

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

Wednesday 21 March 2018

Present: Ruth Evans, Chairman
Sir Robert Owen
Rt. Hon Jennifer Willott
William Lifford
Jackie Smith

In attendance: Marcial Boo, Chief Executive
Alastair Bridges, Director of Corporate Services
John Sills, Director of Regulation
Vicky Fox, Director of MP Support Services
Head of Policy and Assurance
Head of Communications
Head of Programmes and Change
Chief Executive of IPSOS Mori in the UK and Ireland
Senior Executive Assistant and Board Secretary

Apologies: None

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 9 May 2018

Publication: Approved for publication

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those attending, inviting the Board and members of staff to declare any interests not previously recorded. Jackie Smith declared that Ipsos Mori, of whom the Chief Executive in the UK and Ireland would later be joining the meeting, were separately undertaking some work at the National Midwifery Council.

2. Minutes of previous meetings and matters arising

Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 30 January 2018 were approved as a correct record.

Actions arising from the previous meeting

- 2.2 The Board agreed that the action to follow up with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) over their investigation into the data breach that occurred at IPSA in March 2017, should be removed. The Board noted that the ICO had yet to feedback the results of their investigation, but that they would do so when ready.
- 2.3 The Board were also content that a previous action for the Compliance Officer to liaise with Will Lifford over the construction of a log to monitor cases and outstanding work be marked void, given that the Compliance Officer had since resigned from his post.

3. Consultation on MPs' pay and pensions – Draft consultation document

- 3.1 IPSA's Head of Policy presented a draft of IPSA's consultation document on MPs' pay and remuneration. She explained that the document had incorporated the Board's views on issues considered at previous meetings, and asked that the Board consider the draft consultation document and agree any further amendments, prior to the document returning to the Board for final approval on 9 May.
- 3.2 The Board considered the document, noting that a decision was required as to whether standing down MPs should receive a Loss of Office Payment in the event of a Snap Election (considered to be any election taking place before the expiry of a full, fixed term Parliament). The Board agreed that they should, noting that in the event a snap election could significantly alter an MP's plans for standing down, particularly if they had budgeted for a full, five year fixed term Parliament.

- 3.3 The Board agreed that the consultation document was well written, and were content for the document to be formally approved outside of committee. The Head of Communications noted that, because of this decision, the consultation could begin on 10 May, to allow more time for responses to be received by 29 June. The Board were content with this approach.

4. Revised publication policy

- 4.1 The Board received a paper asking that they consider proposed changes to IPSA's publication policy relating to the security of MPs and their staff; and other changes for clarification.
- 4.2 The paper recommended that paragraph 6 of the policy be amended to clarify that all costs purchased through direct suppliers are publishable, and that paragraph 12, which states that we will publish the names of MPs' landlords, be removed so as to reflect IPSA's current operational policy not to publish this information. The Board were content that these changes were appropriate.
- 4.2 The paper also noted that at the Board's meeting of 29 March 2017, it was decided that the additional security concerns facing MPs warranted the removal of the free text fields on published claims detailing the locations that MPs journeyed to and from. This had operated in practice since. However, the Board noted that this would cease to be an issue after the implementation of IPSA's new system. Which would utilise generic drop down locations designed not to compromise MPs' security. This would mean that only locations such as "constituency office," would be published, which would not reveal information that might threaten an MP's security.
- 4.4 The Board approved the revised publication policy, and confirmed that it should also be subject to public consultation, alongside our review of MPs' remuneration.

5. IPSA's Strategy

- 5.1 The Board received a paper from IPSA's Head of Communications outlining the results of IPSA's first consultation on its strategy. He recommended that the Board agree the final version of the Strategy, as no specific changes had been made as a result of IPSA staff or public consultation feedback.
- 5.2 The Board noted that, in total, 47 responses had been received to the consultation. They were content that each had been given due consideration, and so approved the strategy.

6. Public engagement

- 6.1 The Board welcomed Ben Page, the Chief Executive of IPSOS Mori in the UK and Ireland, to their discussion of IPSA's public engagement. The discussion aimed to consider how IPSA engages with the public and how it measures this. The Board noted that, up until now, IPSA had always opted to try to keep a low profile with the media, stakeholders and the public. The Board considered whether, after years of successful regulation, IPSA might take a more proactive position on its own engagement.
- 6.2 Ben Page pointed to several areas in which IPSA could develop its engagement. He noted the high compliance of MPs with IPSA's rules, and the organisation's status as a world leader in its field. The Board noted that it was IPSA's role to assure the public that their money is being used effectively, and agreed that these narratives could provide the public with that assurance.
- 6.3 The prospect of surveying MPs or the public about the effectiveness of IPSA's regulation was also discussed. Yet there was agreement among Board members that before adopting a more pro-active approach to public engagement, IPSA must be clear as to what it intends to achieve. The Board thanked Ben Page for his thought provoking input, and determined to consider at future meetings what the goals of any change in IPSA's engagement strategy would be.

7. Continuous improvement

- 7.1 The Chief Executive presented to the Board IPSA's initial paper outlining a continuous improvement programme to continue on from the implementation of IPSA Online. He explained to the Board the Executive's desire to continue the momentum of IPSA Online, in carrying out further improvements.
- 7.2 The Board noted the team's desire to improve. But felt that a period of consolidation after the launch of IPSA's new system would be useful. They noted that this would allow for time to embed new processes brought into effect by the new system, and GDPR.
- 7.3 The Board agreed with the ideas presented in the continuous improvement paper, but were of the view it would be best to revisit the idea in 12 months' time.

8. GDPR update

- 8.1 The Director of Corporate Services updated the Board on IPSA's project to achieve GDPR compliance. He outlined to the Board the progress already made in updating IPSA's data policies, explaining that IPSA aimed to be substantially compliant with

GDPR by 25 May, when it comes fully into effect, whilst acknowledging there would be more to do over the medium term to sustain progress.

- 8.2 The Board were reassured by the extent of the work that had already been completed, along with the knowledge that an external audit review of the GDPR project was due for consideration in June. They looked forward to a further, substantive update then.

9. IPSA Online Business case

- 9.1 The Board considered a paper from IPSA's Programme Manager, in order to consider the revised costs and benefits of the IPSA Online improvement programme. These had been recalculated two years after they were first put to the Board.
- 9.2 The Board noted that the overall cost of the improvement programme has increased from the figure reported to the Board in October 2017. They also noted that the current forecast cost over three years was 50 per cent higher than the projected cost over two years set out in January 2016 in the original business case, and that the expected cost savings to be delivered by the system had also decreased.
- 9.3 The Board acknowledged that the increase in costs related to poor initial budgeting, higher than anticipated software and implementation support costs, poor initial budgeting, an unexpected General Election, the complexity of the project and difficulties with the supplier.
- 9.4 The Board enquired as to whether costs were likely to increase any further before the launch of the new system in July 2018. The Chief Executive acknowledged that it was possible they could rise marginally if additional support was required at the launch of the system.
- 9.5 The Board were pleased to note that lessons had been learned from the initial budgetary mistakes, but were keen to see a simplified table, setting out the evolution of the figures each year.

10. Compliance Officer's report

- 10.1 The Board received an update from the Compliance Officer for the IPSA. He explained that three ongoing reviews would be concluded and published before the end of April. The Board were assured by the progress on the Compliance Officer's work since February, and looked forward to an additional update at their meeting in May.

11. IPSA Online highlight report

- 11.1 The Board were assured by the progress reported in the IPSA Online highlight report. They noted the success of the first Payroll Parallel run between IPSA's old and new systems, which had shown IPSA's data to be mostly accurate, and the ongoing usability testing which was leading to useful and positive feedback about the system from MPs and their staff.
- 11.2 The Board noted that it would be helpful to understand the plans for the cutover period, during which IPSA would move from one system to another, but were otherwise content with progress.

12. CEO's Report

- 12.1 The Board reviewed the Chief Executive's monthly report on IPSA's ongoing work. In particular they noted that the Chair, Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services, had appeared before a session of the Speaker's Committee for the IPSA on 14 March, during which IPSA's budget for 2018-19 was approved. The Board placed on record their thanks to IPSA's Director of Corporate Services and the Finance team, who had prepared the budget and financial information in advance.

13. Financial Management Accounts

- 13.1 The Board received the financial management accounts for February. They noted there had been little change since January's accounts, and were content that budgets were continuing to be managed effectively.

14. The Board's Programme of Work

- 14.1 The Board noted that, in line with the decision of the Audit and Risk Committee to cancel their planned meeting on 8 May, the Programme of work should be updated to reflect this.

15. AOB

15.3 No further items were raised at the Chair's invitation. The Chair thanked the Board and Executive for their attendance, bringing proceedings to a close.

Meeting closed