

| BOARD PAPER | |
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| Paper ref: | IPSA/200911/10 |
| Agenda item: | 11 |

To: IPSA Board

Date: 13 September 2011

From: Scott Woolveridge
Acting Chief Executive

Subject: Chief Executive's Report

Timing

1. To be taken at the 20 September Board meeting.

Recommendation

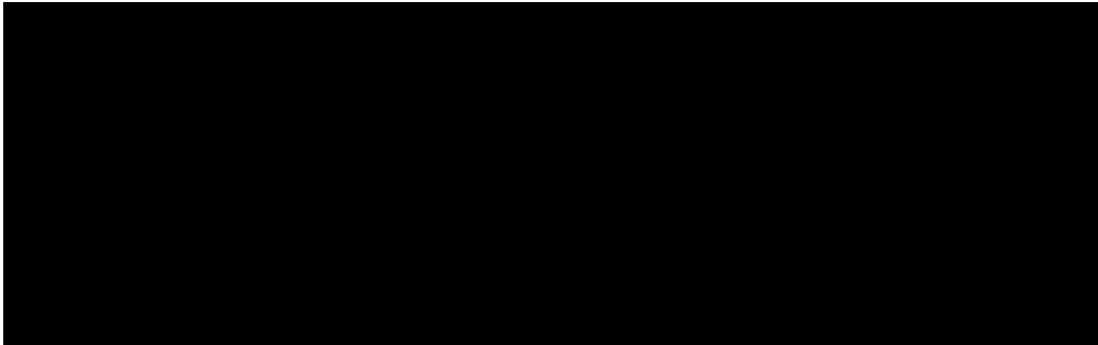

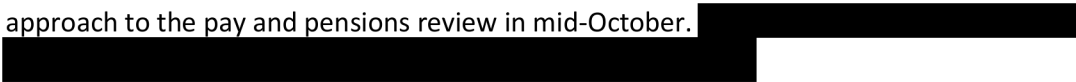
2. That the Board notes this report.

Report

Operational update – headlines

3. Operational effectiveness:
 - In August, we validated 97.84% of reimbursable claims within the new, more stretching, target of ten working days, the majority of which were processed within five working days. (Our KPI is 95%.)
 - In August, we received around 405 calls a week from MPs and answered 62.4% of these within 20 seconds. This reflected staff absence due to annual holidays. (This is not a KPI.)
 - We continue to receive around 281 emails a week, 89% of which were handled within five working days in June. (Our KPI is 90%.)
 - Payroll accuracy in August stood at 99.91% - in line with previous months. (Our KPI is 99.5%.)
 - The accuracy of claims submitted by MPs is high, with just 0.45% of claims designated as not paid in August. (This is not a KPI.)

Service delivery improvements and their communication

4. We have been working on a range of projects to improve our services. These will benefit MPs and IPSA in a number of ways, including making the process of submitting a claim easier and quicker and reducing the proportion of expenses they need to pay for out of their own pockets, but with no reduction in assurance levels.
5. The key changes we will be introducing are:
 - a number of improvements to the online expenses system, including the new “favourites” functionality which will allow users to save and retrieve regular claims (such as mileage); and
 - removing the need for MPs to submit claims for rail tickets and provide evidence if they book their tickets using a dedicated webpage provided by thetrainline.com.
6. More information on each of the proposed changes is at Annex A.
7. 
8. None of the changes will revolutionise MPs’ experience, but taken together, we think they will certainly notice a change for the better. The changes will also provide further evidence of our commitment to continuous improvement of our services consistent with the need for appropriate levels of assurance. We think the changes are significant enough to justify a hard-copy letter to all MPs (a communication method which we use sparingly and reserve for significant communications).
9. The letter will enclose materials to help MPs and their staff understand the value to them of the changes and how they can take up the new services. , our Training Manager, will spend as much as time as possible in the weeks after go-live promoting the changes at the House and over the ‘phone. The Information Team will receive appropriate training and also be asked to raise the profile of the changes and encourage take-up.
10. Subject to the Board’s agreement to the timescale set out in the paper on pay and pensions (item 6 on the agenda), we also expect to make a public statement on our approach to the pay and pensions review in mid-October. 
11. As part of our programme of work focused on IPSA’s long-term sustainability, we are currently scoping the next phase of service-delivery improvements. We will provide a further report on our progress with these at a future Board meeting.

Publication

12. On 8 September, we published the latest cycle of expenses claims. These included 26,730 claims with a value of £3,562,335.88 paid in April and May 2011.
13. This was the most uncontroversial publication yet – very few concerns were raised by MPs and there has been very little press coverage so far. *The Mirror* focused on MPs purchasing iPads using public funds.

KPIs: Crystal Mark for IPSA website

14. At the last meeting, the Board asked us to consider again whether we should seek Crystal Mark accreditation for the IPSA website and include this as a KPI.
15. We have now researched the implications of this in more detail. A number of the technical requirements associated with the Crystal Mark – in particular, that a website be accessible with JavaScript and CSS technology turned off – would necessitate some fundamental and costly changes to our current website. These would have an adverse impact on both the look and functionality of the site – removing the search functionality, reducing image quality, removing the ability to quickly navigate the Scheme and guidance sections and preventing the FAQs section being searchable. The cost of these changes would be in the region of £7,000.
16. We therefore propose that, while work should continue to improve the clarity, usability and accessibility of the website, we should not seek Crystal Mark accreditation.

Public Accounts Committee and National Audit Office

17. Following the hearing on 13 July, we expect the Public Accounts Committee to publish its report on IPSA, following the NAO's report, on 23 September.
18. We will have advance sight of the report on 21 September (i.e. 48 hours notice) and will have two months to respond: we have allocated time at the Board meeting on 20 October to consider and sign off this response.

[REDACTED]

19. [REDACTED]

Pensions: Commencement of IPSA's powers

20. The Government yesterday (12 September) tabled a motion for debate in either w/c 10 October or w/c 17 October prior to our powers over MPs' pensions being commenced.

[REDACTED]

21. The text of the motion is reproduced below:

That this House reasserts its view that the salaries, pensions and expenses scheme for hon. Members ought to be determined independently of this House; accordingly invites the Leader of the House to make an order commencing those provisions of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 which transfer responsibility for the pensions of hon. Members to the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA); supports the approach to public service pension reform set out in the Final Report of the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission chaired by Lord Hutton of Furness; believes that IPSA should introduce, by 2015, a new pension scheme for hon. Members which is informed by the Commission's findings and their subsequent application to other public service pension schemes; recognises the case for an increase in pension contributions made in Lord Hutton's interim report; and accordingly invites IPSA to increase contribution rates for hon. Members from 1 April 2012 in line with changes in pension contribution rates for other public service schemes.

[REDACTED]

22. [REDACTED]

Scott Woolveridge
Acting Chief Executive

13 September 2011