

Rt Hon John Bercow MP
Speaker
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

11 June 2014

Our ref: BO-1125

Dear Mr Speaker,

I write following yesterday's meeting of the Speaker's Committee for the IPSA to pick up some of the points that arose during our discussion.

Your Committee asked about the criteria we apply in identifying where particular pieces of work constitute projects separate from our core activities. We define a project in this context as a discrete piece of work, with a start and finish date that falls outside our core and regular activities, and which often requires external advice, skills or expertise. Such work can reflect changes in our statutory duties. This is the case, for example, with respect to the automatic enrolment in pensions for MPs' staff – or the one-off project relating to the review of MPs' remuneration. It also applies, of course, to our work to prepare for the 2015 General Election.

The Leader of the House also rightly asked about the impact of our rules on diversity. This is something we explicitly consider each time we review the rules: like other public-sector bodies, we are expected to carry out an equality impact assessment with respect to any changes. These assessments are routinely published when the Scheme is changed. I will also review the data that we hold on MPs' historic claims to determine whether there are any potential issues relating to individuals' gender or, where we hold data, relating to other protected characteristics.

Your Committee asked about MPs not claiming expenses. Our position remains that MPs should claim all those costs to which they are entitled. Our most recent survey of MPs, published in December 2013, found that many did not claim for some costs that they believed they were entitled to. The most common reason for not doing so was that "it was only a small claim". But some MPs also said that they did not claim because it would take too long or the claim process was too complicated. I will continue our work to ensure that the claims process is both quick and simple to use, and I would be happy in due course to discuss how we can make further improvements.

Another reason for not claiming was that MPs were concerned about the publication of their claim. As Sir Ian made clear at the Committee yesterday, we will play our part to ensure that data are presented in a way that seeks to avoid trivialisation. The Board will be considering the policy on publication later this month.

I append the relevant section of the survey of MPs. The whole report is available on our website.

I would be happy to discuss any of this with you when we meet later today and, of course, with other members of your Committee at their convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "MARCIAL BOO".

Marcial Boo
Chief Executive

7. MPs' use of business costs and expenses

7.1 These questions were made available to MPs only.

7.2 The percentage of MPs saying they do not claim for some business costs and expenses remains largely unchanged, with 92% responding that they decided not to claim for some costs for which they believe they could have been reimbursed.

'What I don't claim for is meals on late night sittings, simply because I am not sure that this is appropriate and I would not want to be highlighted as someone who claims.'
- MP

7.3 The reasons given were as follows:

- (a) It was only a small claim – 60%
- (b) It would take too long – 53%
- (c) The claim process was too complicated – 49%
- (d) I was concerned about claims being published – 43%
- (e) I was worried the claim would be rejected – 15%
- (f) I wasn't sure if it was claimable – 13%
- (g) I wasn't sure what amount I could claim for – 12%
- (h) Other – 28%

7.4 Those answering 'Other' were invited to provide more details. Six of the 32 responses said they did not claim for expenses that they did not believe should be claimable (in particular late sitting meals). Three of the 32 stated that they did not feel IPSA supported the legitimacy of their claims when under public scrutiny.