Written evidence submitted by the Consultative Panel on Parliamentary Security

1. As part of its consideration of the Jenkins Review of Security Governance, the Commons Commission and Lords House Committee decided in March 2015 to replace the Joint Committee on Security with the Consultative Panel on Parliamentary Security (CPPS). Its current Members are: Rt Hon Lindsay Hoyle MP; Rt Hon Anne Milton MP; Rt Hon Alan Campbell MP; Mike Weir MP; Sir Paul Beresford MP; Ian Paisley MP; Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall; Earl of Courtown; Lord Tunnicliffe; Lord Stoneham of Droxford; Lord McFall of Alcluith; Lord Hope of Craighead.

2. CPPS is an informal body with the following functions:
   i. To support the Speaker and the Lord Speaker in the discharge of their political responsibility for security
   ii. To receive regular briefings from the Parliamentary Security Director, in order to maintain a thorough, up-to-date understanding of the security of Parliament
   iii. To provide a forum in which the views of Members of both Houses can be communicated and discussed effectively
   iv. To provide effective advocacy to other Members for any necessary changes in security arrangements
   v. To ensure better awareness by Members of security management and governance arrangements.

3. CPPS is chaired by Rt Hon Lindsay Hoyle MP, Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Ways and Means. My Hoyle is willing to give oral evidence to the inquiry following this submission.

Background

4. Members of Parliament, and their staff and families, are facing unprecedented levels of unjustified abuse and threats. This abuse is conveyed face-to-face (for example, at constituency surgeries), in writing and online. CPPS is of the firm belief that no-one should have to endure this as ‘part of a job’.

5. As the Chair of CPPS, Rt Hon Lindsay Hoyle MP speaks to MPs from all over the country on a regular basis about security matters. He reports hearing repeatedly that for far too long MPs have contended with high levels of abuse, aggression and threats. CPPS believes this to be unacceptable. It threatens our democratic process and the ability of MPs to support their constituents, hold the Government to account and make effective legislation.

Parliament’s reaction to hate crime towards MPs

6. CPPS welcomes the Home Affairs Committee’s inquiry into Hate Crime, and stands ready to provide any assistance. It believes the inquiry to be timely and will follow the remaining evidence sessions with interest.
7. Parliament has been working for some time better to support members with their security. Since the tragic death of Jo Cox MP in June 2016 these efforts have been stepped up. As Chair of the CPPS, Lindsay Hoyle works closely with IPSA, the police and the Parliamentary Security Department to ensure that MPs (and Peers) get the right support they need to be safe.

8. This work supports that of local police forces across the UK whose responsibility it is to protect Members when they are away from the Parliamentary estate. Security measures for all MPs are funded by IPSA based on measures recommended by the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC). In September 2016, the House of Commons authorities introduced a new service to make the process of obtaining these security measures simpler and more straightforward. Extra resources have also been provided to the Metropolitan Police Unit based in Parliament to liaise with police forces across the UK.

9. The specific details of security support provided are not disclosed by Parliament because to do so could jeopardise Members’ safety. However, the service is based on expert best practice advice from the police.

10. Parliament also works with both internal and external security experts to provide personal security advice to help Members and their staff. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust has recently assisted with this work.

Social media

11. Abuse of MPs on social media has risen to levels not previously seen. CPPS believes this to be a particularly insidious form of abuse. Some individuals assume that they can rain down insults, threats and abuse on MPs and other public figures with impunity. Social media has amplified their reach. As a recent BBC 5 Live survey highlighted, women Members in particular suffer abuse to the point where they are thinking of standing down. There is concern that such abuse might also deter a diverse range of people from putting themselves forward to be Members of Parliament.

12. CPPS believes that the level of social media threats and abuse towards MPs has reached a point where Parliament needs to complement police activity by offering additional guidance to MPs about managing social media abuse or potentially concerning posts. There has to be a zero tolerance approach to these sorts of attacks.

13. Again, the specific details of planned support are not disclosed by Parliament. However, Lindsay Hoyle is happy to brief Members of the Home Affairs Committee individually and/or in private to share further information.

Consultative Panel on Parliamentary Security

10 March 2017