

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

16 December 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 January 2026

1. Declarations of Interest, Actions, and Minutes

- 1.1 The Chair invited attendees to declare any interests not previously recorded, with none being declared.
- 1.2 The minutes of the Board meeting of 4 November were approved.
- 1.3 The Board noted the completed and outstanding actions. It was confirmed that a meeting between the Chief Executive and two HMRC Deputy Directors had been scheduled with the intention of making progress in relation to a range of issues on which IPSA was seeking greater clarity.

2. MP Remuneration

- 2.1 The Head of Standards and Transparency presented recommendations concerning IPSA's determination as to the mechanism through which MP pay decisions should be made for the remainder of the current Parliament. It was proposed that the Board agree to make an annual decision on MPs' pay, taking into account a range of data points, including consideration of the

salaries of a range of comparative professions. The consultation responses had been supportive of this approach, but less supportive of a change to the timing of MPs' pay decisions. Thus, it was recommended that the Board continue to make decisions on MPs' pay ahead of the beginning of the financial year to which the decision would apply. The Director, Standards and Information highlighted the longer-term view, noting that IPSA would hope to run another Citizens' Forum on MPs' pay and funding before the end of the current Parliament, followed by a public consultation and Board decision ahead of a General Election taking place. It was confirmed that IPSA intended to publish a formal response to the recent Citizens' Forum in January.

- 2.2 The Board approved the recommendations presented. Board members asked for IPSA to codify the economic indicators and salary tracking group that would be used each year, so that there could be seen to be a firm commitment to work within a set of clear parameters. It was also asked that a projection of possible pay decisions over the next two-to-three years be provided at the January meeting so that the Board could think more strategically particularly given that MPs' pay could be perceived as lagging behind that of comparable professions within the salary tracking group. Supplementary to this, the Board confirmed that it would be helpful to understand how the salaries of comparative professions had changed over recent years; and it was noted that consideration of international comparators with regard to the salaries of legislators in other parliamentary democracies would also be helpful. The Board asked for a communications plan to be provided in relation to this work.
- 2.3 The Board discussed the requirements of the 2009 Parliamentary Standards Act in relation to MPs' pay. This was considered alongside the recommendations arising from the Citizens' Forum. In relation to this the Board would need to consider several issues in January including the significance of MP outside earnings, the impact of any divergence from government pay policy, and the extent to which comparisons needed to be drawn with professions in the wider economy rather than focusing on the public sector.

3. MPs' Staffing Budget, MPs' Staff Pay, and Consultation Outcomes

- 3.1 The Director, Standards and Information presented the results of a recent MPs' staff benchmarking exercise in which IPSA had used market data from two suppliers. The findings of both suppliers suggested that the MPs' staff pay bandings had fallen behind other comparative roles. It was recommended that the Board approve a blanket increase to all pay bandings for 2026-27 so that these did not fall further behind. Alongside this, IPSA would undertake more detailed analysis of the findings, including consideration of retention data and diversity monitoring, proposing that this work be combined with the wider project concerning the improvement of MPs' staff working lives.
- 3.2 It was noted that there should also be analysis of regional benchmarking data, and IPSA needed to consider the impact of the job descriptions that MPs could select from when recruiting staff.

It was highlighted that there appeared to be significant discrepancies between the data collected by the two suppliers, and it was agreed to review this further. On retention rates, it was clear that turnover particularly amongst caseworkers was higher than should be expected, and that the cost of attrition would be felt by MPs both financially and in the efficiency and efficacy of their operations.

- 3.3 The Board confirmed that it wanted to see a projection of possible longer-term changes to MPs' staff pay, and agreed to the further interrogation of the two datasets, alongside consideration of retention rates, diversity monitoring, and job descriptions. It was agreed to integrate work on MPs' staff pay with that of career progression, and the Board asked to see proposals relating to the sequencing and timing of this integrated work in January. It was noted that whilst a one-size-fits-all uplift was likely to be applied in 2026-27, should further analysis demonstrate that caseworker salaries needed to increase further this could be considered. The Board asked for an additional briefing session on MPs' and MPs' staff pay to be scheduled ahead of the January Board meeting.
- 3.4 The Remuneration Policy Specialist presented the recommendations arising from the recent MPs' staffing consultation – these included revisiting the pay ranges to ensure greater consistency of width and overlap between bands, introducing a minimum pay policy, and the ring-fencing of a budget for staff development. Consultation responses had generally suggested a minimum pay policy of all substantive job roles sitting at least 3% above the National Living Wage; and it was proposed that a staff development budget be approved. The Board expressed support for a minimum pay policy, but asked for more data concerning the impact that this would have on staff who were currently paid below the threshold. With regard to a staff development budget, whilst the Board were in favour of a ring-fenced budget they asked for a clearer rationale to ensure that the amount provided was evidence-based. It was asked that an evidence-based figure be included within proposals to be presented to the Board in January.
- 3.5 The Board discussed options in relation to the MPs' staff pay award. The Board asked that a recommendation be provided in January alongside analysis of the benchmarking data and a proposed increase to the Staffing Budget. Careful consideration of how any decision was communicated would also need to take place, ensuring that MPs were provided with the opportunity to discuss the recommended pay award with their staff. Alongside this, further work would be needed to encourage MPs to adequately reward existing staff rather than seeking to use any uplift to increase headcount.
- 3.6 Finally, the Board discussed proposals for the creation of a staffing support budget which would in part replace the current contingency funding process. The Board approved plans for the creation of such a budget, provided that clear decision-making criteria were put in place, and that a timeline for evaluation of its effectiveness be devised. It was agreed that this budget initially be trialled for the remainder of the current Parliament.

4. 2026-27 MP Budgets

- 4.1 The Head of Standards presented a series of recommendations on changes to MPs' budgets in 2026-27. The Board agreed to an increase to the Office Costs Budget of 3.6% in line with CPI (October 2025). It was noted that where some MPs could evidence exceptional budget pressures, additional support could be offered.
- 4.2 The Board agreed to an increase to the London Accommodation Budget of 6.3% reflecting the year-on-year increase in private rents in Westminster and Lambeth; a 5.2% increase to the non-London Accommodation Budget reflecting the annual rent increase across the private sector across the whole of the UK; and a 3.8% increase to the associated costs budget in line with the October CPIH figure. The Board agreed to an increase of 6.75% to the dependant uplift, in line with the average annual increase in rent across Westminster and Lambeth. The Board agreed to there being no increase to the hotel nightly stay limit, and agreed a small increase to subsistence rates.
- 4.3 A decision on the London Area Living Payment (LALP) was deferred until January.

5. Main Estimate and Business Plan 2026-27

- 5.1 The Director, Finance and Commercial, presented the draft 2026-27 Main Estimate, noting that some figures would change in line with Board decisions on pay and budgets. Key differences between this estimate and that of the previous year were highlighted. For subhead A, in line with current data, the projected draw-down rate against MP budgets had been further increased; £7.7 million had been budgeted for additional staffing support; the contingency budget line had been removed; and the capital budget had increased in line with the anticipated novation of several constituency office leases to IPSA. The Board sought assurance that the run rate against MP budgets had been sufficiently analysed and understood, and that spend would be as close as possible to budget. The Director, Finance and Commercial confirmed that the accuracy of estimates had improved in recent years, with a 98.7% spend against budget recorded in 2024-25.
- 5.2 On subhead B, the Director, Finance and Commercial highlighted that the budget had remained very stable from 2022-23, with IPSA budgeting slightly less under this subhead than four years ago. The Board discussed the forecast consultancy costs, noting that though these had reduced slightly year-on-year, there still appeared to be substantial support budgeted for. It was confirmed that in areas where there is not in-house specialist expertise, IPSA remains reliant on external support. The Board asked for a clearer narrative to be provided in relation to consultancy costs in the explanatory memorandum that would accompany the submission of the estimate to SCIPSA.

5.3 The Director, Standards and Information provided an update on the 2026-27 Business Plan. Progress was being made in refreshing the format of the Business Plan, with one version designed for SCIPSA and another version targeted at the general public. It was confirmed that a draft version would be circulated to Board members in the coming days.

6. Supplementary Estimate and Financial Report

6.1 The Director, Finance and Commercial presented the draft supplementary estimate, noting that similar to the requirement identified at the tail end of 2024-25, MPs were spending more of their budgets than hitherto. The rate had increased again since the previous year. In total, IPSA would be asking for an additional £12 million to cover this increase in spending and the projected cost of McCloud redress claims. The Board asked for a clearer elucidation of the anticipated surge in MP spending and approved the supplementary estimate subject to these minor amendments, with sign off delegated to the Chair of the Board and the Chair of the Audit, Risk, and Assurance Committee (ARAC).

6.2 The Board noted the Financial Report.

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

7.1 The Chair of ARAC presented a report to the Board on the Committee's December meeting. The Committee had discussed the NAO timetable for the sign-off of the Annual Report and Accounts and had been clear that it needed assurance that this work would be completed by the end of January 2026. The Committee received a demonstration of the Government Internal Audit Agency's insights engine and the results of recent data analysis on MP travel spending; received updates in relation to progress made against recommended improvements to IPSA's commercial function and the cyber risk mitigation plan; approved some minor changes to the internal audit plan; and received an advisory review on property processes.

8. Report from the People Committee

8.1 The Chair of the People Committee presented a report to the Board on the Committee's November meeting. The Committee had looked at succession planning within IPSA; received a report on the results of a recent pulse survey which showed that high levels of engagement were being maintained; and discussed delivery against the 2025-28 People Strategy, which was focused on developing IPSA's people within a principles-based environment.

9. Compliance Officer Quarterly and Annual Reports

9.1 The Compliance Officer presented his quarterly report to the Board, which included analysis of complaints data from the past three years demonstrating that numbers had generally remained steady. In the second quarter of 2025-26 there had been fifty new complaints raised with the

Compliance Officer, none of which had resulted in any investigations or findings. The Compliance Officer went on to provide an update on active investigations.

- 9.2 The Compliance Officer presented his annual lessons learned report to the Board, highlighting that the most common complaint received over the past year had been in relation to MPs and their offices being uncontactable. Whilst there were clearly some instances of people expecting instant responses, one of the Compliance Officer's recommendations was for IPSA to encourage MPs to better publicise their office contact details. Other recommendations concerned implementing controls to ensure that MPs' staff who worked for multiple MPs were working the hours they were contracted to. There had been four claim reviews conducted but none had resulted in any concerns being recorded in relation to IPSA policies. The Board welcomed the report and were particularly pleased to note that the Compliance Officer was asking MPs to demonstrate how they had applied IPSA's fundamental principles. The Board asked that the Compliance Officer consider mitigations in cases where published notice of an investigation could increase security or welfare concerns in relation to an MP, suggesting greater liaison with the Parliamentary Security Department and the Whips' offices. It was confirmed that an update on action taken against the Compliance Officer's recommendations would be provided at the March Board meeting.

10. Chief Executive's Report

- 10.1 The Chief Executive presented her report to the Board, drawing attention to several areas of note. IPSA had been asked to provide a written submission in response to an inquiry of the Administration Committee into General Election planning. The induction of two new Board members whose terms would commence on 1 January 2025 was underway.
- 10.2 The Director, MP Services presented the KPI dashboard, noting the key headlines. Compliance with the Scheme remained high and a recent review of staff mobile phone claims had indicated high compliance in that area; work was being undertaken to better capture MPs' and MPs' staff satisfaction rates in relation to IPSA-run events; and though aged debt remained above target, this had decreased. The KPI dashboard had been updated to provide clarity on the 'best in class' metrics against which IPSA measured itself in relation to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- 10.3 The Chief of Staff presented an update on the Transformation Programme. It was highlighted that IPSA was near to completing the process of taking on its first constituency office lease on behalf of an MP. The intention remained for IPSA to become the office leaseholder for ten MPs by the end of the financial year, with efforts underway to reduce the cost and time taken in the process. It was confirmed that hotel booking functionality had been added to the Travel Office booking system that day with an announcement in the MP newsletter scheduled for the following day. Finally, the procurement exercise in aid of establishing a centralised broadband service for MPs would be launched by the end of December, with supplier proposals assessed toward the end of January.

10.4 The Head of Standards and Transparency presented a review of pooled staffing services guidance, noting confidence that the new approach was aligning with principles-based regulation. The efficacy of the new approach would be further tested in the new year when pooled services were required to provide IPSA with their annual declaration, which would include accounting information and quality assured content. The Board asked that the risk of party political activity is considered when interacting with pooled services in the annual declaration process.

11. Board Programme of Work

11.1 The Board approved the appointments of Lea Paterson as IPSA's new Senior Independent Director, Dame Laura Cox as the new Chair of the People Committee, and Cliff Rana as the new Chair of the Audit, Risk, and Assurance Committee. The Chair confirmed that changes to committee memberships would be discussed and agreed in the new year.

11.2 The Board noted a review of the Board management software platform which confirmed the renewal of the contract for a further year.

11.3 The Board thanked Will Lifford, Helen Jones, and Andrea Spataro for their great public service on IPSA's Board, as their terms and Boardroom Apprenticeship placement would conclude at the end of 2025.

Annex One

In attendance: Karen Walker, Chief Executive
Lee Bridges, Director, Standards and Information
Thomas Fitch, Director, Finance and Commercial
Karen Lacey, Director, MP Services
Chief of Staff
Head of Standards and Transparency
Remuneration Policy Specialist (Items 1 to 3)
Standards Officer (Item 4)
Matt Walker, Compliance Officer (Item 8)