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I attended the staff meeting today (8<sup>th</sup> February 2010) so would just like to submit again my concerns about IPSA's proposals regarding the idea of transferring the present arrangements (in place since 2001) for staff pensions to be paid by the Fees Office to transfer to MP's budgets.

This seems a highly retrograde step that diminishes accountability and transparency. As the public concern has been about MP's dodgy management of expenses now seems entirely the wrong time to transfer another chunk of money to the hands of MPs who then have the responsibility of getting staff to join the scheme. As history has proved MP's in some cases have not encouraged the use of money for this purpose rather that they have pocketed it themselves and I was unconvinced that you felt there would be mechanisms to protect this money within each office budget.

Also you were very unclear as to where this proposal came from? Who suggested it? Why if it had never been mentioned in the 3 previous reports on expenses is it now in a very shortened amount of consultation time appropriate to raise it as an item of concern? There are absolutely no stories about the concerns over staff pensions in any other report it seems – in fact the protecting and ring fencing of MPs own pensions funds is perhaps an issue more pertinent to question.

At the meeting I didn't want to raise the issue of MP's spouses working for them – as there were a lot of other comments about this from MP's spouses themselves however I would like to add that in each case MP's spouses as I feel should other employees of MP's be interviewed as to their suitability and qualifications/experience for the job and that regular audits of MP's staff and spouses be made in Westminster and in constituencies to ensure they are doing the job for which they are being paid out of tax payers money. This should run parallel with an insistence that MPs at least once a year sit down to do an appraisal with each member of staff and that a written appraisal be filed in the documentation alongside a proper contract and terms of work for each employee. Perhaps if these things had been in place before the situation with Mr Conway would have been picked up earlier or avoided. Those that are doing a proper job need have no fear should they.

Lastly – not sure this is within the remit of IPSA but interns were mentioned.

Does the Committee feel it is right or appropriate that ex MPs should after deciding to stand down or perhaps not be re – elected that they return to work as MP's researchers? I put the case of Anthony Steen MP for Totnes who in last weeks Parliamentary HOUSE magazine openly stated he was 'unhappy to lose his power over the witchhunt over his expenses but that he'd been offered a job working as an MP's researcher'. He then also undermined the arguments (made again at the staff meeting with IPSA about expenses/minimum wage for interns) about only rich people being able to do internships by saying 'of course I won't claim any expenses as an intern' Lucky him he can afford it but will still then have an authorised pass, access to all areas. Surely this needs to be queried?

