

3. Chief Executive's oral report

3.1. The Chief Executive gave an oral update on the various projects underway. He advised the Board on the Office of Government Commerce Gateway Review that had recently taken place. He further advised:

- that the Speaker's Committee would hold a public hearing in March on IPSA's budget for 2010/11;
- that some 30 members of staff from the House of Commons would be transferring to IPSA; and
- that IPSA had secured office space in Portland House

3.2. Board members agreed that they would welcome an early opportunity to meet new members on the IPSA staff.

4. Expenses scheme: early decisions

4.1. The Board considered a paper on a number of aspects of the new expenses system requiring some early decisions on the direction of travel.

- On IPSA's approach to MPs' responsibilities as employers the Board observed that on the first day of the new system MPs and their staff should have a paper from IPSA setting out the minimum standards expected from MPs in relation to their staff, providing details of who staff and MPs should go to for advice; clarifying it is not IPSA's role to do so; and setting out the consequences for MPs of non-compliance. This paper would be developed into good practice guidance in due course.
- On IPSA's approach to pooled staffing resources for MPs, the Board agreed that IPSA allows the continuation of such shared or pooled services, and works with service providers, where necessary, to ensure the operational requirements are met. Such a resource would be subject to the same set of rules and audit requirements as MPs' other staff members. However, IPSA would not offer payroll services for such a resource
- On arrangements with recruitment agencies to find a temporary pool of support staff for a time-limited period after the general election, the Board agreed not to pursue this any further and observed that this issue would be avoided, should a transition period be used to bring new employment requirements into force.
- On payments to MPs and staff with disabilities, the Board agreed that this would be a subject it would need to review in due course, but that the central position would be that MPs and their staff with disabilities should seek to draw on the Access to Work fund in the first instance. Should the fund not meet their needs, IPSA would reconsider its position.
- On the provision of various insurance policies for MPs, the Board agreed that IPSA only funds (through re-imbusement or provision of a service) insurance cover which it feels is necessary for an MP effectively to perform their Parliamentary duties, and is not already provided by the House. The Board

requested advice on who might be liable should an MP have an accident in office space, the costs of which were reimbursed by IPSA.

4.2. The Board also agreed a paper on a proposed procedure for reviewing claims, on the following basis:

- that MPs should be given 14 days to appeal a decision and that appeals are considered expeditiously;
- that the focus should be on making the right initial decision;
- that the Chief Executive should present a periodic report to the Board on the numbers and kinds of appeals; and
- that the Board was satisfied of the internal review procedures, with appeals being considered by staff of an appropriate level of seniority.

5. Provision of advice to MPs

5.1. The Board considered a paper on how to deal with queries from MPs and the provision of advice more generally. The Board agreed the recommendations on the following basis:

- that the vast majority of queries will be pre-empted by extensive published guidance and the nature of the expenses scheme web interface;
- that all queries be directed through an advice unit (e.g. queries helpline);
- that general queries are resolved in writing, or by phone and subsequently confirmed by email;
- that more specific queries are dealt with exclusively in writing;
- that IPSA staff will receive very clear training to ensure they can distinguish specific queries from general ones; and
- that IPSA would not be able to handle third party queries.

5.2. The Board further noted that there was a significant wider question about payments to third parties, with many MPs expressing concern at IPSA's proposal not to continue to make such direct payments.

6. Communications

6.1. Ed Owen provided the Board with a presentation on external communications for the months ahead. The Board noted the presentation and agreed to reconvene at a later date to discuss further, due to time pressures.

7. Any other business

7.1. The Board agreed it would hold regular Monday morning phone conferences for the next few months.

The meeting was closed.