

# THE CITIZENS' FORUM ON MPS' PAY AND FUNDING

## Executive Summary

October 2025





# How should MPs be paid and funded to best support our democracy?

“We, as members of the Citizens' Forum on MPs' Pay and Funding, are **ordinary people from all walks of life and political persuasions**. We have collaborated, debated and learned together. Everyone has been **respectful and considerate** of each other.

The forum has been **informative, transformative and enlightening**. Many of us came in with little knowledge of how MPs are paid and funded. This process has been eye-opening and we have learnt a lot, often being shocked or surprised by what we have found. For some of us, this Forum has **totally changed our understanding of pay and funding**, and we now see how this system can be used to encourage more democratic behaviours.

We see a need for more engagement and more accessible information about our democratic system. **Education is essential**. We have learned so much and we feel that other people deserve the opportunity to be better informed and share their opinions.

We now recognise this is a **complex topic**. We were surprised to learn of the amount that goes on behind the scenes and it's clear that MPs have a challenging role. As a result of our deliberations we now **mostly believe that MPs' pay is fair** but that it should remain grounded in the context of the wider social and economic realities facing ordinary working people.

We have determined that there is a **crucial role for appropriate funding to support MPs' work**. We believe that this should be the priority area for change.

**Funding must be allocated in a fair and transparent manner** to ensure the public perceive MPs as looking after and listening to their constituents. We envision a system where MPs' pay and funding enable them to **focus entirely on their democratic role**, with minimum job requirements and restrictions on second jobs.

The current lack of **accountability** of how MPs spend their time impacts on our trust in democracy. **Our ultimate vision is for genuine transparency and accessible ways for the public to engage**. Decisions need to be clearer on what's been done and why. People deserve to understand how their tax money is spent and to have a voice in these decisions.

**Technology can transform how democracy works** and allow us to break free from traditions that no longer serve us well.

**We urge IPSA to listen to us**, to hear us loud and clear and not to dilute our recommendations. We want them to **open up more participation opportunities** in the future. And to build public awareness of how pay and funding works.

Ultimately, **bringing citizens together in Forums like these will rebuild trust**. It provides an opportunity to learn, explore, question and to have a voice. We know that there is disengagement in the political system - we need forums like these to show that **the average person can come together with others, look at something complex and reach useful conclusions**."



# Executive Summary

This report describes the outcomes of the Citizens' Forum on MP's Pay and Funding. In September 2025, 23 people from all walks of life and from all over the UK came together over six online sessions to deliberate this question:

## How should our MPs be paid and funded to best support our democracy?

### The Challenge and Scope

Trust in UK politics and democratic institutions is at historic lows. The question of how we pay and fund our MPs reflects not just concerns about value for money, but deeper frustrations about whether our political system works for the people it represents. For IPSA, this presented both a challenge and an opportunity: how to have a genuinely informed public conversation about a topic on which people often have strong but often misinformed opinions.

It was acknowledged that citizens don't experience the topic of MPs' pay and funding in isolation but as part of the wider democratic system. Artificially restricting the discussion to IPSA's remit alone would have felt constraining and disconnected from how people actually think about these issues. Following best practice in deliberation, the Forum allowed discussions to flow naturally, while gently guiding them back to the core focus of the topic when needed. This approach captured links between pay and broader democratic concerns, ensured members' priorities were reflected, and recorded all outputs for transparency.

### The Approach

IPSA commissioned New Citizen Project (NCP) to run the first Citizens' Forum of its kind: bringing together a demographically representative group of citizens, selected by sortition, to learn from experts, deliberate together and develop recommendations.

The convening question, *How should MPs be paid and funded to best support our democracy?*, deliberately brought together pay, funding and our democracy. The intention was not to discuss a figure or a formula but rather to encourage Forum members to think about MPs' roles in supporting the democracy they want to see, and to consider how pay and funding could help enable that.

A key part of this question was the distinction between pay and funding, which is often misunderstood or not considered. When we talk about 'pay and funding', it is important to distinguish between MPs' remuneration (their salary and pension), and MPs' funding (their budgets, staffing and business costs).

**IPSA** is the independent body that regulates and administers MPs' business costs and decides the pay and pensions of the 650 elected MPs and their staff in the UK. As part of a wider piece of work on the theme of 'What's Democracy Worth?', IPSA wanted to try a new way of engaging with citizens, beyond its regular public consultations.






# The Process

The process was independently designed and facilitated by NCP with oversight from an Advisory Group. From speaker selection to facilitation methods, every element was crafted to support informed, reflective discussion and ensure Forum members' views on this complex topic were captured faithfully.

25	18	12
Initial Participants	Total Hours	Expert Speakers
Selected using stratified random sampling, 23 completed the process	Of collective learning and further deliberation in smaller groups	Providing diverse perspectives across key content areas

# The Outcomes

 <b>Funding emerged as the key lever for change, not pay levels.</b> <p>Members focused on how funding could better support MPs' work, increase accountability, and enable the democracy they want to see.</p>	 <b>Opinion on pay shifted significantly.</b> <p>Before the Forum, <b>65%</b> of Members thought MPs were paid too much. After deliberation, <b>67%</b> viewed MP pay as about right - reflecting deeper understanding of the role's demands and complexities.</p>	 <b>Citizens want more participation.</b> <p>Forum members expressed a clear desire for a more participatory democracy, with ongoing ways to engage both with MPs and wider decision-making, and saw a role for IPSA in enabling this.</p>
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# The Recommendations

Members developed a set of recommendations comprising:

## 1. A Forum Statement

Expressing their learnings and their messages to decision-makers at the end of the process

## 2. Nine Principles

For how IPSA should approach pay and funding decisions

## 3. A Vision

For future democracy that is more participatory, accessible, and transparent with MPs supported by skilled staff, empowered by technology, and accountable.

## 4. Six Areas for Change

Spanning MPs' staffing, use of technology, more participation, greater accountability, independence from party politics and representation.



## Principles for Pay

MPs' pay and funding should allow all MPs to fulfil their role effectively and safely, ensuring the position is accessible to people from all income backgrounds and that factors such as disability or gender are not barriers.

MPs' pay should reflect the demanding nature of the role. Fair pay, rest, and holidays are essential to prevent burnout and ensure Parliament functions effectively for democracy.

MPs' pay should be tied to clear minimum performance standards, independently assessed and publicly reviewed, with opportunities for communities to provide feedback and hold their representatives accountable.

MPs' pay should be benchmarked against comparable roles in the public service and similar democracies, reflecting the skills needed and responsibilities they take on.

MPs' pay should be linked in part to national average household income, making it more representative, fair, and connected to the realities faced by the people they serve.

MPs' primary duty should be to their constituents, with second jobs capped in hours and never allowed to undermine their minimum requirements and responsibility as MPs.

## Principles for Funding

MPs' office funding should be flexible and reflect both constituency and parliamentary needs, with expenditure reviewed to ensure it delivers real impact for constituents rather than being based on a fixed, one-size-fits-all amount.

There should be support for MPs and their offices in how to make effective use of funding and resources - including things like inductions, refresher training, and information sharing between MPs' offices enabled via central IPSA resources.

MPs should openly share how funding is spent, with an integrated, consistent and transparent system for public discussion, suggestions and scrutiny. This openness is important to build trust, bring communities closer to their MPs, and engage younger constituents.



# Six Areas for Change

The areas and ideas for change emerged from the same visioning exercise that produced the Vision Statement (see detailed report). After imagining their ideal future democracy, Members discussed practical steps toward that vision - focusing on how pay and funding could enable change.



## MPs' Staffing

- Skilled and supported staff for MPs
- Clear roles and proper funding
- Structures for continuity, independence, and effectiveness



## Use of Technology

- Modernised Parliament
- Efficient, transparent, and participatory work



## More Participation

- Far more participatory and accessible democracy
- Diverse ways for constituents to engage with MPs



## Greater Accountability

- Stronger accountability for MPs
- MPs who are open, responsive, and fully focused on their role



## More Independent and Informed

- MPs more independent from party politics
- Freedom and resources to focus on representing constituents



## A More Representative Parliament

- Parliament that breaks barriers to be more representative of the whole country
- Diverse in background and experience, closely connected to constituents



## Key themes across all recommendations

### Accountability

Constituents need better ways to understand and challenge how MPs spend time and money.

### Transparency

Information about MPs' work and funding must be accessible.

### Participation

Democracy should offer more ways for citizens to engage beyond voting.

### Modernisation

The system should embrace new ways of working, enabled by technology and not prioritise tradition over effectiveness.

### Funding as enabler

Appropriate funding can support the democratic behaviors and culture members want to see.

## Overall reflections and next steps

**This was a powerful opportunity.** Forum members valued the opportunity to learn, deliberate and reach considered conclusions on a complex topic. Some said that the experience had been transformative and enlightening and that they were proud and grateful to have taken part.

**Forum members want more of this.** 100% of members would participate again. A consistent message throughout was the importance of citizen participation in rebuilding democratic trust.

*"Bringing citizens together in Forums like these will **rebuild trust...the average person can come together with others, look at something complex and reach useful conclusions.**"*

**For IPSA.** The recommendations will form part of the evidence that the Board has at its disposal to decide on MPs' pay and funding from 2026 onwards but also provide a mandate for IPSA, and indeed other bodies, to continue to explore how to engage with the public in a more participatory way.

**For democracy more broadly.** This Forum adds to growing evidence that deliberative processes can bridge the gap between institutions and citizens, acting as a way to build trust on both sides.



For more information contact us:  
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