

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

18 March 2025

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

See Annex for record of attendees.

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 20 May 2025

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Chair invited attendees to declare any interests not previously recorded. Lea Paterson declared that she had been asked to join the Remuneration Committee for Permanent Secretaries.

2. Actions and Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the Board meeting of 21 January were approved.
- 2.2 The Chair noted the completed and outstanding actions. An updated Memorandum of Understanding and Joint Statement setting the terms of engagement between IPSA, the Compliance Officer, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (PCS) had now been signed by all parties.

3. General Election Evaluation

- 3.1 The Director, MP Services, Strategy and Change presented an evaluation of IPSA's 2024 General Election activity, noting the successful delivery against stated objectives. The significant number of MPs standing down at the election enabled early testing of the refined Departing Members' process and collaboration with colleagues at the House of Commons had been strong. Seven key focus areas for further improvement were noted – improving the property process, improving the winding-up process, MP and MPs' staff education and training, maintaining operational resilience, improving the staffing process and guidance, engaging with prospective candidates, and working with the House.
- 3.2 The Board welcomed the evaluation. It was confirmed that the new People Strategy would give people regular opportunities to undertake work in other areas of the organisation.
- 3.3 The Board considered possible improvements to the winding-up process, recognising that although the extension of the winding-up period to four months better reflected the time it takes an MP to offboard staff and exit their properties, there had been some instances of departing MPs delaying action; it was recognised that such unintended consequences would need to be addressed in future, with sensible milestones and best practice clearly articulated, and with such an approach being trialed in by-elections.
- 3.4 Finally, the Board welcomed continued improvement to IPSA's collaboration with colleagues at the House, noting that it would be useful to schedule a session with the Administration Committee to discuss IPSA's evaluation of its General Election activity and to present lessons learned.

4. Outcomes of the Consultation on MPs' Pay

- 4.1 The Director, Policy and Engagement presented a report on the outcomes of the recent consultation on MPs' pay, noting that no significant issues had been raised in response to the consultation. The Board agreed to proceed with the proposed adjustment to MPs' salaries in line with the government's recommended affordability level for public sector pay settlements in 2025-26.

5. Debt Prevention Strategy

- 5.1 The Director, Finance presented a debt prevention strategy, noting that salary overpayments to MPs' staff leavers tended to represent the highest volume of debt. Such debt arose when an MPs' staff member ceased employment with an MP and IPSA received late notification from the office. The Board were supportive of a targeted and proportionate application of such debt being allocated against an MP's staffing budget and being included in the published record, founded on a risk-based approach that was sufficiently aware of any likely unintended consequences and involving the operational teams who manage the relationships with MPs' offices. The Board agreed that recovery through the courts was a potential tool for use in very

specific circumstances when all other options for recovery had been exhausted and where such action was economic. The Board also agreed that where necessary and proportionate, IPSA should ask the MP to novate salary overpayment debt to IPSA so that it was possible for monies owed to be recovered directly from the former staff member; and that should the MP refuse, the debt should be recovered from them via salary deductions.

- 5.2 The Director, Finance presented options concerning the recovery of budget overspends incurred by departing MPs, asking the Board whether the timing of winding-up and loss-of-office payments could be reconsidered so that any monies owed could be deducted from these. Again, the Board agreed that this was a potential tool to use where necessary, but that it should be applied proportionately and with due consideration to risk.
- 5.3 It was agreed that consideration of the publication of rent overpayment debt in instances where such debt had arisen due to delayed notice being provided to IPSA by the MP, should be included within the wider publication review.
- 5.4 The Board agreed that in rare instances where appropriate and economic that former MP debt may be pursued through the courts where collectively agreed by the executive leadership team (ELT).

6. Board Annual Evaluation

- 6.1 The Chief of Staff summarised key findings from the 2024 Board Annual Evaluation, noting the areas of development that had been identified in Board self-assessment conversations. These included the reconsideration of meeting planning to ensure sufficient time was available for key updates and decisions, in particular in the coming year to oversight of transformation, including communications and policy; a reduction in the length of papers; and more opportunities for Board members to acquire a greater sense of the operating environment at Westminster. It was noted that in 2025, the Board would have an annual forward plan to help provide greater strategic direction, that Board induction materials had been refreshed to take account of the feedback received in the 2023 Board skills audit, and that a draft plan for continued professional development (CPD) for Board members had been scoped, with constituency office visits, customer call shadowing, and a session on data protection and security included in the programme.
- 6.2 It was recognised that when the Board iterated or revisited past decisions, particularly in light of the ongoing changes to IPSA's regulatory approach, these decisions need to be sensitively communicated with both IPSA's people and with customers. The Board requested a greater focus on artificial intelligence, emerging technologies, and how these were affecting Board governance. Alongside this, there was an appetite for more opportunities to immerse Board members in the experience of MPs and their staff. It was agreed that the Chair and the Chief of Staff would look to incorporate this feedback into the CPD forward plan.

7. Report from the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC)

- 7.1 The Chair of ARAC presented a report on the Committee's recent work, noting that it had discussed the findings of a report concerning the British Library cyber-attack of October 2023 within the context of IPSA's own cyber security controls, and that an action plan had been developed following on from this exercise. The Committee had requested regular updates on progress against the action plan and the Board confirmed that oversight of this should remain with ARAC. The Committee had reviewed strategic risks and identified no particular concerns, though ELT had been tasked with merging three risks that contained significant overlap. The 2025-26 Internal Audit Plan had been approved, as had the National Audit Office's (NAO) 2024-25 Audit Planning Report. It was highlighted that the NAO would be undertaking additional payroll sampling as a result of the substantial turnover in MPs' staff following the General Election and the Committee had asked for further details to be provided on the areas of focus so that internal audit work could be calibrated accordingly.

8. Report from the Improving IPSA Assurance Group (IIAG)

- 8.1 The Chair of IIAG provided an update on the recent work of the Committee, noting the recent reset and review meeting following the General Election period. Given that the Improving IPSA Programme was moving into its delivery phase, it was agreed that all Board members be invited to attend Committee meetings for the remainder of the year, enabling it to draw upon the full range of Board expertise and reducing the bureaucracy for IPSA people.

9. Compliance Officer's Quarterly Report

- 9.1 The Compliance Officer presented their quarterly report covering the period between 1 October and 31 December 2024, highlighting that there had been twenty-nine new cases opened during this quarter. A summary of cases was provided, with complaints concerning matters such as the misuse of travel funding, allegations linked to working hours and campaigning, and the submission of tampered evidence. The number of complaints falling within the Compliance Officer's remit had increased by 50%. Updates were supplied regarding cases that had been subject to police referrals. Given the delays experienced in relation to some referrals, the Board asked the Compliance Officer to consider whether their office would be more effective if it was provided with additional powers, in the context of discussions with the House of Commons Modernisation Committee. The Compliance Officer confirmed they would consider such matters and report back to the Board.

10. Chief Executive's Report

- 10.1 The Chief Executive presented their report to the Board, highlighting several recent committee meeting appearances, including the Administration Committee, the Modernisation Committee,

the Northern Ireland Assembly Remuneration Bill Committee, and the Speaker's Committee for IPSA (SCIPSA), in which IPSA had been able to put forward its proposals for change. At the recent public session of SCIPSA, the 2025-26 main estimate and business plan had been approved. The Chief Executive also provided an update on IPSA's office move, noting that commercial negotiations were ongoing and that though the intention was to move into new premises by the end of the current lease, it would be possible for IPSA to be without an office for a period of up to three months if necessary.

10.2 The Board noted the Annual People Survey results with thanks.

10.3 The Director, MP Services, Strategy and Change presented the KPI dashboard as of January 2025. The Board queried the time MPs and their staff were spending on IPSA Online, the MPs and MPs' staff satisfaction levels with IPSA's service, and the amount of unreconciled payment card expenditure. It was explained that the time spent on IPSA Online had increased while new MPs adapted to using the system, the 49% satisfaction rate was a pre-election figure and that the Annual Survey had opened this week for responses, and that deadlines for payment card reconciliation had only been enforced since the new year following last year's General Election, as offices got used to the process involved.

10.4 The Director, MP Services, Strategy and Change provided an update on the Transformation Programme, noting that the constituency office proof of concept had been concluded with twenty out of eighty-two participating MPs having secured office premises as a result; commercial negotiations on the next stage of the IPSA Online front-end prototype build were ongoing; and some initial work around MP broadband provision as part of the prospective IPSA Online marketplace had commenced. The Director, Policy and Engagement updated the Board on the recent Funding Democracy roundtable discussions and the plans for further work in relation to the statutory review of MPs' remuneration.

11. Finance Report

11.1 The Director, Finance presented the Finance Report, highlighting that though new MPs' spend continued to be at a higher rate than that of returned Members, the gap had reduced since December. On subhead B spend, budgets had not been drawn down upon as much as expected given the pause to much Improving IPSA programme work over the election period, with much of these projected costs transposed into next year's estimate. Overall, it was noted that IPSA was projected to be on track to have spend in line with budget for 2024-25. The Chair commended the improvements recorded in forecasting accuracy and the Board noted the report with thanks.

12. Board Programme of Work, Reflections, and Any Other Business

12.1 The Board noted the forward plan.

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

Matt Walker, Compliance Officer (Item 9)

Remuneration Policy Specialist (Item 4)