

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

20 January 2026

Board Members: Richard Lloyd OBE (Chair)
Dame Laura Cox
Lea Paterson CBE
Cliff Rana JP
Sir Charles Walker

See Annex for record of attendees.

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 10 March 2026

1. Declarations of Interest, Actions, and Minutes

1.1 The Chair invited attendees to declare any interests not previously recorded. One new declaration of interest was recorded, with the Chair noting that he had been appointed by the Ministry of Justice to undertake a review of the Legal Services Board, with a public announcement to be made in mid-February.

1.2 The minutes of the Board meeting of 16 December were approved.

1.3 The Board noted the completed and outstanding actions.

2. Main Estimate and Business Plan

2.1 The Board noted their appreciation for the overall look and feel of the 2026-27 Business Plan, recommending some minor amendments to wording and tone. Subject to these recommendations being actioned, the Board approved the Business Plan with preparation of the final document being delegated to the executive team. It was, however, noted that figures would need to change in line with any amendments to the Main Estimate, and any substantive changes in content resulting from this would require circulation of the updated Business Plan with the Board.

2.2 The Board recognised that some further amendments would need to be made to the main estimate following decisions made at this Board meeting. It was agreed that the final version of the main estimate would be circulated via email for approval by the Board.

3. Update on Artificial Intelligence – Exploration of Opportunities

3.1 The Head of Technology presented an update on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) within IPSA to drive efficiencies and improve customer service. Two pilot projects were underway, focused on improvements to receipt processing and the use of generative AI to review MP communications materials. However, it was highlighted that ahead of any further exploration of opportunities through the use of AI, an overarching AI strategy and use policy would need to be developed alongside training to be provided to IPSA's people. The Chief Executive also noted how the procurement of a data assessment tool would help to ensure that any AI tools built by IPSA were not constructed on the basis of poor data.

3.2 The Board agreed that basic fundamental training for IPSA's people in the use of AI was vital, noting that everyone needed an understanding of the risks and opportunities involved. Alongside the development of an overarching AI strategy and use policy, the Board noted that the IT code of conduct would also need updating. In addition to looking at opportunities to drive efficiencies and improve customer service, the Board were also keen to see IPSA look at how AI could be used to identify and counter fraud. It was recognised that MPs and their staff would also be experimenting with AI, and that work in collaboration with Parliamentary Digital Services and other House of Commons teams and committees should continue to ensure a joined-up approach. The Board were very supportive of further work being undertaken in the exploration of opportunities in AI and this was seen to be key strand of IPSA's five-year plan. It was asked that the Audit, Risk, and Assurance Committee look further at AI risks and that once training had been provided to IPSA's people in the use of AI, a longer session should be planned for the Board at which AI strategy could be discussed.

4. Consultation Outcomes – 2026-27 Scheme

4.1 The Director, Standards and Information presented a series of recommendations arising from the autumn 2025 consultation on the 2026-27 Scheme, which sought to further embed IPSA's new regulatory approach and to simplify the document.

4.2 The Board found the recommendations with regard to the new Scheme to be sensible and proportionate, and were pleased with the reduction in length. It was noted that ancillary guidance needed to also be proportionate and it was important that this was produced in dialogue with MPs and their Office Managers. The Board approved the recommendations as set out in the paper, discussing several of these in detail and providing the following steers.

- 4.2.1 On the Scheme allowing flexibility for Outer London MPs to choose between receiving accommodation funding and receiving the London Area Living Payment, it was noted that a clear rationale would need to be provided by the MP.
- 4.2.2 On removing the restriction on funding for parliamentary travel in Europe by MPs' staff members, the Board delegated responsibility to the Director, Standards and Information and the Head of Standards and Transparency to ensure that guidance was sufficiently clear to ensure that safeguards were in place relating to the duty of care to staff.
- 4.2.3 It was agreed that whilst the fourteen-day deadline for submission of review requests should be removed from the Scheme, guidance should set an expectation that all such requests be submitted within sixty days of a funding request having been rejected.

5. Consultation Outcomes – MPs' Staffing

- 5.1 The Remuneration Policy Specialist presented the Board with recommendations relating to MPs' staff pay, staff pay ranges, and MPs' staffing funding; alongside recommendations arising from the autumn 2025 consultation on improving MPs' staff working lives.
- 5.2 The Board agreed to all recommendations made in both the papers presented, subject to the discussions that would be taking place with SCIPSA in the coming weeks. The Board discussed several recommendations in detail, providing the following steers.
 - 5.2.1 In communicating the creation of a 'staffing support fund', it should be made clear that IPSA was not asking for additional funding, but rather updating and improving the existing contingency funding process. This process would focus on support through targeted interventions and would not be a means to offering MPs year-on-year additional support.
 - 5.2.2 The Board agreed to trial the creation of a new 'leadership' level for MPs' staff above the existing pay range from April 2026, and would consider the results of the trial before making a decision on whether and how this should be implemented longer term.

6. 2026-27 MP Pay Decision

- 6.1 The Director, Standards and Information presented recommendations in relation to the 2026-27 MP pay award, following on from the Board's decision concerning the MP pay determination of the mechanism for making decisions on MPs' pay during the current Parliament.
- 6.2 The Board were in agreement that following consideration of the median of pay for parliamentarians in other G7 countries and the pay of similar roles in the UK, MPs' pay had not quite kept pace with that of its comparators. With this in mind, the Board agreed to a 5%

increase to MPs' pay in 2026-27, and considered possible pathways to a target of MPs' pay sitting at between £108,000 and £110,000 by the end of the current Parliament. In line with the determination agreed in December, the Board would make a decision on MP pay annually. An increase to additional pay for Committee Chairs and Panel of Chairs of 5% was also agreed. The Board decided that an increase to the London Area Living Payment required more consideration, and that this would be agreed via correspondence. The Board asked that a communications plan be drafted and circulated with Board members, with the Chair noting that until an announcement was made the Board's decisions remained confidential.

- 6.3 It was asked that the draft wording of the MP pay determination be circulated with Board members, so that this could be reviewed and signed off in line with the decision made at the December 2025 Board meeting.

7. Chief Executive's Report

- 7.1 The Chief Executive presented her report to the Board, highlighting several updates.
- 7.1.1 Sign off of IPSA's annual report and accounts had been delayed due to work being undertaken by the National Audit Office in relation to McCloud redress scheme costs. The Chief Executive and the Chair of ARAC had met with all parties involved and had agreed on a new deadline of 20 February to have the work completed and accounts signed off.
 - 7.1.2 The Chief Executive had met with two HMRC deputy directors at HMRC in December to discuss several current issues, with progress being made on these and the relationship with HMRC now being managed by the Director, MP Services.
 - 7.1.3 Migration of the IPSA Online system to the UNIT4 Cloud had been paused while a solution was devised in relation to an issue identified with one of the system customisations.
- 7.2 The Director, MP Services presented the KPI dashboard, highlighting that compliance with the Scheme remained high; that the email hit rate had dropped in November, possibly due to a higher volume of communications having been sent out in relation to the autumn consultations; debt continued to decrease in large part thanks to improved processes with regard to deposit loans and salary overpayments; and on average inbound calls from MPs and their staff were being answered within twenty seconds over 90% of the time, a rate higher than the service level agreement. The Board noted the dashboard with thanks, giving particular mention to the continued improvement to the timeliness of responses to freedom of information requests.
- 7.3 The Chief of Staff presented an update on the Transformation Programme, highlighting updates in relation to several projects.

- 7.3.1 Work was progressing in cooperation with a number of MPs to trial IPSA as the leaseholder for some constituency office leases, with the aim of having ten agreements in place by the end of the financial year.
 - 7.3.2 A demonstration of a forecasting tool to a group of Office Managers had been determined to be too complex in its current form. Work was underway to develop a tool better suited for use by MP offices.
 - 7.3.3 IPSA's response to the Citizens' Forum recommendations had been published the day before the Board meeting, and engagement with stakeholders on recommendations outside of IPSA's remit had already begun.
- 7.4 The Chief of Staff summarised plans to undertake an externally-led Board effectiveness review later in 2026 to identify areas for improvement that would benefit Board effectiveness and performance. The Board were in agreement that there was significant value in such an exercise, provided that actionable and proportionate recommendations were agreed as a result.
- 7.5 The Board noted with thanks a status update on commitments made to SCIPSA.
- 7.6 The Director, MP Services presented the improving customer service report focused on changes to the property process. It was highlighted that the customer experience had improved significantly, with more engagement taking place and a rent reconciliation report ensuring that direct rent payments were accurate and on time. An update was provided on how IPSA was supporting several MPs who had struggled to secure suitable office accommodation. The Board agreed that this would be a useful subject for the Improving IPSA Assurance Group (IIAG) to discuss.
- 8. Financial Report, including a report on debt**
- 8.1 The Senior Finance Business Partner presented the financial report, noting that IPSA was forecast to be 2% overspent against Subhead A, largely due to the increased run-rate against MPs' budgets; but was 11% underspent against Subhead B. Debt had substantially decreased in the year to September 2025 and following an increase during the General Election period had fallen to a much steadier level.
- 9. Board Forward Plan and any other business**
- 9.1 The Board noted the forward plan for 2026.
- 9.2 The Board approved a series of recommended changes to Board sub-committee memberships; and approved the appointment of Alan Mather (Non-Executive Director at the Charity Commission) as an advisory member of IIAG.

Annex One

In attendance:

Karen Walker, Chief Executive

Lee Bridges, Director, Standards and Information

Karen Lacey, Director, MP Services

Chief of Staff

Senior Finance Business Partner

Head of Technology (Item 3)

Head of Standards and Transparency (Items 4 to 6)

Remuneration Policy Specialist (Items 5 and 6)

Head of Strategic Communications (Item 6)

Apologies:

Thomas Fitch, Director, Finance and Commercial