



House of Commons
Administration Committee

**Election planning and
services: Responses
to the Committee's
First Report of Session
2016–17**

First Special Report of Session 2017–19

*Ordered by the House of Commons to be
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The Administration Committee

The Administration Committee is appointed to consider the services provided for and by the House of Commons. This includes services provided to the public by Parliament, including visitor facilities, the Parliament website and education services.

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Powers

The powers of the Committee are set out in House of Commons SO No 139. Standing Orders are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/ac and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Sarah Heath (Clerk) and Sean Harris (Senior Committee Assistant).

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First Special Report

The Administration Committee published its First Report of Session 2016–17 on [Election planning and services](#) [HC 588] on 20 March 2017. The report related to the 2015 General Election.

The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) response was received on 18 January 2018 and the joint response from the House of Commons Commission and Members Estimates Committee was received on the 22 January 2018. Both are appended to this report.

Appendix 1: Response from the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA)

Letter from Vicky Fox, Director of MP Support Services, IPSA

I write with IPSA's response to your Committee's report of 13 March 2017 on Election planning and services. We welcome the Committee's report and are pleased that you have recognised the improvements in the support that IPSA provides to new and returning MPs.

The majority of your report's recommendations were quickly incorporated into our plans for a subsequent General Election, such that we were able to benefit from them in advance of the June 2017 election. In addition to the Committee's recommendations, we also incorporated the lessons we had ourselves learned following the election of May 2015, which we published in April 2016.

I append a detailed response to the Committee's recommendations. Overall, they prompted improvements in three main areas.

First, we learned in 2015 that new MPs needed individualised support beyond their first two months in Parliament. Many needed refresher training on IPSA's systems and rules in the autumn of 2015 after the summer recess; others had taken on new staff who needed training for the first time. As a result, in 2017 we ran refresher training for all new MPs from September as well as in June and July. We also expanded the Returning Members' Area which we established in 2015 and communicated it more effectively. And we held meetings with departing and new MPs over the weekend immediately following the Election, as there had been demand for this in 2015.

Second, we produced more guidance for MPs that covered a wider range of areas, particularly relating to the rules that applied during Dissolution. We worked closely with the House on the guidance.

And third, we made substantial changes to our rules in advance of the 2017 election. You may remember that we conducted a comprehensive consultation on our Scheme in 2016, and brought in new rules in April 2017. These included greater flexibility for MPs to claim for capital costs during dissolution, greater discretion for MPs to claim for journeys for

their staff and family members, and the option of receiving an advance on their final loss-of-office payments. These changes enabled us to provide more effective support to MPs both before and after the election.

18 January 2018

Detailed response

Recommendation 4: The General Election Planning Group (GEPG) should lead on the production of communications on dissolution arrangements aimed at Members' constituency case workers before the next election period. The GEPG should work with the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority and staff representative groups to ensure clear and consistent guidance is provided on permissible activities during the dissolution period, and on steps to take in the event of a Member not being returned.

We welcome feedback on our guidance and updated our dissolution guidance in response to both the Committee's, MPs' and MPs' staff feedback. For example, we committed to anticipating more comprehensively the questions that might come up during dissolution, and improving our communication of the dissolution guidance. Notwithstanding the limited time available in advance of the June 2017 election, we worked with the House to produce improved guidance. We have already completed a review of the guidance issued in May 2017, and we will keep it under review to ensure we are ready for any future unplanned elections. Those who mentioned the guidance, in interviews conducted with MPs and staff after the 2017 election, said it arrived in good time and covered all the areas they needed it to. Feedback from MPs' staff at our MPs' staff user group was also positive about the dissolution guidance.

We will also conduct a thorough pre-Election review of all areas of policy as part of our work to prepare for the next planned Election. In doing so we will draw on our experience in 2015 and 2017 and involve a wide range of stakeholders. We will also test our dissolution guidance with both MPs and their staff in advance.

Recommendation 7: The General Election Planning Group should consider further reducing the information provided to new Members on election night to just the key information needed in the days between election and arrival at Westminster. An eye-catching cover note highlighting the most essential and time-critical information (for example, on contacting the House, travel and accommodation, and what to bring for the first week) would help communicate key points more reliably.

For the 2017 General Election, we provided one letter together with a checklist, for new MPs to be given to them on election night. We also reduced the number of documents we passed to new MPs at the New Members Reception Area, and carried out rehearsals with our staff to establish how we could communicate the key information in the shortest and most effective way. We are now working with the House to consider how to reduce the information further and to make it available in a number of different formats, such as online and in videos.

Recommendation 17: We think that the House Service should consider running a drop-in area, in conjunction with the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority,

for returning Members and their staff a few weeks after the next election to refresh memories about House services and procedures and to inform them of any changes that may affect them in the new parliament.

IPSA expanded and improved the Returning Members Area for the June 2017 General Election and communicated it more effectively through our regular Bulletin and House communication channels. We met with 173 MPs and their staff between 13 – 23 June. We remain committed to supporting re-elected MPs early on in the process at future elections, and are grateful for the support of the House in providing accommodation and support for this service.

Recommendation 31: The General Election Planning Group should work with IPSA, party representatives, and staff groups to create a simple guide to setting up a constituency office which could be included in the New Members’ Guidebook, online, and in welcome e-mails to Members’ staff when their accounts are activated (or reactivated).

We will be happy to contribute to this work, in line with our remit to provide financial support to MPs for their business costs and expenses. For the 2017 Election, we reviewed our “Quick Guide” in this area, but we recognise there is scope to take a more joined-up approach and do more for a planned election. IPSA and House service staff are currently planning this work.

Recommendation 32: In the interest of transparency IPSA should publish regularly clear guidance on how its Office Costs Expenditure budgets are currently calculated and benchmarked.

Although not directly related to General Election planning, IPSA is happy to provide some further clarity on this question.

The Office Costs budget was calculated in 2011–12 by merging the two separate Constituency office rental expenses (CORE) and General Admin Expenditure (GAE) budgets. CORE and GAE were based on data of expenditure incurred by MPs which was provided to IPSA by the House of Commons. There are two budget limits: one for London Area MPs and one for non-London Area MPs.

Since then, the Office Costs budgets have been updated with inflation. For 2017–18 the budgets increased by 1.6%, which was the December 2016 figure for CPI inflation.

IPSA keeps the Office Cost budget and all other annual budgets for MPs under continual review; IPSA’s Board is soon considering whether any adjustments to MPs’ budgets are needed for the 2018–19 financial year. We present the IPSA budget annually to the Speaker’s Committee for IPSA for its approval and this includes all the budgets for MPs.

Recommendation 33: If it has not done so as part of its review, IPSA should reconsider how Office Costs Expenditure (OCE) budgets, which cover renting a constituency office, are calculated to ensure that it is possible for all Members to have staff based in their constituencies.

MPs work in a variety of ways and make choices about how best to deploy their staff. IPSA’s approach to supporting and regulating MPs’ business costs and expenses is designed to take account of this.

IPSA consulted between 11 May and 24 October 2016 on possible changes to the Scheme. Whilst not the focus of the review, we included a question in the consultation about the level of MPs' budgets and invited comments on whether they should be adjusted. A small number of respondents made comments about the level of the Office Costs budget. One respondent, for example, said that IPSA should increase the budget in order to enable MPs to cover all costs for constituency offices. There were also some comments relating to the forthcoming constituency boundary changes, and respondents encouraged IPSA to take these changes into account when setting rules and budgets.

In making our decision on the level of the office costs budget for 2017–18, IPSA reviewed MPs' expenditure against the budget in previous years. On average, MPs used 79% of their OCE budget in 2015–16. Just 10 MPs overspent their budget, and a further 130 MPs came within 10% of their limit. We also looked at factors such as office rental costs, utility costs and business rates (including forthcoming revaluations), as part of the review.

IPSA is currently carrying out a policy review specifically on constituency offices premises, to gather more information about rental prices, and the type and quality of office premises. Once complete, this will enable us to review the level of funding provided to MPs to rent and equip their constituency offices.

IPSA also recognises concerns about the impact that constituency boundary changes may have. We plan to hold a consultation on any impact of changes to the Scheme or to MPs' budget levels once the Boundary Commissions have reported to Parliament.

Recommendation 42: We encourage the Parliamentary Digital Service and IPSA to explore options for allowing Members to use all of their ICT equipment budgets available through IPSA and the House, where they have sufficient funds for the required equipment across both budgets.

IPSA's feedback survey showed there is still some confusion over roles and responsibilities in this area which can result in some budgets being underspent or MPs not getting all the equipment they need. IPSA is happy to work with the Parliamentary Digital Services to ensure that MPs can make full use of their budgets in support of their parliamentary role.

Recommendation 52: Issues with unclear dissolution guidance, poor timing of training for new staff, and late payment of resettlement grants could have been avoided through better prior engagement with Members and their staff. IPSA should work with the General Election Planning Group and the parties on engagement with Members and staff on dissolution guidance, timing of briefings for Members and dedicated contacts for Members.

IPSA engaged widely in the run up to the 2015 election and received positive feedback for both our engagement and the support we offered to MPs. We worked closely with the House's General Election Planning Group in the run up to the 2017 General Election on the dissolution guidance and timing of events. Although there was only a short period of time before the election, we engaged as much as possible with MPs and their staff, and received positive feedback on the support we offered. We provided intensive training to IPSA staff in the run up to the election and have received positive feedback from new and departing MPs for the advice and support we gave.

In our feedback survey with departing MPs, the dissolution guidance was well received and praised for its clarity and arrived in good time. MPs spoke positively about the help and support they received from IPSA.

We offered all new MPs training immediately after the General Election and we offered refresher training from September for them and their staff.

We always look for ways to improve the service we offer and we will continue to work with the House General Election Planning Group and other key stakeholders, as we did for the 2015 and 2017 elections, to provide good quality support and training for MPs and new staff and to make improvements wherever we can.

Our responses to other recommendations in the report deal with dedicated contacts and resettlement grants.

Recommendation 53: The introduction of named IPSA contacts for new Members should be repeated at the next election with the heightened service remaining in place at least until the end of the conference recess. Improved training of IPSA's permanent staff is also needed to ensure that the quality and consistency of advice does not subsequently tail off.

IPSA welcomes the positive feedback in this area. Based on the experience of having named IPSA contacts for new MPs at the 2015 General Election, we introduced a permanent 'account manager' model which we continue to use. Each MP has one or more named contacts within the IPSA MP Support Services team and the Payroll team, so that queries and issues can be responded to in the most efficient way and with continuity of service for the MP. This system of account management remained in place for the 2017 General Election with dedicated account managers for departing and new MPs. Returning MPs kept the same account managers they had prior to the election. We did not recruit temporary staff for the 2017 election, and MPs had continuity of service from their account managers throughout the election and afterwards. In the run up to the 2017 election, we provided extensive training to all account managers and payroll staff.

Recommendation 54: We repeat our recommendation from 2013 that IPSA establish a dedicated enquiries line for new Members following the next election for at least three months.

For the 2015 Election, IPSA allocated each new MP a named election contact with a direct telephone number and email address. New MPs were also able to call the dedicated enquiries line (which had extended opening hours for a month after the Election, an arrangement which we repeated for the 2017 Election). We operate an enquiries line (for all MPs) available every Monday to Friday from 10am to 5pm. For the 2017 General Election, we offered extended hours of 9am – 6pm for four weeks from 9 June. We continue to offer our enquiries line and email advice service.

Recommendation 55: We recommend that IPSA writes to this Committee in relation to its final decision on payment of resettlement grants to defeated Members following the next election, explaining how it will ensure they are not left considerably out of pocket for a prolonged period.

This issue was explored through our comprehensive consultation on the rules of our Scheme in 2016. IPSA received feedback from MPs following the last election that, because they were no longer receiving a salary, they needed their resettlement payment while they concluded their parliamentary affairs and wound up their offices. Some MPs also queried why outstanding debts could not be subtracted from the resettlement payment in order to conclude their financial affairs with IPSA more quickly.

As part of the consultation, IPSA asked for views on whether to make changes to the timing of the loss-of-office payments made to MPs. We received a number of comments from groups of and individual MPs who supported a change to the timing of loss-of-office payments, expressing concern that some MPs after the 2015 General Election experienced financial hardship due to the lack of income. A few respondents suggested that a portion of the loss-of-office payment could be made upfront and then the rest after the MP had concluded their financial affairs. These respondents were also generally in favour of a more pragmatic solution to the recovery of outstanding debts during this period.

We decided, in light of these consultation responses and our own review of how resettlement payments operated in 2015, to change our approach for future elections. MPs who lose their seats at an election are now able to request the remainder of the month's salary from the date of the Election which will be deducted from their loss-of-office payment. For the 2017 General Election, this allowed former MPs to request an amount equivalent to the rest of their June salary. The remainder of the payment was made once they had concluded the winding up process. MPs are also able to request that any outstanding debts are subtracted from their loss-of-office payment (or the remaining amount). We believe these changes helped MPs to wind up their affairs more efficiently and reduced their financial difficulty during this period.

Because of the unexpected nature of the 2017 election, many MPs who lost their seats had not completed the number of years' service they had expected to and therefore the loss-of-office payments were lower than they might have anticipated. As part of our statutory review of MPs' remuneration in 2018, IPSA will consider whether any further changes to the level or the arrangements relating to loss-of-office payments are necessary, in order to ensure that former MPs are adequately supported while they close down their financial affairs.

Recommendation 59: A study by the House Service on the feasibility of creating a pool of staff to provide Members with administrative support in the weeks following the next Election would be welcome. These staff should ideally be experienced as they would need to get Members' offices up and running quickly. Therefore, the General Election Planning Group should work with the parties and IPSA to explore creating a list of experienced Members' staff who could (in the event that their Members are defeated or stand down) provide administrative assistance for new Members on short-term contracts. This would provide new Members with access to experienced staff without the pressure of making long-term recruitment decisions hastily.

We are aware from feedback from departing MPs that some struggled to wind up their parliamentary business quickly because of a lack of administrative support once their permanent staff left their employment. There is also anecdotal evidence that new MPs struggle to set up their Parliamentary offices and absorb the extent of the information they are faced with on the business management and expenses processes alongside their

new role. IPSA is happy to work with the House in any areas within our remit that will improve MPs' experience after the General Election and welcome further discussion of this proposal

Appendix 2: Joint response from the House of Commons Commission and Members Estimates Committee

Letter from Sarah Davies, Chair and Senior Responsible Owner, General Election Planning Group

Purpose and summary

1. The General Election Planning Group (GEPG) presented its summary of the services provided by the House relating to the 2017 general election (and lessons learned) to the Administration Committee in November.
2. The House's response to the Committee's Report, Election planning and services, which was published in March 2017, was presented to the Commission in December 2017 and was approved. We are pleased to report that many of the recommendations were able to be incorporated in the plans for the 2017 election, despite the short timescale.
3. Detailed responses to the recommendations are included below and in Annex A.

Further evaluation

4. The Committee agreed at its meeting in November to support proposed evaluation work with Members elected in 2017. A plan for this is now in place. The House's Evaluation and Insight Team will carry out face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of around 30% of new Members (up to 30 interviews) with fieldwork carried out in February and March. The interview will cover both new Members' experience of the induction period and their experience since then of House services. A top-line report, and then a final report, will follow. The team plan to hold interviews with returned Members later in the financial year.

Next steps

5. Work on addressing the outstanding recommendations is underway and we expect this to complete in the coming months. As part of our ongoing engagement with the Committee we intend to report the progress achieved and options for consideration by July 2018.

22 January 2018

Detailed response

The Commission/ Members Estimates Committee (MEC) is grateful to the Administration Committee for its work on induction for new Members, including its series of suggestions about continuing to improve the experience of Members arriving for the first time. The election called in 2017 provided an opportunity for many of these recommendations to be implemented immediately, and we list these in the table appended to this response. We set out in the narrative below our response to those recommendations which were either not possible to implement in the time available, or which were only partially implemented.

Recommendations which it was not possible to incorporate into the 2017 General Election offering

Mainly as a result of the short planning window it was not possible to incorporate the following recommendations into the 2017 offering. Specific responses in terms of next steps are included in each case:

23. We support plans to build better digital tools (such as apps) and online resources which Members can access as needed to complement the New Members' Reception Area. As well as providing information on services, the tools should help new Members to orientate themselves on the Parliamentary Estate. (Paragraph 48)

25. We encourage the General Election Planning Group to work closely with the Parliamentary Digital Service to develop apps and accessible online resources to supplement the induction session on procedure and one-to-one training as this would help new Members balance the demands on their time in the first few weeks and start to develop a basic understanding of Parliamentary procedure. (Paragraph 50)

These recommendations were noted and were reflected in the lessons learnt arising from the 2017 General Election. It has been agreed that preparatory work will start in early 2018 to ensure the capability exists to develop digital tools for the next General Election. The customer service team will work closely with PDS and Members to ensure digital tools are created in response to specific needs identified.

35. We recommend that the Parliamentary Digital Service updates the Committee with options for the range of devices which should be offered in the equipment catalogue at the next election, bearing in mind the requirement for hardware to be more compatible with Parliamentary systems and software. (Paragraph 65)

36. We would welcome an update during the current Parliament from the Parliamentary Digital Service on whether there is significant evidence to support need for the introduction of a mid-Parliament refresh of Members' IT equipment. (Paragraph 66)

38. The Parliamentary Digital Service should have a target for completing the refresh of exiting Members' ICT equipment of the end of the summer recess following the next election (assuming a May election). (Paragraph 69)

These recommendations were noted and will be taken forward by PDS as part of their planned engagement with the Administration Committee in the next year.

58. The House Service should explore, with staff groups including the Members' and Peers' Staff Association (MAPSA), the possibility of facilitating a voluntary Members' staff buddying scheme, through which experienced staff could advise new Members (of the same party) and their staff on recruitment, setting up an office, etc. (Paragraph 97)

The recommendation was considered. While the House Service is happy to provide support in the administration of such a scheme, the process is more likely to be successful in the event of it being run by the respective parties.

59. A study by the House Service on the feasibility of creating a pool of staff to provide Members with administrative support in the weeks following the next election would be welcome. These staff should ideally be experienced as they would need to get Members' offices up and running quickly. Therefore, the General Election Planning Group should work with the parties and IPSA to explore creating a list of experienced Members' staff who could (in the event that their Members are defeated or stand down) provide administrative assistance for new Members on short-term contracts. This would provide new Members with access to experienced staff without the pressure of making long-term recruitment decisions hastily. (Paragraph 98)

The recommendation was noted. There is support within the House Service for providing additional help to Members to allow them access to experienced staff immediately after a General Election, and additional merit in enabling Parliament to retain people who have been invested in through our training and other Members' staff offerings. There are, however, a number of practical issues to consider. Corporate Services therefore agrees to conduct a feasibility study during 2018 which will be presented to the Administration Committee.

Recommendations which were partially incorporated into the 2017 General Election offering

Mainly as a result of the short planning window it was not possible to fully incorporate these recommendations into the 2017 offering, although some activity was possible. Specific responses in terms of next steps are included in each case:

3. We recommend that in planning for the next general election the General Election Planning Group (GEPG) adopts the same focus on customer service as in 2015, with members of this Committee, party Whips and individual Members engaged at the earliest opportunity. The GEPG and party representatives should continue to liaise closely on the timing of party and parliamentary business as well as the various other demands on Members' time immediately after the next election. (Paragraph 13)

The recommendation was largely incorporated into the 2017 planning. Due to the timescale there were limited opportunities to engage with parties and individual Members. The timescales and associated pressures also reduced the availability of staff from the parties to support planning. Engagement with those listed will be an essential element of the planning for the next election.

19. The approach of cutting down the number of induction events run in the first few weeks, involving Members directly in their production, and focusing on the key information Members needed right away, led to the vast majority of new Members attending all the events on Induction Day. This approach should be repeated next time. (Paragraph 41)

The recommendation was noted and incorporated into planning for 2017. Due to the nature of the election the induction programme was carried out in an exceptionally busy period. As a consequence further work is planned for early 2018 to consider the process of induction with a fixed term or snap election.

20. The General Election Planning Group should consider ways of supplementing the induction briefings with more interactive training and activities in smaller groups which could be more tailored to their audience and would allow for more Q&A opportunities. (Paragraph 43)

The recommendation was largely incorporated into the 2017 planning. Alongside the response to recommendations 19, 23 and 25 further work is planned on how we can enhance the offering through digital tools and in response to Members' needs.

22. The approach of having a simple and uniform visual identity for all induction materials provided by the House Service should be strengthened so that they are easily distinguishable. Clearly numbering the key documents (as well as using the colour-coding introduced in 2015) would also mean Members and staff could identify when they were missing documents in the sequence. (Paragraph 45)

The recommendation was largely incorporated into the 2017 planning. With expected lead times for the Election it will be possible to apply a uniform approach to all publications.

34. We recommend that the Parliamentary Digital Service develop a short guide for Members on selecting the right equipment for their offices. The guide should offer a selection of standard packages that Members can choose from, depending on the way they like to work. This guide should be promoted in the New Members' Reception Area and on the intranet. (Paragraph 64)

The recommendation was noted and a simple guide was offered, The House Service is keen to explore how Members can be supported more generally in setting up their constituency offices. A feasibility study is already underway and is expected to report back to the Administration Committee by summer 2018.

39. The Parliamentary Digital Service should consider pre-ordering some commonly requested equipment so that it can be processed and despatched immediately. Any equipment from this pool not required by new Members could be used to fulfil subsequent orders from returning Members or the House Service, thus avoiding nugatory cost. (Paragraph 70)

The recommendation was noticed and a limited amount of equipment was ordered in advance. Due to the differences in Members' requirements there is a significant risk to an extensive amount of equipment being pre-ordered. The approach will be reviewed during planning for the next election in line with the equipment catalogue at that time.

40. We support further exploration of the steps proposed by the Parliamentary Digital Service in relation to improving delivery service standards in constituencies as well as the introduction of a named contact for each Member at the next election. We believe that this will improve the way in which interrelated issues are dealt with as well as enabling Digital Service staff to build relationships with individual Members and their staff. (Paragraph 71)

The recommendation was noted and a series of constituency events were held pre and post-election. Work is underway through the customer service team to explore the most appropriate ways of providing support to constituency offices.

42. We encourage the Parliamentary Digital Service and IPSA to explore options for allowing Members to use all of their ICT equipment budgets available through IPSA and the House, where they have sufficient funds for the required equipment across both budgets. (Paragraph 74)

The recommendation was noted and discussions on this point are scheduled to take place in the near future.

45. The House Service should work with Members and their staff ahead of preparations for the next election to identify the most appropriate methods to advertise professional development opportunities to Members. As part of this, the Parliamentary Digital Service should be engaged early in the process on the inclusion of information on Parliament's intranet pages. (Paragraph 77)

The recommendation was noted and formed a significant part of work underway by the Members' Continuous Professional Development team. A new prospectus has been advertised and will continue to be reviewed.

46. The General Election Planning Group should continue to look at the activities provided by other legislatures as possible models for future professional development provision in the UK Parliament. (Paragraph 78)

48. The House Service should consider inviting external organisations to deliver development and knowledge-sharing activities on the Estate, as well as facilitating more informal knowledge sharing between more experienced and newer Members. (Paragraph 80)

These recommendations have both been noted and opportunities for exchanging knowledge in the coming years are being considered.

51. Once an induction framework for Members' staff has been agreed it should be passed to HR so that it can be applied for all Members' staff at whatever stage they are recruited. The 'Members' Staff Handbook' should also be updated to reflect the range of training available—highlighting essential training that all Members' staff should undertake. (Paragraph 85)

The House of Commons Learning and Development team had rolled out some induction arrangements for Members' staff and these are currently in the process of being reviewed. Additional resources would be required to support the development and rollout of induction training for a large number of new staff members after the next General Election. The outcome of the review and suggested next steps will be presented to the Administration Committee in Spring / Summer 2018.

56. The General Election Planning Group should consider creation of simple guides, and videos for new Members on recruiting and managing staff. These should allow Members and their staff to quickly develop a basic understanding of their role, responsibilities, and

sources of advice. These resources should be supplemented by on- demand training that recognises the differing levels of experience Members will have in directly employing and managing staff. (Paragraph 95)

The recommendation was noted and a range of materials and sessions were provided to Members after the election. The House Service is working closely with parties to understand any specific needs to be addressed. A revised offering will be in place for the next election.

57. The House Service should consider enhancing the HR advice service (either through temporary recruitment or an agency) by providing named contacts, similar to those employed by IPSA, to assist new Members until the end of the conference recess following the next general election. These temporary staff, under the guidance of the HR Advisory Service, would act as designated HR contacts to new Members, assisting with the initial process of hiring staff and providing general advice. (Paragraph 96)

The recommendation was noted and additional staff worked with the Members' HR Advice Service to provide support to new Members after the election. Further work is planned to investigate allocating a named contact to each Member. We would need to consider further how many additional resources would be appropriate and what type of support we would expect the additional advisers to provide. The proposal would involve expanding the current casework service to a generalist HR service, which brings potential risks as well as benefits.

60. We support the principle that Members continue to directly employ their staff. However, Members' staff should be able to access support on day-to-day HR matters independent of their Member, including training, occupational health, and independent advice on handling employment issues before they can escalate to full grievances. For their staff, a Member is an employer, line manager and HR department unless they choose to individually contract out these functions. This is not a fair expectation of Members, whose focus should be on their parliamentary and constituency duties, nor does it lead to staff always being provided the support and advice they need. The House Service, along with the major parties, should explore the development of a centralised HR support service for Members' staff, which could be funded jointly by the House and the parties. (Paragraph 100)

Work is already underway, overseen by the Clerk, to consider how the House could offer additional HR support to Members' staff and we note the concerns raised by the Committee in this regard. IPSA is also working on an increase in the guidance and policies that are linked to Members' staff contracts of employment and are best placed to advise how best to communicate these to Members' staff.

Appendix 3: Annex A to the joint response from the House of Commons Commission and the Members Estimates Committee

Administration Committee Inquiry: Update on recommendations	
Recommendations	Status
1. The General Election Planning Group (GEPG) should ensure that messages around cyber and physical security are clearly communicated to new as well as returning Members at the next election so that the Parliamentary Digital Service and Security Department can build on this to embed good practices throughout the next Parliament. (Paragraph 7)	Completed
2. Ensuring that office capacity is available to accommodate all new and returning Members and their staff, with as few moves and as little disruption as possible, will be important for the effectiveness of Parliament as an institution during the next several election periods. To achieve this for 2020, plans for moving existing Members out of Northern Estate buildings need to be made soon and bearing in mind the need to allow time for more routine election moves to be planned and implemented. (Paragraph 9)	Completed
3. We recommend that in planning for the next general election the General Election Planning Group (GEPG) adopts the same focus on customer service as in 2015, with members of this Committee, party Whips and individual Members engaged at the earliest opportunity. The GEPG and party representatives should continue to liaise closely on the timing of party and parliamentary business as well as the various other demands on Members' time immediately after the next election. (Paragraph 13)	Partially incorporated
4. The General Election Planning Group (GEPG) should lead on the production of communications on dissolution arrangements aimed at Members' constituency caseworkers before the next election period. The GEPG should work with the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority and staff representative groups to ensure clear and consistent guidance is provided on permissible activities during the dissolution period, and on steps to take in the event of a Member not being returned. (Paragraph 16)	Completed
5. The House Service should explore ways of allowing the parliamentary email accounts of Members standing at the next Election and their staff to remain open, liaising with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to ensure that measures are in place to avoid any advantage arising to incumbents. The House Service should also consider whether there is a need to extend the period during which Members standing down at an election, and their staff, can still access their Parliamentary email accounts to allow more time for records to be transferred or destroyed securely (Paragraph 18)	Completed

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6. The support for new and as well as returning Members has come on leaps and bounds over the last few parliaments and we would like to commend the House Service staff among others who have worked hard to bring this about. (Paragraph 20)	N/A
7. The General Election Planning Group should consider further reducing the information provided to new Members on election night to just the key information needed in the days between election and arrival at Westminster. An eye-catching cover note highlighting the most essential and time-critical information (for example, on contacting the House, travel and accommodation, and what to bring for the first week) would help communicate key points more reliably. (Paragraph 21)	Completed
8. The introduction of improved written guidance tailored for specific readers (new Members, all Members' staff, and returning Members) was a very positive development. However, these useful guides are easily lost in piles of correspondence and briefing. To extend their use they should be reissued at intervals: a few weeks, then several months after the next election. These guides should also be easily found (and in a searchable format) on the Parliamentary website. (Paragraph 23)	Completed
9. Contact Centre staff should be equipped to provide basic information to new Members who may not be familiar with London, such as tips on public transport options (contactless or Oyster cards etc.). The General Election Planning Group should also consider whether including information from Transport for London (perhaps including an Oyster card or equivalent) in the information packs handed to Members on Election Day would be beneficial. (Paragraph 26)	Completed
10. Arranging buddies into groups to share knowledge about the array of processes, rules, and facilities in the House seems to have been a useful approach and should be repeated next time. Including an ICT specialist in each group would be especially beneficial. Providing buddies with new Members' biographical information will have to enabled them to familiarise themselves quickly with the Member they were assisting and tailor the service they provided. This approach should be repeated. (Paragraph 28)	Completed
11. The response of Members to the service provided by individual members of House Staff acting as buddies in 2015 was overwhelmingly positive and we would like to thank each of them for volunteering their time to help new colleagues find their feet. (Paragraph 31)	N/A
12. The buddying programme should be repeated at the next election with enough volunteers recruited to ensure individual buddies are required to provide support to no more than two new Members. (Paragraph 32)	Completed
13. The buddying scheme should be extended to include formal assistance to new staff of Members, including those based in constituency offices. (Paragraph 33)	Completed

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14. We encourage all the parties to continue to facilitate their former or existing Members pairing with new Members of the same party to provide a source of support and advice at the next election. While House Service buddies should not be seen as a replacement for the parties facilitating their own 'political buddies' the experience of the SNP in 2015 showed the value of this new service, particularly for parties experiencing a high turnover or large influx of Members. (Paragraph 34)	N/A
15. The General Election Planning Group should consider whether contact information for government departments in relation to casework enquiries would be best provided to new Members at the New Members' Reception Area. (Paragraph 36)	Completed
16. The General Election Planning Group would need to consider how much space can be made available at the New Members' Reception Area (NMRA)—and the need to focus services on Members—but we think that the option for new Members to bring someone with them through the NMRA to help absorb information is worth exploring. (Paragraph 38)	Completed
17. We think that the House Service should consider running a drop-in area, in conjunction with the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, for returning Members and their staff a few weeks after the next election to refresh memories about House services and procedures and to inform them of any changes that may affect them in the new parliament. (Paragraph 39)	Completed
18. We recommend that the General Election Planning Group again invites civil servants from Whitehall to test out the New Members' Reception Area before the next election to ensure that the process and content is clear to those unfamiliar with Parliament. (Paragraph 40)	Completed
19. The approach of cutting down the number of induction events run in the first few weeks, involving Members directly in their production, and focusing on the key information Members needed right away, led to the vast majority of new Members attending all the events on Induction Day. This approach should be repeated next time. (Paragraph 41)	Partially incorporated
20. The General Election Planning Group should consider ways of supplementing the induction briefings with more interactive training and activities in smaller groups which could be more tailored to their audience and would allow for more Q&A opportunities. (Paragraph 43)	Partially incorporated
21. The General Election Planning Group should explore the possibility of running a mock sitting of the Chamber on a party-by-party basis at the next election, in order to give Members the experience of speaking in the Chamber and to familiarise themselves with basic procedures and etiquette. (Paragraph 44)	Completed

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22. The approach of having a simple and uniform visual identity for all induction materials provided by the House Service should be strengthened so that they are easily distinguishable. Clearly numbering the key documents (as well as using the colour-coding introduced in 2015) would also mean Members and staff could identify when they were missing documents in the sequence. (Paragraph 45)	Partially incorporated
23. We support plans to build better digital tools (such as apps) and online resources which Members can access as needed to complement the New Members' Reception Area. As well as providing information on services, the tools should help new Members to orientate themselves on the Parliamentary Estate. (Paragraph 48)	Not incorporated
24. To ensure that all Members have a basic understanding of how to navigate the business of the House before the start of the Parliament we recommend that the select committee induction session be replaced by a session covering the key procedural knowledge that new Members need in the first few weeks, including the House's weekly timetable, at the next election. (Paragraph 49)	Completed
25. We encourage the General Election Planning Group to work closely with the Parliamentary Digital Service to develop apps and accessible online resources to supplement the induction session on procedure and one-to-one training as this would help new Members balance the demands on their time in the first few weeks and start to develop a basic understanding of Parliamentary procedure. (Paragraph 50)	Not incorporated
26. We commend the Whips and the Accommodation and Logistics Service for their hard work in coordinating office allocations and moves following the Election. (Paragraph 52)	N/A
27. The policy of asking departing Members to vacate their offices within five days of dissolution starting, or—for defeated Members—after Election Day, generally worked well and should be retained. A longer period, agreed with the Whips, should be retained for Members and/or staff departing following a by-election or death of a Member. (Paragraph 53)	Completed
28. We recommend that the General Election Planning Group explores options for providing new Members and their staff with additional storage space for confidential documents, and ensures that information about obligations under data protection legislation is visible in the temporary hot-desking facilities at the next election. Sufficient confidential waste bags should also be made available in these offices. (Paragraph 56)	Completed

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29. The General Election Planning Group should work with Members' staff groups to identify the office resources needed in temporary offices (including stationery) and agree written advice to be placed in the rooms on what can be provided if required. We also recommend that the House Service explores, in light of available technology, ways of facilitating more flexible and remote working options, especially for new Members' staff, which can be rolled out quickly while new Members await allocation of permanent offices. (Paragraph 58)	Completed
30. The Accommodation and Logistics Service and Parliamentary Digital Service should coordinate office setups better to minimise the number of visits needed to each office. (Paragraph 59)	Completed
31. The General Election Planning Group should work with IPSA, party representatives, and staff groups to create a simple guide to setting up a constituency office which could be included in the New Members' Guidebook, online, and in welcome e-mails to Members' staff when their accounts are activated (or reactivated). (Paragraph 61)	Completed
32. In the interest of transparency IPSA should publish regularly clear guidance on how its Office Costs Expenditure budgets are currently calculated and benchmarked. (Paragraph 62)	Completed
33. If it has not done so as part of its review, IPSA should reconsider how Office Costs Expenditure (OCE) budgets, which cover renting a constituency office, are calculated to ensure that it is possible for all Members to have staff based in their constituencies. (Paragraph 63)	Completed
34. We recommend that the Parliamentary Digital Service develop a short guide for Members on selecting the right equipment for their offices. The guide should offer a selection of standard packages that Members can choose from, depending on the way they like to work. This guide should be promoted in the New Members' Reception Area and on the intranet. (Paragraph 64)	Partially incorporated
35. We recommend that the Parliamentary Digital Service updates the Committee with options for the range of devices which should be offered in the equipment catalogue at the next election, bearing in mind the requirement for hardware to be more compatible with Parliamentary systems and software. (Paragraph 65)	Not incorporated
36. We would welcome an update during the current Parliament from the Parliamentary Digital Service on whether there is significant evidence to support need for the introduction of a mid-Parliament refresh of Members' IT equipment. (Paragraph 66)	Not incorporated

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37. We recommend that the Parliamentary Digital Service ensures that information on the benefits of House-sourced ICT equipment is clearly conveyed in the equipment catalogue, by more prominently setting out what is included in the price. (Paragraph 67)	Completed
38. The Parliamentary Digital Service should have a target for completing the refresh of exiting Members' ICT equipment of the end of the summer recess following the next election (assuming a May election). (Paragraph 69)	Not incorporated
39. The Parliamentary Digital Service should consider pre-ordering some commonly requested equipment so that it can be processed and despatched immediately. Any equipment from this pool not required by new Members could be used to fulfil subsequent orders from returning Members or the House Service, thus avoiding nugatory cost. (Paragraph 70)	Partially incorporated
40. We support further exploration of the steps proposed by the Parliamentary Digital Service in relation to improving delivery service standards in constituencies as well as the introduction of a named contact for each Member at the next election. We believe that this will improve the way in which interrelated issues are dealt with as well as enabling Digital Service staff to build relationships with individual Members and their staff. (Paragraph 71)	Partially incorporated
41. We recommend a specific new Members' constituency staff contact be appointed within the Parliamentary Digital Service. They should act as a key contact point and champion for constituency staff and ensure that they are able to access the help and training they need to get their offices fully operational as soon as possible. This contact should work with the member of staff leading on Members' staff engagement by the House Service to make sure that services are communicated effectively to constituency staff. (Paragraph 72)	Completed
42. We encourage the Parliamentary Digital Service and IPSA to explore options for allowing Members to use all of their ICT equipment budgets available through IPSA and the House, where they have sufficient funds for the required equipment across both budgets. (Paragraph 74)	Partially incorporated
43. At the end of the 2010 Parliament the Committee endorsed the approach of focusing resources for professional development at the point of need rather than running courses or events in anticipation of sufficient Members being able to attend to make them worthwhile. Given the unpredictable pressures on Members' time and the need to ensure available funding is used effectively we believe this remains an appropriate strategy. (Paragraph 75)	Completed

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44. The House Service should consider a simplified offer of professional development aimed at new Members immediately following the next election. It should be based on the core activities and skills that Members are likely to need in their first year, perhaps setting out the information in a similar way to a university prospectus with a clearer distinction between information and training offers. (Paragraph 76)	Completed
45. The House Service should work with Members and their staff ahead of preparations for the next election to identify the most appropriate methods to advertise professional development opportunities to Members. As part of this, the Parliamentary Digital Service should be engaged early in the process on the inclusion of information on Parliament's intranet pages. (Paragraph 77)	Partially incorporated
46. The General Election Planning Group should continue to look at the activities provided by other legislatures as possible models for future professional development provision in the UK Parliament. (Paragraph 78)	Partially incorporated
47. Gaining cross-party support for Members to take part in the same kind of professional development that is simply taken for granted in other sectors (and indeed by staff of the House Service) will, over time, help to tackle the perception in some parts of the news media that investing in developing the skills and knowledge of Members of Parliament is reproachable. As in 2013 we will write to the Leaders of all parties represented at Westminster to encourage continued proactive support by the parties of the training programmes put in place following the next election. (Paragraph 79)	Completed
48. The House Service should consider inviting external organisations to deliver development and knowledge-sharing activities on the Estate, as well as facilitating more informal knowledge sharing between more experienced and newer Members. (Paragraph 80)	Partially incorporated
49. We recommend that the 'Members' Staff Handbook' be sent in hard-copy and by email to all Members' offices following the next election and to constituency offices as they are set up. (Paragraph 83)	Completed
50. The House would benefit from imparting to Members' staff some knowledge of procedure, because those staff would then be able to better advise their Member. More guidance and information for staff on giving tours of the Palace and on the process for booking rooms would contribute to a better visitor experience for members of the public. Requiring staff to complete fire safety training as part of their induction would also potentially benefit all occupants of the Estate. The House has a world-renowned research facility in the House of Commons Library but new Members' research staff are not routinely signposted to it. The General Election Planning Group should work with staff representative groups to create a work stream focused on developing an induction programme for Members' staff in both Westminster and constituencies. New research staff of Members should be advised to contact the Library in their first week to arrange an induction. (Paragraph 84)	Completed

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51. Once an induction framework for Members' staff has been agreed it should be passed to HR so that it can be applied for all Members' staff at whatever stage they are recruited. The 'Members' Staff Handbook' should also be updated to reflect the range of training available—highlighting essential training that all Members' staff should undertake. (Paragraph 85)	Partially incorporated
52. Issues with unclear dissolution guidance, poor timing of training for new staff, and late payment of resettlement grants could have been avoided through better prior engagement with Members and their staff. IPSA should work with the General Election Planning Group and the parties on engagement with Members and staff on dissolution guidance, timing of briefings for Members and dedicated contacts for Members. (Paragraph 90)	Completed
53. The introduction of named IPSA contacts for new Members should be repeated at the next election with the heightened service remaining in place at least until the end of the conference recess. Improved training of IPSA's permanent staff is also needed to ensure that the quality and consistency of advice does not subsequently tail off. (Paragraph 91)	Completed
54. We repeat our recommendation from 2013 that IPSA establish a dedicated enquiries line for new Members following the next election for at least three months. (Paragraph 92)	Completed
55. We recommend that IPSA writes to this Committee in relation to its final decision on payment of resettlement grants to defeated Members following the next election, explaining how it will ensure they are not left considerably out of pocket for a prolonged period. (Paragraph 94)	Completed
56. The General Election Planning Group should consider creation of simple guides, and videos for new Members on recruiting and managing staff. These should allow Members and their staff to quickly develop a basic understanding of their role, responsibilities, and sources of advice. These resources should be supplemented by on- demand training that recognises the differing levels of experience Members will have in directly employing and managing staff. (Paragraph 95)	Partially incorporated
57. The House Service should consider enhancing the HR advice service (either through temporary recruitment or an agency) by providing named contacts, similar to those employed by IPSA, to assist new Members until the end of the conference recess following the next general election. These temporary staff, under the guidance of the HR Advisory Service, would act as designated HR contacts to new Members, assisting with the initial process of hiring staff and providing general advice. (Paragraph 96)	Partially incorporated
58. The House Service should explore, with staff groups including the Members' and Peers' Staff Association (MAPSA), the possibility of facilitating a voluntary Members' staff buddying scheme, through which experienced staff could advise new Members (of the same party) and their staff on recruitment, setting up an office, etc. (Paragraph 97)	Not incorporated

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<p>59. A study by the House Service on the feasibility of creating a pool of staff to provide Members with administrative support in the weeks following the next election would be welcome. These staff should ideally be experienced as they would need to get Members' offices up and running quickly. Therefore, the General Election Planning Group should work with the parties and IPSA to explore creating a list of experienced Members' staff who could (in the event that their Members are defeated or stand down) provide administrative assistance for new Members on short-term contracts. This would provide new Members with access to experienced staff without the pressure of making long-term recruitment decisions hastily. (Paragraph 98)</p>	<p>Not incorporated</p>
<p>60. We support the principle that Members continue to directly employ their staff. However, Members' staff should be able to access support on day-to-day HR matters independent of their Member, including training, occupational health, and independent advice on handling employment issues before they can escalate to full grievances. For their staff, a Member is an employer, line manager and HR department unless they choose to individually contract out these functions. This is not a fair expectation of Members, whose focus should be on their parliamentary and constituency duties, nor does it lead to staff always being provided the support and advice they need. The House Service, along with the major parties, should explore the development of a centralised HR support service for Members' staff, which could be funded jointly by the House and the parties. (Paragraph 100)</p>	<p>Partially incorporated</p>