

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

Wednesday 11 December 2019

Board Members: Richard Lloyd (Interim Chair)

Sir Robert Owen

Rt. Hon Jenny Willott

Will Lifford

In attendance: Marcial Boo, Chief Executive

Vicky Fox, Director of Regulation and Insight

Georgia Wilson, Director of Improvement and MP Support

Alastair Bridges, Director of Finance and Corporate Services

Head of Policy and Assurance

Head of Communications

Assurance Analyst (Items 7 and 8)

Executive Assistant and Board Secretary (Minutes)

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 24 January 2020

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Interim Chair opened the meeting and invited the Board and staff to declare any interests not previously recorded. The Interim Chair declared an interest relating to his involvement in the recent Court of Appeal case (Lloyd v Google LLC [2019] EWCA Civ 1599) and later withdrew from discussions concerning data protection.

2. Minutes and Actions List

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 30 October were approved. All actions were completed.

3. Chief Executive's Report

- 3.1 The Chief Executive presented his report to the Board, noting that IPSA's operations had been dominated by preparations for the General Election. All managers were mindful that this was a demanding time for IPSA staff and were determined to support colleagues through this period.
- 3.2 To focus resource on supporting new, departing, and returning MPs through the election, a moratorium had been implemented on improvements related to the IPSA Online finance and expenses system. This work would recommence in the new year. A meeting had been held with the CEO of the system manufacturer, and plans to mitigate risks affecting General Election delivery were agreed. However, the project to produce and publish guidance on the system had successfully been fast-tracked.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive stressed that the majority of improvement priorities identified have been implemented. There was confidence that significant progress could be demonstrated to the Speaker's Committee for the IPSA in its first meeting of the new Parliament.
- 3.4 The Chief Executive presented the performance data report to the Board alongside RAG ratings for each measure. An overall scorecard will be added for the Board's next meeting. The Board requested further qualitative information on the nature of phone calls and email queries, as well as complaints. The Board also sought and received further detail on the payment card data provided. It was noted that the payment card reconciliation deadline had been extended this month due to the General Election.
- 3.5 The Board welcomed the report and suggested that it would be useful to include details of all Service Level Agreements for reference. Explanatory text at the beginning of each section of performance measures could also note significant data movements.
- 3.6 The Board received an update on the pooled services review and on the impact of a recent Court of Appeal judgment on data protection.

3.7 The Chief Executive notified the Board of a referral made to the Compliance Officer, who will provide a case summary in her next report to the Board.

4. General Election

4.1 The Head of Policy and Assurance drew the Board's attention to an issue concerning whether an MP who is re-elected in a different constituency should be considered to have continuity of service. She recommended that the Board adopt a provisional policy to recognise continuity of service, subject to a formal review in advance of future elections. The Board accepted the recommendation.

4.2 The Board also discussed the specific circumstances of a former MP who was not entitled to IPSA's winding-up payment. Paragraph 10.19 of the Scheme of MPs' Business Costs and Expenses offered IPSA a discretionary power to grant an equivalent payment to MPs, which the Board agreed. The Board also sought and received assurance that this issue would be considered as part of the next statutory review of MPs' remuneration.

4.3 The Director of Regulation and Insight updated the Board on IPSA's regulation of MPs' websites during the campaign. Discussions were ongoing with the website hosts and letters will be sent to the compliance units of the political parties concerned. Any further action would be for the Electoral Commission to take.

4.4 The Director of Improvement and MP Support presented her paper on General Election planning, which included updates on the overall RAG rating, payroll scheduling, and discussions with House authorities.

4.5 Tailored meetings had been held with all standing down MPs to discuss staffing, redundancy, and other entitlements. A dress rehearsal of the New Members' Reception Area took place on 6 December and the feedback was positive. The Chief Executive and Director of Improvement and MP Support would also deliver presentations to new MPs on effective office management and standards and reputation. One-to-one meetings with new MPs would be scheduled for January.

4.6 The Director of Improvement and MP Support informed the Board that the data collection tool had been successfully trialled through a test upload and payroll run, so that IPSA could pay new MPs' salaries in December on schedule.

4.7 The Board noted the progress made and thanked IPSA staff for their hard work.

5. Reassurance Measures

- 5.1 Following the Board's request of 30 October for further information on the funding of measures to provide reassurance to MPs, the Director of Regulation and Insight presented an updated paper to the Board. It recommended that IPSA fund CCTV at MPs' homes, subject to certain conditions.
- 5.2 The Board noted the recent Joint Committee on Human Rights report on 'Democracy, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Association: Threats to MPs' and restated its commitment to responding to MPs' concerns and working closely with the House and police on how best to protect MPs, their families, and staff.
- 5.3 The Board resolved that IPSA should fund the installation of CCTV in MPs' homes for the financial year 2020-21. To seek value for public money as an independent statutory organisation, IPSA would work closely with the House in any re-contracting process and would conduct an assurance review of this expenditure in 2020.
- 5.4 The Board noted that guidance should be communicated to MPs concerning the capital value and maintenance of this equipment should an MP lose their seat or stand down. The Board was also strongly supportive of a wider review of security expenditure, covering questions of remit, responsibilities, and process, to be undertaken in the coming year and for work on this to be done collaboratively with other relevant agencies.

6. 2020-21: Corporate Plan, Draft Estimate, and MP Budgets

- 6.1 The Chief Executive presented papers on the 2020-21 Corporate Plan, Draft Estimate, and MP Budgets. The last of these followed the Board's steer of 30 October on Hays' recommended salary bands for MPs' staff, and included recommendations on MPs' other budgets.
- 6.2 The Board raised questions concerning the proposed training budget for MPs' staff, the uprating of the London and non-London associated costs budgets, and the provision of additional funding for interns. The Board decided that the training budget should be set between £3,000 to £4,000 and that conversations with the House placement scheme on current uptake should inform the determination of a precise figure for the funding of interns. The Board received clarification that the proposed increase in the associated costs budget reflected increases in inflation, average energy bills and council tax.
- 6.3 The Board considered the salary band proposals for MPs' staff and accepted the recommendations for MPs' staffing and other budgets. The proposals aligned with the Board's intentions to help to modernise MPs' offices and to offer MPs greater

flexibility when setting job descriptions for their staff. Wider issues relating to the Gemma White report would be discussed at the Board's Strategy Day in February.

- 6.4 The Director of Finance and Corporate Services presented the 2020-21 draft budget Estimate to the Board. This included IPSA's Subhead B organisational costs as well as Subhead A on MP expenditure. He summarised the figures in the paper, highlighting year-on-year movements and efficiencies made as a result of IPSA Online, the office move, and the implementation of the IT strategy.
- 6.5 The Board made suggestions relating to particular figures in the draft budget. IPSA's Executive undertook to work through the detail of the figures, following the Board's steer, and to re-present a budget to the Board in January.
- 6.6 The Chief Executive gave the Board a presentation on IPSA's delivery against its 2019-20 priorities and proposed priorities for 2020-21. This would include a statutory review of MPs' remuneration following the election.
- 6.7 The Board stressed the importance of getting the basics right in order to aspire to regulatory excellence and deliver tangible service improvements to MPs. This would improve stakeholder relationships and IPSA's credibility when supporting MPs in professionalising their offices, particularly in light of the White report, and to winning wider recognition of the value of independent regulation of MPs' costs.
- 6.8 The Board's steer was therefore for IPSA to aim for excellence cross-organisationally and to plan improvements according to a multi-year timetable, prioritising for the coming year activity that directly supports MPs and their staff. A further iteration of the plan would be presented to the Board in January.

7. Payment Card Assurance Review

- 7.1 The Assurance Analyst presented the Payment Card Assurance Review which incorporated editing suggestions made by the Board in its June meeting.
- 7.2 The Board approved the report and its publication in February 2020, in parallel with the implementation of a new payment card policy.

8. Mileage Pilot

- 8.1 The Head of Policy and Assurance updated the Board on the mileage pilot. The feedback indicates that the pilot has been well received by MP participants.

- 8.2 The Board decided not to adopt a tiered model to the pilot nor to allow new participants to join midway through, owing to methodological and capacity concerns within the payroll team. The Board, however, resolved that the pilot should continue into 2020-21 with the current participants. The Board looked forward to receiving a full evaluation of the pilot in 2020.

9. Financial Position and Management Accounts

- 9.1 The Director of Finance and Corporate Services presented IPSA's financial position as at October 2019. Specific reports on General Election expenditure will be provided in the future. The Board noted the report with approval.

10. Board Work Programme and Any Other Business

- 10.1 The Interim Chair updated the Board on the recruitment process for a permanent Chair. It was also noted that the Board was set to meet in nine of the twelve calendar months of 2020, but that Board Members may wish to consider changing the frequency of meetings. The Chair also noted the ongoing work between the Board and the Executive to update documents relating to IPSA's governance, which would continue in the early part of 2020.
- 10.2 The Interim Chair thanked Board Members and staff for their work and attendance. The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 24 January 2020.

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