

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

Thursday 24 January 2019

Present: Ruth Evans, Chairman
Sir Robert Owen
Rt. Hon Jenny Willott
Will Lifford
Richard Lloyd

In attendance: Marcial Boo, Chief Executive

Vicky Fox, Director of MP Support Services (Items 10 – 15)

Alastair Bridges, Director of Corporate Services

Head of Policy and Assurance

Head of Communications (Items 10 – 15)

Senior Executive Assistant and Board Secretary (Minutes)

Publication and Validation Manager (Item 9 only)

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 14 March 2019

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. No declarations were forthcoming.

2. Minutes of previous meetings and matters arising

Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 13 December were approved as a correct record, subject to one minor amendment.

Actions arising from the previous meeting

- 2.2 All actions due to be completed from the previous meeting had been completed. The corporate plan will return to the Board in March as scheduled.

3. Chief Executive's Report

- 3.1 The Chief Executive reported that the results of the IPSA staff survey had just been received and will be reported in full to the Board at the March meeting.
- 3.2 In addition, the Chief Executive confirmed that IPSA Online was still on track to go-live in April 2019, and that this would be announced to MPs by the beginning of February. The Board noted that, due to the change in the implementation of the system, IPSA will lay its accounts following the summer recess, with the agreement of HM Treasury and the National Audit Office.
- 3.3 The Board reviewed the performance data annexed to the report. The Board highlighted the consistency with which staff are hitting their targets and discussed the need to review these. The Executive stated that, following the launch of IPSA Online, these targets will be reviewed later in 2019.

4. MPs' salary adjustments for 2019-20

- 4.1 The Board approved an increase to MPs' pay of 2.7%, based on the Office for National Statistics figure for the change in average public sector earnings, as published in December 2018.

5. Technical Changes to the Scheme

- 5.1 The Board reviewed proposed technical changes to the Scheme of MPs' Business Costs and Expenses.
- 5.2 The Board agreed to consult on an amendment to the Scheme that will allow MPs to pay a hire fee in order to use IPSA-funded IT equipment for campaigning during election periods. This will simplify the rules during this period and bring IPSA's rule in line with that of Parliamentary Digital Services in the House of Commons.
- 5.3 In addition, the Board agreed to consult on a minor amendment to the Scheme which would provide IPSA with the discretion to extend the 90-day period for submitting claims in exceptional circumstances. The Board also agreed to consult to amend the Scheme to allow IPSA to extend the winding up period when it makes practical sense to do so.
- 5.4 Finally, the Board agreed to consult on several minor amendments in the phrasing of some text within the Scheme.
 - 5.4.1 Paragraph 1.2 will be revised to clarify the role of proxies and what IPSA staff are able to discuss with them.
 - 5.4.2 Chapter 3 will be amended to include additional guidance stating that MPs are responsible for managing their own budgets following the implementation of IPSA Online.
 - 5.4.3 Paragraph 3.5 will be rephrased to clarify the definition of travel which is 'not considered necessary for the performance of MPs' parliamentary functions'.
 - 5.4.4 Paragraph 7.11 will also be amended to make it clear that reward and recognition payments cannot be made to staff who are connected parties.
 - 5.4.5 Paragraph 9.18 will be revised to make it clear that MPs are able to claim for Ultra Low Emission Zone charges.
- 5.5 These proposed changes will be subject to public consultation for three weeks. Following this, the Board will consider responses before implementing final changes in the updated Scheme of MPs' Business Costs and Expenses for 2019-20.

6. Technical Changes to the Pensions Scheme

- 6.1 The Board endorsed the recommendation in the paper to change IPSA's pension scheme so that it aligns with the financial assumptions used in the cost cap valuations set out in directions from HM Treasury. It was agreed that that, as this was the intention when this part of the scheme was introduced, it is not necessary to consult on this as a change.

- 6.2 Additionally, the Board agreed to the recommendation that IPSA and the Trustees are able to extend time limits or deadlines, for example to opt-out of schemes, in particular cases. This decision will be consulted on for a period of three weeks, after which, having reviewed the responses, an appropriate amendment may be made to the pension scheme in 2019-20.

7. 'Winding up' payment rules

- 7.1 The Board discussed and agreed the recommendation that winding-up payments should be made to standing-down MPs at a snap election, regardless of when the snap election occurs. This will appear in the 2019-20 Scheme of MPs' Business Costs and Expenses.
- 7.2 The Board also considered and agreed the draft amendments to the rules to implement the new winding up payments (subject to legal sign off)

8. Publication policy consultation report

- 8.1 The Board noted the work completed by the Policy team to complete the publication consultation report. The Board approved the report to be published on IPSA's website.

9. IPSA's Publication work

- 9.1 The Publication and Validation Manager presented the work of the IPSA Publication team for the Board's information. He discussed the process of bimonthly publication and the stages that are completed to ensure efficient and accurate publication cycles.
- 9.2 The Board thanked him and the team for the work they do, and noted the rigorous systems that IPSA have in place to ensure successful publication. They looked forward to further developments in the way data are published in future.

10. Public engagement

- 10.1 The Board reviewed the first draft of the public engagement paper and thanked the Director of Regulation and Insight and the Communications team for their work, endorsing the overall approach.

11. Media Handling

- 11.1 The Communications team provided an update of their work on IPSA's media handling strategy, and noted favourably that adverse media coverage of IPSA and of MPs' expenses had declined markedly since IPSA was established.
- 11.2 The Board considered whether IPSA should publish assurance reports throughout the year rather than only once a year in an annual assurance report. Board members were in favour of this approach. Following receipt and approval of the next assurance report, the Board will then decide on the date of its publication.
- 11.3 The Board thanked the Communications team, and the Director of Regulation and Insight, for their work to date. The Board would receive a full communications strategy at its meeting in March, which would include IPSA's internal communication and stakeholder engagement strategies, as well as IPSA's approach to public engagement and media handling.

12. IPSA's Estimate

- 12.1 The Board received the final Estimate, as was shown to the Speaker's Committee for the IPSA on 23 January 2019. The final version included all impacts resulting from the new IPSA Online go-live date of 2 April.
- 12.2 The Board thanked the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services for their work prior to the SCIPSA meeting and for appearing alongside the Chair at the meeting.

13. Financial Position and Management account

- 13.1 The Board thanked the Finance team for their work on the finance report, noting the slight amendments that have been made within subhead B as a result of changes to IPSA Online.

14. The Board programme of work

- 14.1 The Board noticed a discrepancy between the agenda for the meeting on 14 March 2019, and that included in the Board programme of work. The Board Secretary will look into this and review the content of this document prior to the next meeting.

15. Any Other Business

- 15.1 No further items were raised. The Chair thanked the Board and Executive for their attendance, bringing proceedings to a close.

