

January 5th IPSA Launches Review of the Scheme

05 January 2011

Today IPSA is issuing an open invitation asking for views on the rules governing MPs' expenses.

Following the general election in May last year, IPSA, the new independent regulator created in the wake of the expenses scandal, introduced a fresh approach with greater scrutiny.

For centuries, MPs and the House of Commons decided the rules for themselves. IPSA brought an end to self-regulation and intends to continue giving the public a say about what the rules should be. For the next six weeks, we are asking people to come forward and offer their views about the rules for MPs' claiming expenses.

Following preliminary discussions with the political parties and MPs, we have found that issues of concern to MPs include the impact of the rules on their family life, the definition of the 'London Area' and the budget for renting a constituency office.

To inform this consultation, we also conducted a poll of the public. The results show that 30 per cent of respondents trust MPs to claim only for legitimate expenses. A further 35 per cent said they had some trust, but not very much.

This suggests that some progress is being made but there is still a long way to go.

On specific issues, like family accommodation and office costs, the survey shows that a majority of the public is reluctant to see more generous funding at this stage. Likewise there are still strong views on the use of taxis and first class travel.

We will consider these findings and other feedback in the consultation but also invite all interested people – MPs, their staff and the public – to comment on any other aspect of the rules.

Speaking on the launch of the consultation, IPSA's chairman, Sir Ian Kennedy, said:

"IPSA was created by Parliament to bring an end to the old, discredited expenses system and has introduced an integrity and probity to MPs' expenses. Our new approach is working, but I know it is not perfect. We have learned many lessons in the eight months that we have been regulating MPs' expenses and have taken them on board and acted where appropriate. But, of course, some still

have concerns. We want to hear these concerns and the evidence which lies behind them. We want to hear not only from MPs but from taxpayers around the country. After all, it is the taxpayer who pays the expenses.

“Our commitment to giving the public a say on the rules is an historic shift from the practices of the past. I’m proud that IPSA is making its contribution to the process of restoring confidence in our democratic institutions.”

IPSA will review the rules annually, to make sure they are appropriate and keep pace with the challenges facing MPs and Parliament.

ENDS

Notes to editor

1. The consultation document and results of the public poll can all be found on the Annual Review page

2. Since May 2010, IPSA has:

- Validated more than 65,000 claims from 636 MPs
- Paid out more than £9m in expenses
- After validation, not reimbursed 2,000 claims with a collective value of £144,000
- Handled more than 23,000 calls from MPs and their staff

- Dealt with 20,000 emails from MPs and their staff
- Provided one on one training for 240 MPs
- Provided training for 1,100 MPs' staff

3. For further information, call Mark Anderson on 020 7811 6488 or 07792 242736.

www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk