

COPE 66

Please find below a brief response to the IPSA consultation on MPs' Expenses:

Dear Sir Ian,

I welcome your consultation as an opportunity for the House to modernise its practices in relation to the employment of MPs' staff. I would hope that employees are not to be seen as easy targets in an attempt to cut the budget. This would not restore public confidence in the system.

I wish to draw your attention to two key matters. There are many important issues raised in your document but no doubt others will comment on them.

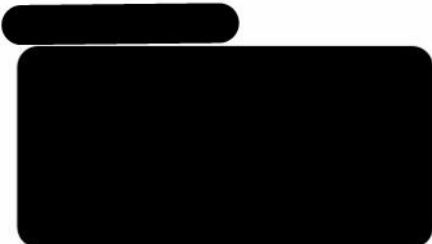
Firstly, I wish to object to your proposals on the pension scheme for MPs' staff. From your document, it is unclear why you recommend that the existing arrangement of employer contributions to the staff Portcullis Pension Plan coming from central House resources should be changed to coming out of individual MP's staffing budgets. I can see no justification in your document for this proposed change. You do not indicate that staff budgets should be increased accordingly. This, therefore, amounts to a 10% cut in staff budgets. I do not understand why you do not raise staff pensions as a point for discussion or as a question in the consultation but instead simply make as an assertion towards the end of your document.

When my employment started, there was no Members' staff pension scheme. It was instigated after a long campaign by the staff union. This was a huge step forward in modernising employment practices in the House. What you propose by assertion is a retrograde step. I would strongly oppose such a recommendation and urge that the House retains its position making the employer contributions.

Secondly, I would urge you to face the question of trade union recognition. The House's failure to recognise the staff trade union is an affront to modern employer/employee relations. It leaves the House in a position that is archaic. Trade union recognition might be a way for the House to indicate it is willing to at least move in to the last century. It is disappointing that you fail to address this issue.

I would urge you to take this opportunity to modernise the employment practices used by the House.

Yours sincerely,

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