

IPSA CONTINGENCY PANEL – TERMS OF REFERENCE

2017-18

Role and remit

1. The role of the Contingency Panel ('the Panel') is to consider applications from MPs for additional funding. This additional funding will be in order for those MPs to undertake their parliamentary duties effectively, where an expense or liability is not covered by any of the budgets set out in the *Scheme of MPs' Business Costs and Expenses* ('the Scheme') or where it exceeds any financial limit that may apply.
2. The Panel will have regard to paragraphs 10.8, 10.9 and 10.10 of the Scheme and the accompanying guidance. It will also have regard to other decisions taken by the Board and any other relevant guidance, as required.
3. The Panel will consider applications in the following areas.
 - Staffing Expenditure budgets
 - Office Costs budgets
 - Accommodation budgets
 - Other exceptional claims where there is not an established policy position or where the claim is not covered specifically by the rules or budgets set out in the Scheme. When a clear policy position is established and communicated to MPs, the claim can be handled through the miscellaneous section of the online expenses system or any other budget as specified
4. The Panel has delegated authority from the IPSA Board to take decisions about provision of additional funding under the contingency arrangements.
5. The Panel may, using its own judgement, make minor policy decisions on which there is no established policy. The Chair of the Panel will be responsible for deciding whether any particular case should be referred to the Board because it raises a more significant matter of principle on which there is no established policy.
6. All decisions regarding additional funding taken by the Panel have effect only for the relevant financial year.

Composition

7. The Contingency Panel will comprise:
 - Chief Executive – **Chair**
 - Director of Regulation
 - Head of Finance (or representative)
 - Operations Managers (or representatives)

- Director of MP Support Services
 - Head of Policy & Assurance
 - Another policy team representative
 - Publication and Validation Manager
 - Payroll Manager
8. Where necessary, in considering a request for additional funding, the Panel will invite the appropriate MP Account Managers and/or Payroll Officers to represent the case and provide background information.
 9. The policy team will provide advice and administrative support to the Panel.

Process

10. The Panel will normally meet once a week. There should be at least three members of the Panel in attendance, and at least one person who is not from the policy team.
11. The Panel will assess each application on a case-by-case basis, making its own judgement on whether each application provides sufficient justification to be approved. A proportionate approach will be taken in terms of information requirements that will be applied to applications which involve insignificant amounts of additional funding.
12. If an application is deemed to be urgent, the Chair may consider the application out of committee and if necessary, take a decision without consulting all other Panel members. But the Chair should make every effort to consult all members of the Panel and should not take a decision without consulting at least one other member.
13. MPs will be notified of Panel decisions (including a request for further information) within 48 hours of the Panel sitting, with a routine target of 24 hours.
14. MPs may request that the Panel reconsiders its initial decision, providing further evidence in support of the application.
15. If the MP is dissatisfied with the Panel's decision following that reconsideration, they may ask for a review of the decision. The process will vary, according to the nature of the application, as follows:
 - if the application concerns a claim which lies outside the Scheme, MPs may refer the decision to the Compliance Officer, in the same way as they can for any disputed claim; or
 - if the application concerns a request for an increase to a budget, they may request that the judicial member of the IPSA Board considers whether due process has been followed in the Panel's decision.
16. There will be a minute of the decisions taken at every Panel meeting, which will be circulated to members of the Panel along with a list of actions.
17. All applications, their status and any decisions taken will be recorded on IPSA's central information system.

18. It will be the responsibility of the member with the relevant action to record and update the central record, to notify the MP of the Panel's decision, and to request for an MP's budget to be uplifted if required.
19. The Panel will provide the IPSA Board with a monthly update of decisions taken, indicating the amount of additional funding which has been agreed and outlining any notable applications.
20. Certain information about contingency applications and the Panel's decisions will be published on IPSA's website on an annual basis, in line with IPSA's publication policy.