

Press Releases September 2010

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IPSA has today announced that it will be launching the first annual review of the new rules governing MPs' expenses in October and is calling for comments from the public and MPs on the new rules which were introduced to help restore faith in Parliament following the expenses scandal.

The new rules were unveiled earlier this year to cross-party support and came into force following the general election in May. IPSA is committed to reviewing the rules each year and is now inviting comments on the rules and their effects on MPs.

The review will invite comments from a broad range of interested parties, in addition to those IPSA is by statute obliged to consult, and will also include a public consultation. The review will examine the problems that IPSA was created by Parliament to address, the extent to which IPSA has addressed these, and any changes to the rules which may be needed. Anyone wishing to contribute to the review should email IPSA on: schemeconsultation@parliamentarystandards.org.uk

Commenting on the launch of the review, Sir Ian Kennedy, IPSA chair, said:

"It is important that the scheme that IPSA operates should reflect the views of the public, the needs of MPs and the importance of efficiency and cost effectiveness. IPSA needs to examine on a regular basis the extent to which it is meeting these objectives. The review will provide invaluable information on which to build the next phase of our operation."

Alongside this review, IPSA has today also confirmed that it will introduce three simplifications to the way in which it administers the current rules. Neither the rules themselves nor the principles behind them are affected by this.

First, IPSA will make payments to MPs' landlords for the rental charges on constituency offices and rented properties. All such payments will be subject to IPSA's agreeing the terms of the contracts in advance.

Second, IPSA will extend the use of MPs' travelcards to allow them to be used as a credit card for council tax bills and utility bills. To ensure the appropriate use of this facility, IPSA will verify all payments made using the credit card and will require prompt and complete matching of credit card

bills with receipts and supporting evidence. IPSA will closely monitor spending on the credit cards and will reclaim any expenditure made which is not allowed under the rules.

The third simplification will be to expand the system of payment on presentation of an invoice to allow all claims within the rules with a value of over £200 to be paid on submission of an invoice. All such claims will be subject to verification by IPSA, and will require the submission of supporting evidence and receipts within one month of the claim being made.

These changes will be introduced in November and will be implemented within IPSA's current budget.

All expense claims made will be published on IPSA's website.

Commenting on the service changes, Andrew McDonald, IPSA's interim chief executive, said:

"Following the creation of IPSA last year, we have had to work with great speed to set the rules and establish robust means to implement them. It has not been easy or straightforward, but we are meeting that challenge. In doing so, we have learned a great deal along the way. We want to use that experience to make the process easier for MPs and to deliver efficiency savings for the taxpayer, while maintaining the scrutiny of MPs' expenses which was called for by the public.

"The three steps we've taken to simplify the process represent a sensible, pragmatic evolution of the way we administer MPs' expenses."

Since the new rules were introduced following the general election, IPSA has handled 24,000 claims and paid out more than £3.3 million in expenses claims. IPSA has also paid out more than £1.2 million in advances and loans to MPs.

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For more information contact the IPSA press office on 020 7811 6488