

## Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

Thursday 13 December 2018

**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 Regulation and Insight

Alastair Bridges, Director of Corporate Services

Head of Policy and Assurance

Head of Communications

Senior Executive Assistant and Board Secretary (Minutes)

Research Assistant (Item 6 Only)

Tracy Hawkings, Compliance Officer (Items 3 and 4 Only)

Kathryn Stone, Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (Item 3 Only)

Personal Assistant to Kathryn Stone (Item 3 Only)

**Status:** Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 24 January 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 20 September were approved as a correct record, subject to four minor amendments.

### Actions arising from the previous meeting

- 2.2 All actions from the previous meeting have been completed without comment.

## **3. External Speaker: Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards – Kathryn Stone**

- 3.1 The Board welcomed Kathryn Stone, Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. The Board discussed the Commissioner's role, and the work of the Commissioner for Standards' Office. The Board thanked the Commissioner for attending and looked forward to working with her in the future.

## **4. Compliance Officer's report**

- 4.1 The Compliance Officer presented her report on her work over the preceding period. The Board commended the Compliance Officer on her efficiency in resolving outstanding cases and look forward to a further update in March.

## **5. Chief Executive's Report**

- 5.1 The Chief Executive updated the Board on the release of IPSA's annual publication, stating that the assurance reports, Freedom of Information request and annual publication data were all published as expected and no media coverage was received.
- 5.2 Additionally, the lease for 85 The Strand has now been signed with the intention to move in to the property in late February or the beginning of March. Progress is being made with looking at the layout and design of the office.
- 5.3 The Board were updated on the progress being made with the IPSA Online improvement programme including confirmation of an intended early 2019 go-live

date. The Board were concerned to make sure that staff are prepared to manage the financial year-end process, and that IPSA would be appropriately resourced when the system is launched. The Chief Executive confirmed that these were priorities to ensure a successful go-live and would be considered when selecting the final go-live date.

- 5.4 The Board asked about the report from the Sutton Trust that related to the pay of interns. The Director of Regulation and Insight confirmed that she would meet the Trust in January to discuss IPSA's position that all interns employed by MPs for longer than four weeks should receive the minimum wage. Although IPSA have no remit over how interns are employed, we would clarify with the Trust IPSA's role in the process.

## **6. MPs' budgets for 2019/20**

- 6.1 The Board received a paper with options and recommendations for increases to MPs' budgets for the 2019-20 financial year.
- 6.2 The Board received three options for an increase to MPs' staffing budgets. The Board decided to increase this budget by 1.5%, as it reflects the change in pay that the wider civil service would receive. Additionally, the Board agreed to consider a more fundamental review of MPS' staffing budgets in 2019-20. This would allow them to amend the budget as necessary following a full consultation process on the demands on MPs' staffing budgets that would start in January.
- 6.3 The Board agreed to increase MPs' office costs expenditure budgets by 2.2% to reflect inflation.
- 6.4 The Board approved the recommendation to increase costs related to utilities in the accommodation budget by 2.2%. As the evidence showed that rental costs in Westminster and Lambeth had actually declined in the last year, the Board agreed not to make other changes to MPs' accommodation budgets. As such, although the associated cost element of the accommodation would increase by inflation, the overall budget increase would only be 0.4%.
- 6.5 The Board agreed to make no change to the dependant uplift to MPs' accommodation budget. They also agreed to keep the allowance for hotels in London, outside London and in Europe the same at £150 and £175 per night, with a further review in 2020-21.
- 6.6 The Board agreed to increase London Area Living Payments (LALP) by 2.2% in line with inflation.
- 6.7 Finally, the Board agreed that no change should be made to MPs' winding-up budget.

## **7. IPSA' draft Estimate**

- 7.1 The Board thanked the team for their work on the 2019-20 Estimate.
- 7.2 The Finance team confirmed that the majority of the proposed increases were driven by inflation. The draft budget reflected the figures that had been included in the MPs' budgets paper presented to the Board.
- 7.3 The Board approved the budget Estimate and were content for the figures to be presented at the private session of the Speaker's Committee for the IPSA on 19 December.

## **8. IPSA's draft corporate plan**

- 8.1 The Chief Executive highlighted the key themes of IPSA's proposed corporate plan for 2019-20. They included a focus on consolidating the work of IPSA Online and realising the benefits it would deliver. Additionally IPSA will prioritise working effectively with the data that we hold and collect, and increasing our public engagement.
- 8.2 The Board agreed with the proposals in the plan, reinforcing the importance of realising the benefits of the work that has been completed over the last few years. They also supported the work being undertaken on new projects, and looked forward to working with the Executive to develop these.
- 8.3 The Board suggested some minor drafting changes and agreed to receive an updated corporate plan at the March Board meeting.

## **9. Financial Position and Management account**

- 9.1 The Board received an update on IPSA's financial position which reflected a similar position to that brought to the Board in October. The Board noted the information and thanked the team.

## **10. Freedom of Information**

- 10.1 IPSA's Freedom of Information Adviser presented the work that IPSA have done to release information under the Act, highlighting how it strategically supports the other work that IPSA does. The Board thanked the team for the work that they do in efficiently releasing information to the public and upholding IPSA's reputation as a transparent regulatory body.

## **11. Publication: Travel Claims**

- 11.1 The Head of Publication answered some follow up questions from the previous Board meeting relating to the necessity of collecting, and publishing first class travel claims. In particular it is necessary to collect this information to validate the large quantities of claims. The data set also allows for more effective assurance work, in line with IPSA's desire to become a more data-driven organisation.
- 11.2 The Board agreed to continue collecting and publishing this information as is currently done to ensure IPSA remained transparent in the publication of MPs' costs. However, the Board asked that IPSA provide additional text on our website to clarify IPSA's Scheme and confirm that first class travel is allowable and within the rules.

## **12. IT Strategy**

- 12.1 Following the Board's approval of IPSA IT strategy at its October meeting, the Head of Business Technology presented an overview of the strategy, providing the Board with an opportunity to ask questions. The strategy will focus on five key areas: simplicity, quality of service, a new operating model, security and innovation. There would also be a significant decrease in cost by changing to in-house support.
- 12.2 The Board thanked the team for the work and looked forward to seeing the results of the new strategy in 2019.

## **13. The Board programme of work**

- 13.1 The Board agreed to all upcoming Board dates. The Board Secretary agreed to look to amend the March dates in order to host both the Board meeting and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on the same day.

## **14. Any Other Business**

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