

PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS ACT 2009



THE SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE FOR THE INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY (IPSA)

FIRST REPORT 2023

Appointment of IPSA Board Member (former high judicial
office holder)

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The Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority

The Speaker's Committee for the IPSA is appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009 as amended by the Constitutional Reform & Governance Act 2010.

Membership

[Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP](#), (Speaker of the House of Commons) (Chair)

Peter Blausten (Lay Member)

Ms Cindy Butts (Lay Member)

Ms Theresa Middleton (Lay Member)

[Chris Bryant MP](#), (Chair of the Committee on Standards)

[Thangam Debbonaire MP](#) (Labour, Bristol West)

[Marion Fellows MP](#) (Scottish National Party, Motherwell and Wishaw)

[Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP](#), (Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons)

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Appointment of IPSA Board Members

1. The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) was established by the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009. The Chair of the Board of IPSA and other Board Members are appointed by His Majesty the King, following an Address from the House of Commons. The Speaker of the House of Commons is required to select individuals to serve on the Board of IPSA “on merit on the basis of fair and open competition”, and with the agreement of the Speaker’s Committee for the IPSA.

2. The Act specifies that, in addition to the Chair, there shall be five Board Members, and that:

- a) At least one of the members of IPSA must be a person who has held (but no longer holds) high judicial office (within the meaning of Part 3 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 (c.4)).
- b) At least one of the members of IPSA (“the statutory auditor”) must be eligible for appointment as a statutory auditor by virtue of Chapter 2 of Part 42 of the Companies Act 2006.
- c) One of the members of IPSA (“the Parliamentary member”) must be a person who has been (but is no longer) a Member of the House of Commons.

3. On this occasion the vacancy on the Board of IPSA was for a board member who has held high judicial office, following the end of Sir Robert Owen’s tenure. Sir Robert’s term was due to end on 31 December 2023. However, he wrote to the Speaker to formally notify him of his intention to resign with effect from 26 April 2023, owing to personal circumstances.

4. This report provides information about the procedures followed by the Speaker’s Committee during the selection of a candidate to join the IPSA Board in place of Sir Robert.

The Process

5. In November 2022, the Speaker appointed the following panel to review the recruitment pack, interview candidates, and make final recommendations to the Speaker:

- Cindy Butts, lay member of the Speaker’s Committee for the IPSA¹;
- Sir David Crausby, former Member of Parliament;
- Sarah Laessig, independent Chair;
- Richard Lloyd OBE, Chair of the IPSA, and
- Theresa Middleton CBE, lay member of the Speaker’s Committee.

¹ Ms Butts stood down following the first panel meeting due to other commitments. The panel determined that it was properly constituted to continue its work, despite Ms Butts’ absence.

6. The panel was asked to provide the Speaker with the names of candidates who it believed were appointable to the role, in the form of a ranked list. The recruitment consultants Veredus were engaged by IPSA to support the process.

7. The panel first met in December 2022 to review the recruitment pack and advertisement for the role. The panel revised the role description and person specification, before they were signed off by the Speaker. The campaign went live on 21 December 2022 and closed on 30 January 2023. The role was advertised on the Times Appointments and Veredus websites. Candidates were asked to provide their CV, a statement in support of their application, and a declaration of any political activities. The panel were also provided with Veredus's initial assessment of the strength of the candidates' applications.

8. Six applications were received.² The panel met on 20 February 2023 to longlist candidates, and agree which candidates to invite to preliminary interviews with the recruitment consultants. Panel members present declared whether they had pre-existing knowledge of any of the candidates, either in a personal or professional capacity. There were some connections, none of which were sufficiently close to require the panellists concerned to remove themselves from further consideration of the candidates. The panel decided on a longlist of four candidates for initial interviews with Veredus.

9. The panel met again on 8 March to consider the outcome of these preliminary interviews with Veredus, and agreed a shortlist of four candidates to final interviews. One candidate withdrew their application before the final interviews took place.

10. Each shortlisted candidate was offered the opportunity to meet the Chair of IPSA to discuss the IPSA's role and its current programme of activity.

11. Veredus carried out social media screening for each of the shortlisted candidates. Veredus also took two references for each of the interviewed candidates. Nothing in either the references or social media screening gave the panel cause for concern.

12. Panel interviews were held on 27 March on the Parliamentary Estate. Candidates were asked to prepare a five-minute presentation setting out what they saw as the main challenges and opportunities facing the IPSA over the next three years, and how they, as a board member, would enable the IPSA to meet the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities therein.

13. Each interview lasted a little over 45 minutes. Questioning was designed to test the candidates' fit with the essential and desirable criteria in the person specification. At the end, the candidates were asked about how they would handle the time commitment, any actual or potential grounds for perceived conflicts of interest, and whether there was anything else in their backgrounds that might affect their ability to command the confidence of the public, Members from across the House, and Members' staff.

14. The panel found that all three interviewed candidates met the requirements and were appointable to the role. The panel provided the Speaker, for each interviewed candidate, with a summary of their fit with the person specification. Having carefully considered the panel's report, the Speaker decided to recommend Dame Laura Cox to the Speaker's Committee as his preferred candidate for the post. The Speaker's Committee met on 13

² The number of applications received may appear low, but this reflects the statutory requirement for the position to be filled by a former holder of high judicial office.

June 2023, and agreed to the Speaker's selection of Dame Laura Cox.

15. The Speaker and the Committee are entirely satisfied that the selection process was rigorous and that the panel discharged its duties conscientiously and with all due regard to the requirements of thoroughness, fairness and propriety, and to ensuring applications from a diverse range of candidates and testing all candidates on their commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. We are grateful to Sarah Laessig and her fellow panellists.

The candidate

16. Dame Laura Cox was called to the Bar in 1975, appointed Queen's Counsel in 1994, and elected Head of Chambers in 1995 for a fixed term of 7 years. In December 2002, on becoming a judge, she was awarded a "Lifetime Achievement" award jointly from the organisations 'Justice' and 'Liberty' for commitment to equality and human rights over 25 years at the Bar. Dame Laura retired from the High Court Bench in 2016, after having served 14 years as a judge. She remains an Honorary Bencher of the Inner Temple.

17. In 2018, Dame Laura was appointed to carry out an independent inquiry into the Bullying and Harassment of House of Commons Staff, and delivered her final report and recommendations to the House in October that year. After the implementation of those recommendations, she accepted the invitation to be a member of the appointments panel to select the Chair and members of the Independent Expert Panel.

18. The panel made the following comments on Dame Laura Cox:

The substance of Dame Laura's presentation reflected a strong understanding of IPSA and the challenges it faces. In response to questioning, Dame Laura offered consistently strong answers which demonstrated a broad range of experience which was more relevant to the role than that of other candidates, despite pitching her achievements and experience modestly.

Dame Laura offered the clearest articulation of what she would bring to the board, and the strongest understanding of the political environment in which IPSA operates. In particular, she drew on recent examples of defending, responding to and accounting for difficult decisions, to evidence her adeptness operating under intense public scrutiny, which the panel felt would be relevant to IPSA.

Dame Laura also gave particularly impressive and tangible examples of championing equality, diversity and inclusion within the judiciary. Her characterisation of the fragility of progress on ED&I in the workplace, and her counsel against complacency, was convincing...

In her personal style, Dame Laura was polished and calm with a genuine, engaging and likeable manner which left the panel confident she would approach board discussions constructively and collegiately. Overall, the panel consider Dame Laura an eminently appointable candidate.

19. Appointments to IPSA are made by His Majesty on an Address from the House of Commons. The Committee invites the House to approve the appointment of Dame Laura Cox as a Board Member of IPSA for a five-year period.

Role description and person specification

Role of the Board

IPSA's Board provides the strategic leadership of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, safeguarding its independence, acting as an advocate for its values and delivering its objectives: meeting its statutory duties; helping to maintain confidence in Parliament; and providing efficient and cost-effective administration of services which meet the needs of taxpayers, MPs and their staff. The Board ensures that IPSA exercises its statutory obligations, including:

- The review and setting of MPs' salaries;
- The review and development of the MPs' pensions scheme; and
- The operation and review of the Scheme of MPs' business costs ('the Scheme').

The Board sets the strategic priorities for IPSA as an organisation ensuring it is efficient, cost-effective and fit for purpose and delivers its objectives. In doing so, the Board:

- Contributes to the development and articulation of IPSA's vision, values, strategies and plans, and shares, champions and demonstrably lives the values;
- Sets the policy framework for MPs' business costs;
- Oversees the development of, and approves, a Corporate Plan, Annual Report and Estimate of IPSA's use of resources; and
- Sets the risk appetite and approves the framework of internal controls in support of the achievement of IPSA's strategic objectives.

The Board also:

- Reviews and approves the Scheme for MPs' business costs and assesses and ensures compliance with Scheme rules;
- Determines the salaries to be paid to MPs, including mechanisms for review and up-rating of salaries;
- Scrutinises the performance of the organisation in meeting its objectives and holds the Executive to account for their delivery;
- Determines and reviews the procedures used by the Compliance Officer;
- Proposes and, from time to time, revises a code of conduct for members of IPSA's Board; and
- Appoints and determines the terms and conditions of the Chief Executive.

Richard Lloyd is the Chair of IPSA.

The Board meets normally no less than once every two months either in person at IPSA's offices or via virtual meeting platforms, with notice given well in advance. The Board

currently has two subcommittees: the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the People Committee. The respective remits of the subcommittees are detailed in the Board's Standing Orders.³

About the Role

IPSA is embarking on a major programme of transformation (as set out by the 3-year Corporate Plan 2021-24⁴), with a desire to put customer service at the forefront of its regulatory functions.

Its purpose, mission and values have recently been reviewed and revised following extensive internal and external engagement and IPSA has secured additional funding through the Speaker's Committee for IPSA (SCIPSA) to deliver its Corporate Plan.

This plan is ambitious. It requires cultural change, technological improvements and end-to-end system and process redesign but must be delivered alongside IPSA's existing day to day operations.

The Board of IPSA is made up of a Chair and four members. The Parliamentary Standards Act 2009 requires that:

- At least one member must have held, but no longer hold, high judicial office;
- At least one member must be eligible for appointment as a statutory auditor by virtue of Chapter 2 of Part 42 of the Companies Act 2006; and
- At least one of the members (the 'Parliamentary Member') who has been (but is no longer) a member of the House of Commons.

Apart from the Parliamentary Member, no one who has been an MP at any time within the last five years may be a member of the Board of IPSA.

In this recruitment and pursuant to the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009, IPSA are seeking an individual who has held (but no longer holds) high judicial office within the meaning of Part 3 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005⁵ to join the Board from 1 January 2024 for a term of up to 5 years

IPSA needs a Board member whose professional experience can support the Chair and the executive leadership team on an exciting but challenging journey in which media interest is never far away and stakeholders need careful, tailored engagement. IPSA is keen to diversify the Board both demographically and professionally and hopes applications will be received from a range of candidates with diverse backgrounds. We would particularly welcome applications from a diverse range of candidates across the protected characteristics and who are based across the UK.

3 [IPSA Board: Standing Orders \(ctfassets.net\)](https://ctfassets.net)

4 [IPSA_Corporate_Plan_2021-24.pdf \(ctfassets.net\)](https://ctfassets.net)

5 [Constitutional Reform Act 2005 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

Key responsibilities

This Board member plays a pivotal role in the governance, scrutiny, and direction-setting of the organisation. In particular, and working with other members of the Board, the postholder:

- Supports the Chair and executive leadership of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority in developing its corporate plan, approving its Annual Report and Accounts, and budget Estimate;
- Establishes with the Board the strategic direction of IPSA and ensures compliance with IPSA's statutory duties including reviewing and setting MPs' pay, reviewing and developing the MPs' pension scheme, and establishing the Scheme of MPs' Business Costs;
- Works closely with the Chair, Board, and Executive to maintain strategic direction and monitor performance, including legal compliance, risk management, and the promotion of IPSA's vision and values;
- Works closely with the Chair, Board, and Executive to maintain strategic direction and monitor performance, including risk management and the promotion of IPSA's vision and values;
- May represent IPSA in public, before parliamentary committees, and with MPs and parliamentary officials, as appropriate;
- Commits to IPSA's values, abides by the Board's code of conduct, and supports equality, diversity, and inclusion; and
- Works with other members of the Board to help fulfil its statutory function as outlined in more detail below and in the terms and conditions.

Remuneration: £500 per day.

Length of term: up to five years (with the possibility of reappointment subject to open competition).

Time commitment: this role requires a commitment of approximately 2-3 days a month. Board meetings are held in London to an agreed schedule, no less frequently than once every two months, and can exceptionally take place virtually.

Independence and political activity

The IPSA Board's Code of Conduct requires that Board members must observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. IPSA is fully independent of the Government and Parliament.

IPSA operates in a political environment, and must maintain the confidence of MPs of all parties as well as their staff. Political restrictions are set out in statute, and the IPSA Code of Conduct:

- The Parliamentary Standards Act 2009 states that Members of IPSA (other than the designated Parliamentary Member) cannot have been a member of the House of Commons at any time within the last five years.
- The Board member may not occupy paid party-political posts or hold particularly sensitive or high roles in a political party, nor engage in specific political activities or matters directly affecting the work of IPSA. Further details are included in the IPSA Code of Conduct for Members.⁶

Past political activity is not a bar to Board membership, and we welcome applicants who can demonstrate political awareness. However, in the interests of transparency, applicants will be asked to disclose political activity within the last 10 years.

Standards in Public Life

Although the appointment does not come within the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, it is being made using a process which takes into account the relevant guidance in the Government's Governance Code. The Seven Principles of Public Life, the 'Nolan' Principles to be upheld by all those taking up Public Appointments, are included at Annex D.

Security clearance

CTC (Counter Terrorist Check) security clearance is required. This involves: successful completion of the Baseline Personnel Security Standard and a Security Questionnaire, a check of both spent and unspent criminal records, a check of Security Service (MI5) records, and of company records (e.g. personal files, staff reports, sick leave returns and security records).

Person Specification

We are looking for applicants with the ability to operate and influence at Board level. Previous non-executive board experience is not essential for this role. Applicants will need to have held (but no longer hold) high judicial office within the meaning of Part 3 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005⁷. To fulfil this requirement, candidates must have held office as a judge in either:

- Supreme Court;
- the Court of Appeal in England and Wales;
- the High Court in England and Wales;
- the Court of Session;
- the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland;
- the High Court in Northern Ireland; or
- Lord of Appeal in Ordinary;

⁶ [Code_of_Conduct_for_the_Chair_and_Board_Members_of_IPSA_-_September_2021.pdf \(ctfassets.net\)](#)

⁷ [Constitutional Reform Act 2005 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

A person appointed to the office of Lord Chancellor on or after 12 June 2003 who holds, or held, office of a kind referred to above is to be regarded as holding, or having held, high judicial office only if they have ceased to be Lord Chancellor by virtue of that appointment, and holds, or held, the qualifying office otherwise than by virtue of that appointment as Lord Chancellor.

The successful candidate will need to act, and be seen to act, with independence, objectivity, and transparency. Applicants will therefore need to demonstrate integrity, sound judgement, an exemplary commitment to the Nolan principles of public life⁸, and an understanding of the importance of upholding the profile and reputation of IPSA and democracy.

Candidates will need to provide evidence in their application of ability in the areas listed as essential below and ideally one or more of those listed as desirable.

Essential

- Demonstrable understanding of organisational governance, with the ability to challenge and advise on complex matters, such as pay and pensions issues, and capacity to consider multi-faceted regulatory and policy issues with an open mind.
- Awareness of the UK's political environment and challenges MPs and their staff face.
- Track record of operating in an environment where decisions are under constant public scrutiny and of demonstrating integrity, objectivity, and transparency in decision making.
- Ability to influence and work collaboratively and collectively at Board level, fostering open, constructive and robust dialogue, continuously improving Board and IPSA performance, and respecting boundaries between non-executive and executive responsibility.
- Clear commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and the Nolan principles of public life.⁹
- An unwavering ability to operate with objectivity, independence, and discretion, display sound, strategic judgement, and grasp challenging and consequential issues fully and quickly

Desirable

- Experience of contributing to the leadership and strategic direction of a changing organisation.
- Specialism, experience in providing advice and decisions on, or keen interest in data protection or information governance legislation and case-law, or pay, pensions, and tax.

8 [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

9 [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Extract from Dame Laura Cox's CV

Professional Experience

2019 Awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Queen Mary, University of London

2016 Retired from the High-Court Bench

2013 Elected as Vice-President of the UK Association of Women Judges

2002 Appointed to the High Court Bench

1998 Appointed as the British Member of the International Labour Organisation's Committee of Independent Experts

1995 First judicial appointment as a Recorder and appointed part-time judge in the Employment Appeal Tribunal

1995 Head of Chambers for a fixed term of 7 year, and elected a Governing Bencher of the Inner Temple

1994 Appointed Queen's Counsel

1977-2022 Independent practising barrister in Cloisters Chambers

1976 Undertook a 12-month pupillage at Cloisters Chambers.

Called to the Bar in 1975.