

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

20 May 2025

Board Members: Richard Lloyd OBE (Chair)
Dame Laura Cox
Helen Jones
Lea Paterson CBE
Andrea Spataro (Boardroom Apprentice)

Apologies: Will Lifford

See Annex for record of attendees.

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 15 July 2025

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interest

1.1 The Chair welcomed IPSA's recently appointed General Counsel to the Board meeting and invited attendees to declare any interests not previously recorded. No new declarations of interest were recorded.

2. Actions and Minutes

2.1 The minutes of the Board meeting of 18 March and those relating to the Board strategy day of 19 March were approved.

2.2 The Board noted the completed and outstanding actions. The Director, Policy and Engagement provided an update in relation to the implementation of Board decisions concerning intra-office loans and secondments, confirming that discussions had taken place to agree a timeline and that an engagement session with a group of new MPs was being planned for the autumn.

3. Improve Customer Service

- 3.1 The Head of MP Services centred their update on improving customer service on the property process following the recent incorporation of the Homes and Offices Services team into MP Services. The team now consisted of twenty Account Managers, each having responsibility for between 35-40 MPs, for whom they delivered a comprehensive support service. In embedding these changes in team structure and scope, the focus had been on people, processes, systems, and policies. Though the property process would never be straightforward in that no two leases were the same and MPs' requirements differed, property forms were already being dealt with in a timelier manner and more direct engagement was taking place with MPs, as the team looked to adopt a more flexible and adaptable approach. Going forward, the Head of MP Services intended to further simplify the property registration form and process, and to explore options for the development of a tracking system which would enable real-time visibility of the accuracy of rental payments.
- 3.2 The Board welcomed progress in this area, expressing support for further simplification of the property process. It was agreed that consideration of risk appetite was crucial in underpinning such work, and that it appeared as though an overcomplicated process had resulted from rules accumulating in response to one-off issues arising and not from a review of broad-based risk. In addition to this, the Chief Executive noted the need for improvements to the property process to be seen within the context of the Board's projected consideration of the future of IPSA Online at its strategy day in September, with the Chair confirming that creative thinking was required in order to further minimise the amount of time MPs were required to spend on the system.

4. MP Remuneration Review

- 4.1 The Head of Strategic Communications provided an update on the 'What's Democracy Worth' initiative, which comprised the next stage in IPSA's comprehensive review of MPs' remuneration. The outcomes and learning from the Green Paper and roundtable discussions were noted. Key findings were that IPSA was respected and trusted among influential stakeholders and that there was general support for IPSA enabling a national conversation focused on how and why UK democracy is funded, in a manner befitting the public mood and the external environment. Building on the success of the roundtable discussions, IPSA planned to launch this national conversation through a combination of polling to obtain baseline data on public trust in democracy, organising events in parliament, convening citizens' panels, developing IPSA's media and social media presence, and partnering with other organisations within the wider parliamentary community. Alongside this, use would be made of connections that IPSA people had in order to engage with local community groups. This work would take place ahead of a formal public consultation in autumn 2025. Longer term, it was hoped that IPSA could make further use of public engagement initiatives on other matters aligned with its strategic objectives.

- 4.2 The Board asked for more details on how IPSA was developing its media and social media presence. The Head of Strategic Communications confirmed that stronger relationships were being forged with journalists, enabling clearer and more consistent messaging; and that whilst X and LinkedIn are currently IPSA's social media platforms, a new Instagram account was ready to launch, and a plan had been devised for building a following and the creation of content. Given the fragmented media landscape, the Board were supportive of use being made of connections that IPSA people had with local community groups, which would hopefully increase engagement with grassroots organisations and harder-to-reach communities.
- 4.3 The Board were conscious of a need to be sensitive to the external environment, alive to risks such as the potential for engagement with bad actors, and to be mindful of how other related organisations had undertaken similar pieces of work; but were otherwise supportive of an initiative which provided clear opportunities. It was noted that following agreement by the Board in March to extend the timeline for the comprehensive review of MPs' remuneration that this work should not be subject to further delay, that Board members should be kept informed of developments as the project moved into its public engagement phase, and that an update should be provided at the meeting of 15 July.

5. Strategy Implementation

- 5.1 The Director, MP Services, Strategy and Change presented an update on the implementation of outcomes arising from the Board's strategy day on 19 March. Engagement sessions on the development of a principles-based approach had taken place with several teams, a fireside chat with the Chair at an all-people meeting had been well-received, and key concepts were being discussed at proxy and office managers' meetings. The change in IPSA's regulatory approach had been reframed as a move towards being more proportionate, balanced, and reasonable, with greater contextualisation highlighting relative materiality and retained controls. A number of operational changes had been started, with the intent moving from validation to service quality; automatic claim stops on IPSA Online had been reviewed; the evidence requirements had been replaced by a funding handbook; and the support framework was being used to target risk. The Director, Policy and Engagement noted that a number of policy-related processes would also be reviewed, including the contingency funding application process, claim reviews, and the treatment of novel and contentious interpretations of principles.
- 5.2 The Director, MP Services, Strategy and Change summarised work that had taken place in relation to constituency office sourcing and management, following Board support for the creation of a diverse set of pilots to succeed the proof of concept which had concluded at the end of 2024. Extensive engagement had taken place with MPs and Office Managers who were experiencing difficulties in sourcing suitable office accommodation. Issues reported included regional budget pressures, the variability and often high cost of business rates, a lack of suitable and/or available property, and weaknesses in lease agreements. Evidence seemed to indicate that a one-size-fits-all approach was not appropriate or sustainable. The Board agreed that

these findings would be valuable in assessing the future development of the Office Costs Budget.

- 5.3 The Board discussed IPSA's future target operating model (TOM). It was agreed that principles-based regulation and constituency office sourcing would be discussed in further detail at the next Improving IPSA Assurance Group meeting, and that the People Committee would consider the TOM.

6. Annual Survey of MPs and MPs' Staff – Initial Analysis

- 6.1 The Director, Policy and Engagement provided some initial analysis of the recent annual survey of MPs and MPs' staff, which had been delayed due to the 2024 General Election. It was noted that the high levels of satisfaction recorded were particularly reassuring given the significant turnover in MPs and staff that had followed the election. The Director, MP Services, Strategy and Change highlighted the praise recorded for MP Services and Payroll support and noted that although there were several reported issues with IPSA Online functionality to work through, confidence in using the system was high. Other areas for possible improvement that had been recorded in response to the survey included enhancement of payroll tools, a facility for enabling direct debit payments, and a better website search function, all of which were being looked into.
- 6.2 The Board received the report on the annual survey results with thanks and recognised the significant work that had gone into increasing the completion rate, noting that more substantial analysis would be provided for the 15 July meeting. The Board were supportive of a review of survey questions to ensure that these continued to reflect IPSA's priorities as laid down in the 2024-27 Corporate Plan; asked for further analysis of non-proxy staff members' responses, which appeared to contrast somewhat with those of MPs and proxies; and were supportive of creative solutions being explored to enable direct debit payments.

7. Update on IPSA Office Relocation

- 7.1 The Chief Executive provided an update on IPSA's office relocation, noting that IPSA was close to agreeing terms on a new office premises and had significantly progressed the clearance of the current office, resulting in the disposal and digitisation of a number of physical records. It was confirmed that the new office would require some minor work to extend an existing meeting room and to create a new one. The new office represented a significant annual saving on the current lease. The Chief Executive was authorised by the Board to take any steps necessary to enter into the new lease agreement. This includes the execution of the lease as a deed under seal and, for this purpose, to authenticate the common seal of IPSA.

8. Chief Executive's Report

- 8.1 The Chief Executive presented his report to the Board, highlighting two points of particular note. Firstly, in light of continued security concerns it was proposed that IPSA consider the restrictions placed upon the publication of MP travel claims and the use of taxis where required for reasons of safety as permanent changes. The Board approved this recommendation, but noted that this would be subject to annual review given IPSA's duty of transparency and the changing nature of threat levels, with the need to ensure that the action remained proportionate. Secondly, a recent decision made by the executive leadership team was highlighted which concerned alignment of the statutory and occupational qualifying periods for maternity pay, along with bringing paternity pay and the new statutory parental bereavement and neonatal care policy in line with the approach to occupational payments. This was supported by the Board.
- 8.2 The Board discussed work underway following the discussion of cyber risk at a recent Audit, Risk, and Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting, and suggested that in light of recent high-profile cyber attacks, ARAC may want to revisit this subject.
- 8.3 The Director, MP Services, Strategy and Change presented the KPI dashboard, highlighting that IPSA had received 420 year-end forms, more than double the typical number, and that over 2,500 phone calls had been recorded over the year-end period. It was noted that the number of days taken to reimburse claims was at its lowest ever rate of 1.9 days.
- 8.4 The Director, MP Services, Strategy and Change provided an update in relation to the Improving IPSA Programme.
- 8.5 The Chief of Staff summarised progress against the 2022-23 Board Governance Review recommendations, noting that of the thirty-two agreed recommendations, twenty-one had been completed. The continuing professional development plan had been revised to include a greater focus on artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, greater use would be made of external speakers at Board meetings, and a skills audit and Board team building session would be planned for 2026 following completion of the non-executive director recruitment campaigns. It was agreed that actions relating to Board Governance Review recommendations would now move into business-as-usual activity.

9. Finance Report

- 9.1 The Director, Finance presented a verbal update on the management accounts, as due to year-end activity April figures had not been finalised. It was noted that there would be a considerable underspend on capital budgets due to the postponement of strategic projects for the election period and that annually managed expenditure (AME) would also be underspent. Going forward, following agreement with the Chair of ARAC, debt reporting would be included within the scope of regularised finance reports to the Board. The Director, Finance stated that following the

election, debt had peaked in November 2024 but had since decreased considerably, with much of the outstanding debt being property-related. Updates were provided on preparations for the annual audit and on discussions with HMRC on taxable expenditure.

10. Board Programme of Work

- 10.1 The Board reviewed the Board Programme of Work, asking that an update on the work of the People Committee be included on the agenda for 15 July. It was agreed that equalities data on MPs' staff and artificial intelligence strategy, risks, and opportunities should also feature as items.

Annex One

In attendance: Ian Todd, Chief Executive
Lee Bridges, Director, Policy and Engagement
Karen Walker, Director, MP Services, Strategy and Change
Thomas Fitch, Director, Finance
Chief of Staff (absent for Item 5.3)
General Counsel (absent for Item 5.3)
Head of MP Services (Item 3)
Head of Strategic Communications (Item 4)