

Andrew McDonald  
Interim Chief Executive  
Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor Portland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5BH

28 May 2010

Dear Mr McDonald,

Please find attached a letter signed by over 100 Members of Parliament from all parties asking for stronger assurances from the IPSA that staff of returned MPs, whose existing contractual agreements mean they will exceed the staffing budget limit you have set, will not have to suffer a pay cut or redundancy because of the new expenses scheme.

We are aware of your recent communication with MPs in which you say you will 'set out a course of action to support the MPs and staff who may be affected' if MPs have been unable to reduce costs to their staffing budget before November. We believe it is unacceptable for staff to have to wait until November to know if their employment will continue and the ambiguous wording of the statement does not make it clear if additional funding will be made available to affected MPs.

The House authorities have told us that approximately 175 MPs will find themselves in this situation and therefore a permanent solution needs to be found sooner rather than later. We believe the IPSA are relying too heavily on the possibility that MPs' staff will voluntarily move to another job or request to work fewer hours to reduce the shortfall in the staffing budget. We are concerned that telling MPs to 'take all reasonable steps to attempt to reduce costs' means staff will have to take a pay cut or be made redundant, as it is difficult to see how else savings could be made when in practice the majority of MPs use this budget solely to pay staff salaries and associated costs.

IPSA's Operations Director has now met the Chair and Secretary of the Unite Parliamentary Staff branch to discuss this and other issues affecting staff. This is a very welcome development and we are pleased that the IPSA is recognising the need to improve consultation with staff of MPs. However we were disappointed to see in your recent bulletin to MPs that despite reviewing and changing aspects of the new expenses scheme that are not working for MPs, the same principle has not been applied to aspects of the scheme that are detrimental to their staff. We urge you to review and modify the scheme so that staff of MPs are not unfairly penalised.

Yours sincerely,

**Unite Parliamentary Staff Branch**

Louise Haigh, Secretary

Max Freedman, Chair

Lauren Edwards, Political Officer

Gareth Myton, Treasurer

**The Members and Peers Staff Association**

Gill Cheeseman, President

Sian Norris-Copson, Chair

Jane Davies, Vice Chair (Labour)

Julie Spencer, Executive Member

**Liberal Democrat Staff Committee**

Celia Hall, Chair

Enc: Letter from over 100 MPs about staffing budget cuts

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Dear Mr McDonald,

We write expressing our strong concern over the changes that have been made to staffing allowances in the new Parliament by the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA).

The decision to take MPs' employer contributions towards the pensions of their staff members from the staffing budgets instead of a central budget has resulted in a significant cut. The limit for the staffing budget has not been raised to a sufficient level to cover this and other new costs that have been transferred to it. We believe our staff should not have their employment conditions reduced as a result of this change and that the cut will be harmful to the work that we are required to undertake for our constituents.

Many MPs utilise the majority, if not all, of their staffing budget in order to deal with their case workload and to support them in their Parliamentary duties. Many re-elected MPs have existing contractual agreements with staff that will mean they will exceed the limit for the staffing budget that has been set by the IPSA. We understand that you have instructed MPs who may be affected to monitor the situation and report back to you by November when you will 'set out a course of action to support the MPs and the staff who may be affected.' In the meantime MPs are expected to 'take all reasonable steps to attempt to reduce costs'.

We are concerned that many MPs will be forced to make members of their staff redundant or cut their salary before November and we therefore seek a stronger assurance from IPSA that existing staff contracts will be protected. We are concerned about the impact the cut could have on the quality of the service constituents receive from MPs' offices. We are also concerned about the legal implications of any 'difficult decisions' MPs may be forced to make because of the reduced staffing budget.

**We urge you to confirm that under no circumstances will staff of MPs be forced to take a pay cut or be made redundant if their existing contractual arrangements exceed the reduced staffing budget. We urge you to raise the staffing budget to a level that allows MPs to employ**

**experienced staff and continue to offer their constituents a good level of service.**

We also urge you to recognise representatives of the three staff bodies in Parliament – the Unite Parliamentary Staff Branch, the Members and Peers Staff Association and the Liberal Democrat Staff Committee – as appropriate persons you must consult under the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009 and agree to meet with them to discuss a more adequate solution to this problem.

We await your reply with the urgency that this issue deserves.

Yours sincerely,

*<List of 100 supportive MPs from all parties>*