangements for the first week worked really well and allowed new

MPs to concentrate on their new role. Take-up (at over 300 nights of hotel accommodation) was also far higher than estimated.

- 4.27. Finally, IPSA's Payment Card is also highly valued by MPs as a source of support (and a tool for managing cashflow). We carefully planned the process of getting cards issued quickly. Nearly all of the 192 new MPs requested one and all received it within five days.

#### *Departing MPs*

- 4.28. We put a number of measures in place that helped departing MPs to complete the winding up process quickly (such as making their staff redundant, giving notice on properties, making claims and repaying debts). These included starting meetings with standing-down MPs a year before the Election which allowed us to see all but one of the 90 MPs standing down before May. We also offered 'what if I am defeated' meetings to those who were standing for election. The Departing Members' Area, and our information and support pack for each departing MP, were also welcomed. More defeated MPs were willing to book an appointment at the DMA than we expected, allowing us to meet on a face-to-face basis all but one of the 92 defeated MPs in the first week after the Election.
- 4.29. Follow-up meetings with departing MPs also worked well and further helped them to complete the winding up process quickly. Again, the success of these meetings was due to the quality of the IECs and of the training we gave them.
- 4.30. We made redundancy calculations for MPs' staff in marginal seats well in advance of the Election and then filled any gaps over the post-Election weekend. This meant that we (and Members' HR) had this vital information available to discuss with defeated MPs as soon as we met them. In turn, this allowed them to make their staff redundant more quickly after the Election.

#### *Returning MPs and their staff*

- 4.31. The Returning Members' Area was popular with MPs' staff. We should build on this for the next Election to expand our support to this group. It also led to a series of one-to-one follow-up meetings.

#### *IPSA's staffing resources*

- 4.32. The quality of our IECs was very high and justified the investment we put into selecting and managing the right recruitment agency. They took up post at about the right time, just after Christmas 2014. This allowed them time to be trained, bond as teams and help to refine our processes.
- 4.33. We put effort into keeping successful candidates informed while they waited for their security clearance before they started with us. This worked, and our drop-out rates were low for this kind of activity: only 5 out of 36 individuals withdrew before they took up post, and a small number shortly after starting.

- 4.34. Our arrangements for training were also successful and we should give the same level of priority to designing and delivering high-quality training for IECs and other temporary staff in future (while reviewing the detail of the programmes in light of feedback about specific elements).
- 4.35. Resource levels (which allowed a ratio of around one IEC for 18 MPs) were generally sufficient to deliver our objectives, although IECs worked long hours on some days, and there were intense pressures across IPSA immediately after the Election.

## 5. What went less well, and what we will do differently next time

### *Key issues*

- 5.1. We have reviewed the results of our lessons learned exercise as well as feedback from existing and former MPs to identify where things went less well.
- 5.2. It is clear from this analysis that most of the issues that arose had the same root cause: the need to modernise and streamline some of our core processes. The central lesson learned is therefore that we must have better core processes before the next Election. This will allow us to avoid trying to make improvements in process at the same time as delivering a new service, as we had to do in 2015.
- 5.3. IPSA was set up rapidly in 2010 and, at the time of the General Election, had been operating for five years. In that time, it had not had a chance to step back to review and redesign its fundamental processes. Nor was there an opportunity for a comprehensive programme of investment in our systems and IT. At the same time, the way in which MPs claim expenses (such as through the much greater use of direct payments to suppliers), the way they carry out their work (including through mobile devices) and the potential of IT to support the delivery of improved services have all changed dramatically.
- 5.4. As a result, some of our processes are now more time-consuming and complicated to operate than they need to be, and the General Election programme made us aware of this more directly. It also came through as a theme in our survey of MPs in autumn 2015. For example one new MP commented:

*“I am in utter shock that hard copies of receipts etc have to be submitted. It seems obvious to me that scanning and email evidence would save time, the environment and taxpayers' money.”*

Another said:

*“There is really now a need to re-examine the whole system.”*

Our processes therefore need to be redesigned, and delivered through a more effective interface with MPs. To address this issue, we have initiated an improvement programme that includes a fundamental review of our processes and IT systems, with an implementation date planned for April 2017.

### *The detail*

- 5.5. This section sets out in more detail the issues we encountered and how we plan to address them. Our new improvement programme, known as IPSA 2017, should resolve most of these, and we have noted below where this is the case. We are also confident

that, if we can improve our processes, we can operate with a reduced need for additional temporary staff at future elections.

- 5.6. This document covers the main lessons learned. We have also created a log of second-order issues. Most of these are minor process-related points and so will also be addressed through our improvement programme. Other issues will be reviewed by those managing the programme for the next General Election.

### ***Planning, design and governance***

- 5.7. We believe that the planning, design and governance for the General Election were areas of strength for IPSA. There were, however, things that we would want to do differently next time.
- 5.8. First, we should think more systematically about how we engage and involve all IPSA's teams in the process of planning for the Election, and put more effort into communicating the consequences of not getting involved. Specific circumstances (such as internal gaps in resources) contributed to varying levels of involvement. We need to make a greater effort to mitigate their effect.
- 5.9. Linked to this, we need next time to get all IPSA's teams to conduct their own assessments of what needs to be done to prepare for the Election, and to do it earlier. We need to ensure that training starts earlier, and that everyone understands the end-to-end nature of the processes that they are delivering, and not just the segment for which their team is responsible.
- 5.10. Our Testing Workstream delivered some good results, such as a day-long 'Challenge Panel' at which teams stress-tested each other's processes and identified opportunities for improvements. But we could have done more to test processes, products and communications externally. Thus we tested the appearance and structure of the General Election website with our MP Staff User Group, but we did not test much of the material externally.
- 5.11. Our improvement programme will address another issue that arose during the General Election. The 'trackers' we created to provide management information about progress in the delivery of services to new and departing MPs were the right approach, but difficult to operate because our systems were not set up to generate the data automatically. We will ensure that the systems and data architecture that we build as part of the IPSA 2017 programme give us the ability to produce management reports which are much easier to generate.
- 5.12. Overall, the structure of the Programme worked well and we should repeat it for a future Election. But the focus of our Training Workstream was mainly on IPSA's temporary staff. We should ensure it more actively manages and co-ordinates all training plans and materials (including those for new MPs) and continually evaluates their effectiveness.

5.13. One area of slippage in our planning process was that we came to the process of training MPs later than we had planned, which reduced the amount of time available to consider and test both materials and logistics. We do not believe that this had a significant impact on the outcomes, but we should ensure that we have more time at the next Election to review this area thoroughly in advance.

#### ***Processes, and their impact on MPs and IPSA***

5.14. In one of our lessons learned events, one colleague said: *“delivering the Election isn’t hard if your processes are good; then all you need to do is focus on to what extent you need to scale up”*. We were aware that we needed to review our processes in advance of the Election, but planning and delivering the Election programme exposed the fact that we needed to do a more fundamental review and, in particular, take advantage of recent developments in IT. In looking at our processes, we also need to look at the underlying systems and data-access arrangements that support their delivery.

5.15. The main issues relating to process, systems and access to data that arose are set out below. Some are related to specific processes, others are more cross-cutting. The biggest impact of this was on IPSA staff, who worked hard within the existing framework to ensure services to MPs were not affected. This meant that they had less time to spend on more value-adding activities.

#### ***Rental of property***

5.16. There are a range of processes involving rental of property, including providing signed leases, taking out deposit loans and making direct payments to landlords. We knew that they would come under pressure because of the number of rental arrangements that would start and end during this period. So we reviewed our approach in all these areas in advance of the Election.

5.17. We tried hard to consider the process through the eyes of MPs (while not overlooking any necessary regulatory requirements). First, we managed to merge three forms into one and make them clearer in the process. Second, we responded to the known problem from 2010 of MPs not having a signed lease, by adjusting the process to allow them to register a property and get a deposit loan on the basis of a draft lease with the signed copy to follow later. Third, to help with cash-flow, we introduced a facility to claim advance payment of the first month’s rent.

5.18. Despite these innovations, our internal processes (which included too many steps and hand-overs between teams) did not cope well with the speed and volume of transactions. We managed to deliver a good service but only because of the efforts made by our staff to go the extra mile (such as by making urgent payments) and some MPs expressed frustration that we were not able to respond at speed.



### *Access to data and information*

5.19. We had difficulty in accessing data quickly. Data and information in IPSA are held in a number of different systems, and some information (such as the data in some MPs' staff contracts) is held only in hard copy. Although we have many standard reports that we and MPs can access, the General Election programme confirmed the need to review our data architecture and systems to ensure that all data and information is digitised and can be accessed more quickly.

5.20. Examples of the impact of this issue were:

- The time taken by IECs to find all the information relating to departing MPs and their staff. As one colleague said: *"you couldn't find it all in one place at the switch of a button"*.
- Full data on deposit loans for properties could only be accessed by checking hard copy records as well as the data in our systems.
- The 'trackers' we created to provide management information about our services to new and departing MPs were time-consuming to set up and use because our systems were not configured to generate the data automatically.
- Comprehensive data on advance loans, potential or actual budget overspends and monies owed, needed to be extracted from a number of different systems. Some of these relied on manual processes (such as to check the expiry dates of leases), which carried the risk of error.
- Our payroll system was not configured to allow us to use its full functionality, leading to more manual processes than necessary. The increased volume of work over the Election exposed this more acutely as a problem. And some data (such as in contracts) were only available in hard copy.

### *Roles and responsibilities*

5.21. There is a need for roles and responsibilities within individual processes to be clear. In some cases, problems arose because there was a lack of clarity over who was responsible for what. In other cases, there were problems with embedding new approaches thoroughly into the organisation (such as the need to complete CRM records in more detail and close cases and tasks promptly).

### *RSA tokens*

5.22. RSA tokens are used to allow MPs to access the online expenses system securely. The physical tokens had to be withdrawn in March 2015 and replaced with an electronic equivalent. We started the switch to soft tokens in April 2014, which we thought would

give us sufficient time to make the change for existing MPs. But, despite sustained communications, many MPs had not made the switch in time.

- 5.23. This specific problem will not be an issue at the next Election. But there is a lesson to be learned about minimising the extent of other changes happening at the same time as an Election, and ensuring that all IT is working well in advance.

#### *Digitising and automating processes*

- 5.24. A number of comments were made during the Election about the opportunities to streamline and modernise some of our processes, eg:

*“The proxy registration process felt very bureaucratic.” [IPSA staff member]*

*“Manually adding stationery-ordering registrations to MPs’ accounts was time-consuming and delayed use of the service.” [IPSA staff member]*

*“Why can’t I just scan receipts on my phone and upload them to your site?” [MP]*

*“When creating a contract, you can’t save it, so if you make a mistake you need to start again.” [MP staff member]*

- 5.25. These were echoed and amplified by some new MPs and others in our survey of MPs who commented on the lack of user-friendliness of the online expenses system and, in particular, the difficulty of accessing reports about their financial affairs: *“I would like to see better use of technology to improve the interface and to make the online expenses system more user friendly”; “I don’t find the reporting system easy to use. Producing reports is not easy and aren’t always up to date”; “IPSA provides a generally good level of service – the online platform lets IPSA down.”*

#### *What we will be doing on processes and systems*

- 5.26. A major component of our improvement programme is the creation of a streamlined, robust and digitally-enabled set of core processes in advance of the next Election, with roles and responsibilities clearly documented. This is already under way. This will further embed the culture of planning and designing that puts the twin needs of regulator and user at the start and heart of the process. Our new systems will ensure that we create one place where we and MPs can find all relevant and up-to-date information about MPs’ financial affairs.
- 5.27. We have already started projects to add data on leases and on MPs’ staff contracts to our systems. These are both on track for completion by the end of March 2016.
- 5.28. A year before the Election, we will specifically review those processes which will come under most pressure during the Election.

### ***Other issues for MPs***

5.29. Modernising and streamlining our processes and our interface with MPs will address many of the issues that arose for them and their staff, and for IPSA's teams providing them with support. There are other issues that arose too.

### ***New MPs***

5.30. Beyond the critically important task of getting new MPs on to payroll within their first month, we believe that we also quickly established good working relationships and gave them the support they needed to understand what they could claim for and how they could claim it.

5.31. The main issue with new MPs was that we did not fully appreciate the impact of the summer recess. A number of new MPs needed refresher training in the autumn, or had recruited staff and wanted us to train them to help manage their business costs and expenses. When MPs came back after the summer break, our IECs had left the organisation and we had fewer resources to deal with this demand. We should revise the timing and nature of support to new MPs in light of this experience.

5.32. Nor did we anticipate the pressure that letting agents would put on MPs to pay deposits and first month rental payments to landlords immediately. We will review this area in light of conditions in the property market, but also take into account any improvements that we have been able to make to processes relating to renting property and making payments over the coming years.

5.33. In advance of the Election we worked to develop a potential 'flat-finder' service for MPs to support them in finding rental accommodation. We decided early in 2015 that it would not be appropriate to contract with particular companies, but we passed details of a number of agents to MPs. This appeared to be the right decision since there was no evidence of any appetite for an enhanced service.

5.34. A number of new MPs and their staff expressed unhappiness with what they perceived to be the inflexibility of contracts and job descriptions for MPs' staff. This is partly a regulatory issue but we need clearer communication of the rationale for standard contracts and job descriptions.

5.35. Some new MPs and their staff asked if direct payments could be made to a greater range of suppliers of goods and services. There are practical limits to what can be achieved in this area but again, we need to communicate more clearly why this is the case.

### ***Departing MPs***

5.36. Beyond the concerns about some of our processes, as highlighted above, there was no single, dominant concern expressed by departing MPs. But there are a range of lessons to be learned for the next Election.

- 5.37. In some cases, where we had not faced issues before, our position took too long to resolve. Examples were whether we would pay for the costs of leases that extended beyond the Winding Up period, or whether we would allow the cost of end-of-lease 'deep cleans'. On occasions, this led to delays or inconsistent advice to MPs and their staff; and the position was also not always communicated effectively to all of IPSA's teams. Since the Election, we have developed a clearer process for making, recording, communicating and implementing policy decisions.
- 5.38. We also need to communicate to departing MPs the need to be aware that, if they had previously relied on their staff to make claims for them but have now made them redundant, the MPs themselves will need to learn how to make claims: we are unable to make claims on their behalf. Departing MPs also need to make it clear to their staff that, if they work beyond the end of the Winding-Up period, they cannot be paid by IPSA; a number of staff were under this misapprehension.
- 5.39. We underestimated the amount of time it would take some MPs to wind up their affairs. While most had completed their business by September 2015, a small minority took longer because of issues that arose late in the day.
- 5.40. A number of MPs suggested we should reconsider our policy not to make Resettlement Payments until all the MP's financial affairs had been wound up. They suggested that a proportion of the payment should be paid to tide the MP over. This, they argued, would still leave the former MP with an incentive to complete his or her business in good time.
- 5.41. We believe that the Departing Members' Area operated effectively, and helped defeated MPs quickly to understand what they needed to do to wind up their affairs. But the planning process went slightly less smoothly than it did for the NMRA, and we can improve this in our work with the House of Commons in future.
- 5.42. We also found that there was more appetite than we had envisaged among departed MPs for meetings to be held over the weekend immediately after the Election. This is something we will take into account for the future.

*Supporting MPs before the Election, and re-elected MPs*

- 5.43. We were perhaps not as well prepared as we might have been for the Dissolution period which ran from 30 March 2015 until the Election on 7 May. For example, there was concern among some of IPSA's staff that we did not have specific rules or guidance on some of the issues that MPs' staff raised about travel, subsistence and relocation.
- 5.44. In response, we will conduct a thorough pre-Election review of all areas of policy in our future Election planning, drawing on our experience in 2015 and involving more colleagues. This should aim to anticipate any questions that might come up. We will also test our Dissolution Guidance with MPs and their staff more in advance.

- 5.45. We will also focus more clearly, and earlier, on the plans for re-elected MPs. It was always our intention to use the Election to remind re-elected MPs of the support we can offer and provide refresher training where needed. With the support of the House, we established a Returning Members' Area (RMA) in Portcullis House in the second half of May, but this was not as well advertised as it might have been.
- 5.46. The Returning Members' Area and other similar events proved popular with MPs and their staff. We have therefore created a continuous programme of regional events and drop-ins at Westminster, working closely with the House. We have also restructured our teams to make the account management approach permanent. We will review our approach to re-elected MPs in light of the effectiveness of both these innovations.
- 5.47. Finally, we under-estimated the number of changes in MPs' staff that there would be in the offices of re-elected MPs. This meant that we were sometimes slower to process those joining and leaving than we would have liked, and responses to our survey of MPs also highlighted the need to improve our processes for getting new members of staff onto the payroll.

#### ***Communication with MPs and their staff***

- 5.48. We communicated with MPs and their staff in a range of ways, including through face-to-face meetings, bulletins, emails, guidance, the General Election website and the main IPSA website. We did this in line with a programme that we planned in advance. Overall, these channels delivered effective results, and face-to-face communication (at the NMRA, DMA, RMA and pre- and post-Election roadshows and drop-ins) were highly successful.
- 5.49. But we learned that we cannot rely on emails and letters to communicate information. We need to use a wider range of methods of communication (including the provision of more self-service information). Our plans to simplify and improve our processes may reduce the need for as much extensive communication. But we will need to plan a thorough, multi-channel communication strategy in advance of the next General Election.

#### ***Main issues***

- 5.50. There are a number of things that we will do to improve communication next time:
- we will anticipate more comprehensively the questions that might come up during Dissolution, and improve our communication of the Dissolution Guidance;
  - we will ensure that communications and our website material are tested more routinely outside the organisation, and quality-assured internally;
  - we will consider what we can do to give new MPs greater understanding of the Scheme and confidence in using our systems;

- we will more systematically assess where we need to manage expectations about what is feasible in respect of our systems and processes, or those of the banks where payments are made.

5.51. The two other issues relating to communication that arose related to MPs and their staff.

5.52. First, in the run-up to the Election, we created a new pension Scheme for MPs' staff with Legal and General. This was in order to comply with new legislation. We informed existing staff about this in February 2015 both through the IPSA Bulletins for MPs and through an emailed letter. It became clear in May and June 2015 that not all staff members had seen these communications. At this point, we wrote individually to all staff members. We have since followed this up with the opportunity for staff to meet IPSA and Legal and General staff on a face-to-face basis.

5.53. Second, several MPs wanted their staff to be able to switch from a non-IPSA contract of employment to an IPSA contract after November 2014, which we had set as the deadline for doing so. Although we had communicated to MPs and their staff about IPSA contracts and their potential benefits since 2012 and again in 2014, the deadline caused much resentment from a small number of MPs and staff who felt that they were being penalised. In retrospect, we could have issued more targeted communications in 2014 to the 675 staff on non-IPSA contracts. We are now in contact with all these staff, and the number of MPs' staff on non-IPSA contracts is down to around 350 individuals.

5.54. As part of our improvement programme, we are conducting a thorough review of our role and remit in relation to MPs' staff. This will include a review of how we communicate with them and take into account lessons learned during the General Election.

5.55. The two other lessons learned relate to our internal approach to managing communications:

- first, we will put in place arrangements to ensure that communications are more actively planned, managed, quality-assured, tested and evaluated, with a single point of accountability to make sure that this happens and to spot gaps;
- second, we will allow more time for the creation and testing of the General Election website, promote it more effectively and include a "What if I lose my seat?" section.

### *Main website*

- 5.56. As part of our improvement programme, we will create a completely new IPSA website. This will be live by the end of 2016, and have new content-management arrangements to ensure that it continues to meet user needs on an ongoing basis.
- 5.57. We will also develop a separate, secure online Portal for MPs which will allow them to see all the data that we hold for them and to transact all their business with us (such as making claims and putting staff on the payroll), using new, streamlined processes and with interactive help available.
- 5.58. The website and Portal should dramatically reduce the need for MPs and their staff to contact IPSA by phone or email, although we will of course retain these channels as well as expanding the number of opportunities for face-to-face communication.

### *Minor issues*

- 5.59. Finally we will also review more minor communications matters that we logged before and after the Election, to consider whether they are still of concern in the run up to 2020. These include co-ordinating emails enclosing log-ins for the online expenses system and direct payment suppliers, and working with the House to communicate the respective roles of IPSA and the House more clearly.

### **Resources**

- 5.60. We believe that resources (taking into account the temporary staff whom we recruited) were appropriate, although we relied on staff working long hours in the weeks immediately after the Election. Given what we delivered, we consider that we had an optimum level of funding: enough to do nearly everything we planned, but without unnecessarily generous levels of support.
- 5.61. A point of pressure came earlier in the planning process when, before and after Christmas 2014, many staff in IPSA were helping to recruit and train temporary colleagues, while also doing their day job. Again, this relied on a great deal of dedication and flexibility on the part of IPSA teams.
- 5.62. We need to consider whether we should provide dedicated IEC support for new MPs for longer in the future. And we under-estimated the pressure that our existing teams – including MP Support, Records Management, Validation and the Payroll Team - would be under in the immediate aftermath of the Election when they were dealing with around 850 current and former MPs.
- 5.63. We will review all these issues in advance of the next Election in light of the changes we plan to have made to our processes through our IPSA 2017 improvement programme.

## 6. Conclusion and next steps

6.1. We believe we planned and delivered the 2015 Election programme effectively, allowing new MPs to understand and access the funding that they needed to support them in carrying out their Parliamentary functions, and helping former MPs to wind up their affairs quickly.

6.2. But we are not complacent, and we know that we can improve. In particular, we are clear that some of our processes and systems were not as streamlined as they should have been, for either MPs or IPSA staff. This is why we have carried out a thorough lessons learned exercise, both to build on what went well and give us a clear list of issues that we need to address in future.

6.3. We plan to use the findings in this report in a number of different ways:

- We have made some immediate changes to improve services to MPs, and also our own internal processes. For example, earlier this year, we introduced an account management approach for the provision of support to MPs, and a greatly increased number of opportunities to meet IPSA's staff on a face-to-face basis both in London and at regional events.
- We have already initiated a fundamental review of our processes and systems with the aim of improving MPs' experience of using our systems, freeing up time for them to spend on other activities and making it easier for IPSA to administer.
- We have started a fundamental review of the *MPs' Scheme of Business Costs and Expenses* to resolve some of the policy issues that arose during the Election. We expect to consult on potential changes to the Scheme later this year.
- In conjunction with the House of Commons we are reviewing areas of perceived or potential overlap between the services or funding we provide, and also examining relative responsibilities. We expect to reach conclusions in this area later this year.
- In 2018, we will start planning for the 2020 Election. By then, our IPSA 2017 programme of improvements will be complete and we will also review again the lessons that we learned from the largely successful 2015 General Election.