

MP Help Zone Projected Office Costs Expenditure 2012-13

| IPSA Office Costs Budget 2012-13: Forcasted Expenditure | | |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Item | Monthly/Unit | Annual |
| Constituency Office Rent (Fixed by 5 year contract, for town centre location) | £841.83 | £10,101.96 |
| Constituency Office Business Rates (Including 0.7% small business rates reduction) | £487.50 | £5,850.00 |
| Constituency Office Buildings Insurance (Contractual obligation of lease) | | £316.96 |
| Constituency Office Internet (line rental and usage) | £103.5/quarter | £414.00 |
| Constituency Office Telephone (line rental and calls) | £40.00 | £480.00 |
| Constituency Office Water Costs | £16.25 | £195.00 |
| Constituency Office Electricity | | £2,400.00 |
| Constituency Office Cleaning | £252.12/quarter | £1,008.48 |
| Window Cleaner (Contractual obligation of lease) | £10/month | £120.00 |
| Printer Toner for Parliamentary Printer (Black x 8) | £80.00 | £640.00 |
| Printer Toner for Parliamentary Printer (Each Colour x 4) | £88.00 | £1,056.00 |
| Parliamentary Casework Software and IT Support | | £916.80 |
| MP Stationery | | £554.00 |
| Fire Extinguishers servicing (Health and Safety Requirement) | | £21.60 |
| Employers Liability Insurance (Required) | | £604.20 |
| | Total Budget Available | £21,500.00 |
| | Total Expected Costs | £24,679.00 |
| | Total Expected Shortfall | -£3,179.00 |

Explanatory Notes:

This budget is provided for through the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) who have administered MP's expenses since 2010. It is fixed at the level shown below; this is the maximum amount available from which we can claim to meet our office running costs and any associated expenditure throughout the financial year. The figure is set nationally. It may rise in line with inflation at the end of the financial year, but this is not guaranteed. It is unlikely to rise by any more than that. Money cannot be carried forward from one financial year to the next. There are no 'reserves' or other sources of income we can tap into.

*In previous years, due to the unforeseen cost of our business rates (which we were told we would not be liable for by our landlord when we initially signed the lease on our constituency office) we have been able to claim a 'contingency' payment from IPSA to cover our shortfall. **The reality is that we will not be able to do this indefinitely.** We have cut all but strictly necessary expenditure (indeed, this is a requirement of IPSA in order to qualify for a contingency payment, and they are satisfied that we have done this for the past 2 years and again this year) and **have no further room to make savings without closing the Help Zone in the coming months - unless we can find a way of closing the shortfall of £3,179.00.***

We have already sought to re-negotiate existing contracts, and having re-negotiated all those which are willing to consider the possibility, have exhausted this avenue.

We appreciate that this application is unprecedented, and there is no 'previous example' or practice to follow in the Cannock Chase District. This leaves the decision on our application entirely at the discretion of members. We feel that the following four 'points to consider' may be helpful in working out how this application fits in to the Council's existing policies and practices.

- Cabinet on 2 November 2011 agreed a new framework for discretionary relief to be awarded across various 'categories' of applicants. The category to which the Help Zone is best matched is clearly 'Advice, Support and Training Centres'. ***This table suggests that an 85% discount would be appropriate for this category.***
- ***The committee awarded an 85% discount to the Cannock Chase Advice Centre.*** This is the most similar service to the Help Zone we could identify as having come before the committee.
- One substantive difference is that while the Chase Advice Centre is open to all who need it, the Help Zone, by virtue of Parliamentary Protocol, only assists those living within Cannock Chase District. Council guidelines advise that when considering value for money to the taxpayer, **the usage of a service by predominantly members of the tax-paying community is an advantage.** The Help Zone is ONLY available for use by those in the Cannock Chase District.
- Council guidelines advise members when determining discretionary relief to take account of the contribution made to the area, and the cost of this service to the area if it were not able to operate. This service has already provided a valuable contribution to thousands of Cannock Chase residents, and will continue to do so as long as we are able. This help is non-partisan, non-judgemental and comes at no cost to the Local Authority.

Aidan Burley MP, 17 September 2012