

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

By conference call

Tuesday 3 September 2019

Board Members: Ruth Evans (Chair)

Sir Robert Owen (Acting Chair – Items 5 & 6)

Rt. Hon Jenny Willott

Will Lifford

Richard Lloyd

In attendance: Marcial Boo, Chief Executive

Alastair Bridges, Director of Finance and Corporate Services (1-4)

Vicky Fox, Director of Regulation and Insight (Item 4)

Head of Policy and Assurance (Item 4)

Executive Assistant and Board Support Officer (Minutes)

Executive Assistant and Board Secretary (Minutes)

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 19 September 2019

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members attending. She invited the Board and staff members to declare any interests not previously recorded. No declarations were forthcoming.
- 1.2 The Chair would not participate in the discussion concerning an Interim Chair, but had communicated her views to Board members in advance.

2. Minutes and Actions List

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10 July 2019 were approved.

3. Proposed Transfer of Funds from Subhead A to Subhead B

- 3.1 The Chair invited the Chief Executive to introduce the paper. The Chief Executive noted that IPSA's Executive had judged it appropriate to accelerate preparation for and expenditure on a potential General Election. The Chief Executive pointed out that, since the production of the paper, political developments had been very fast moving.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive confirmed that IPSA was making real progress in implementing measures agreed by the Board in July to boost capacity and respond to demand following the introduction of the new IPSA Online system. This included recruitment of additional staffing capacity and further IT support to secure technical fixes to the system. That said, further measures were needed to prepare for a General Election.
- 3.3 The Board were invited to scrutinise and consider approving a request to SCIPSA to transfer a portion (£600,000) of contingency funding from Subhead A to Subhead B. This transfer would keep IPSA's expenditure within the overall total funding granted to it and was deemed by the Executive to be reasonable, proportionate, and prudent within the circumstances. Whilst the Treasury needed to be informed of the requested transfer, it is not anticipated that they would object. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services was happy to provide detail on the financial position.
- 3.4 The Board asked to see July's management accounts. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services undertook to circulate the finalised accounts, including detail on contingency funding remaining in Subhead B. Subhead A currently had a low number of claims against it, aside from a few contingency funding applications. As such, there could be confidence that the whole contingency pot would not be exhausted.

- 3.5 On Subhead A, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services noted potential pressure on MPs' staffing costs, but this potential overspend is likely to be offset by lower-than-expected expenditure elsewhere. The current trend and that of previous years indicate that a transfer would be low risk.
- 3.6 The Board remained committed to fund security measures for MPs recommended by the police. As such, they sought assurances that the transfer, if approved, would leave more than sufficient funding available for security measures.
- 3.7 The Director of Finance and Corporate Services confirmed that there was absolutely no need to constrain recommended security spending. IPSA would provide the funding necessary. He also noted that the figures and trends from previous years gave him comfort that spending has consistently tracked below budgeted levels. In the event of a surge in demand, there would still be some lag in invoicing. Moreover, the proposed transfer would not draw down all of the contingency available in Subhead A, but instead only one-third of it. The Chief Executive added that a substantive paper on funding security measures would be presented to the Board on 19 September.
- 3.8 The Board then questioned whether £600,000 was sufficient, noting that a second request to SCIPSA for a transfer should be avoided.
- 3.9 The Chief Executive noted that this transfer, if approved, would only be necessary if there was no General Election this financial year. A General Election before April 2020 would require IPSA, as in previous years, to seek significant additional funding from Parliament to meet its statutory responsibilities. In defining the sum to be transferred, IPSA intended to balance achieving IPSA's obligations and objectives with spending public money carefully. However, he suggested adding £50,000 to the proposed transfer to cover unexpected potential costs. The Board accepted his suggestion.
- 3.10 The Chief Executive informed the Board that the SCIPSA meeting of 10 September had been cancelled. If the Board were to approve this request, the Chief Executive would contact the Clerk of SCIPSA to consider the appropriate way to submit it to the House.
- 3.11 The Board agreed that the package, with the inclusion of the additional £50,000, was reasonable and was sensibly timed in anticipation of a possible General Election. The Board asked that MPs and their staff be involved in considering the improvements to be made to IPSA Online so that IPSA could make changes based on user feedback. The Board therefore approved submitting a request to SCIPSA to transfer £650,000 of contingency from Subhead A to Subhead B.

4 Proposed change to MPs' staff contract of employment confidentiality clause

- 4.1 The Chair welcomed the Director of Regulation and Insight and the Head of Policy and Assurance. The Director of Regulation and Insight stated that the paper was IPSA's proposed response to a recommendation in Gemma White QC's report.
- 4.2 The recommendation to change the confidentiality clause in MPs' staff contracts concerned only IPSA and did not depend on the House. The recommendation would be taken forward through consulting MPs and their staff. It was important to note, however, that the paper was written under the assumption that there would not be a General Election, which would affect the timings detailed in it. Notwithstanding this, the Chief Executive noted that a letter to statutory consultees could nonetheless make clear that the White recommendation is being actioned.
- 4.3 The Director of Regulation and Insight thought that it was important for the amended clause to be in place for new MPs and their staff. Her view was that the consultation should proceed, but that IPSA should first await developments this week in the House. For new MPs and staff, the consultation would simply communicate IPSA's intention to provide staff contracts with the new, amended clause included. This would not be a time-consuming exercise.
- 4.4 For existing MPs and staff, the current contract clause does not prevent staff from bringing grievances. A consultation could clarify that. IPSA would work with existing staff, as well as with MAPSA and the unions, to see how they wish to proceed, including by amending existing contracts.
- 4.5 The Board endorsed the paper and the Director of Regulation and Insight's approach. It was important for IPSA to take responding to the recommendations of the White report seriously. The Board believed that the amended clause should form part of the standard terms of contracts provided to new MPs' staff. The consultation with existing MPs' and staff need not be time-consuming, as it concerns a clarification of, rather than a change in, the legal position.

5 Nomination of an Interim Chair

- 5.1 The Chair reiterated her views, before leaving the call. A Board member agreed to chair the meeting and noted the difference between chairing meetings and the continuing responsibilities of the Chair between meetings.
- 5.2 The Board felt it vital that that the Interim Chair be accessible and able to visit IPSA's offices regularly. Operational insight or expertise would also be helpful. It was agreed that Richard Lloyd had the most relevant skills and sufficient time capacity to

be IPSA's Interim Chair. It was also acknowledged that he had stepped up his involvement and support to IPSA's Executive and staff during the preceding months.

- 5.3 The prospective Interim Chair thanked Board members for their confidence and accepted the nomination as Interim Chair from 11 October.
- 5.4 The Board considered when to notify SCIPSA of the appointment of an Interim Chair from 11 October. The Chief Executive suggested that it would be appropriate for the Chair to write to the Speaker to inform him. Given political business in the House, he suggested notifying the Speaker nearer to the time of the Chair's departure, but that the Clerk of SCIPSA could be informed unofficially to flag that a formal notification would be due in October. The Board agreed with this approach.

6 Any Other Business

- 6.1 The Chief Executive would update the Board on actions that IPSA would take on issues discussed at this meeting (budget transfer and confidentiality clause amendment) following the outcome of upcoming Parliamentary business.
- 6.2 Board members were invited to review the draft agendas for the Board meeting and governance session of 19 September, with Directors also attending the latter.

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