

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

Wednesday 3 March 2021

By video conference call

Board Members: Richard Lloyd (Interim Chair)

Helen Jones

Will Lifford

Sir Robert Owen

In attendance: Ian Todd, Chief Executive

Alastair Bridges, Director, Corporate Services

Lee Bridges, Director, Policy and Engagement

Karen Walker, Director, Strategy and Change

Georgia Wilson, Director, MP Services

Head of Communications

Head of Policy and Assurance

Apologies: Board Secretariat

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 14 April 2021

1. Welcome and declarations of interests

1.1 The Interim Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Helen Jones and Sir Robert Owen whose appointments to the Board had now been completed.

1.2 Members were invited to declare interest not already declared. It was noted that HJ may have a conflict on the final agenda item, but it did not preclude her from hearing the item or contributing to it.

2. Parental and Reservist leave

- 2.1 Positive feedback from service users was reported on the 1% cost of living uplift and automatic implementation of staffing budgets decisions from the last meeting.
- 2.2 Feedback from Parental and Reservist leave consultations was also presented, which was in the main highly supportive with some additional suggestions.
- 2.3 In discussion, board members noted that it was important to ensure that equality and diversity principles were met in terms of the application to other forms of related leave such as fostering. The need for an understandable but accurate representation of the provision in guidance will be necessary, given that MPs cannot take 'leave' as office holders.
- 2.5 The position of those whose employment moves between MPs was discussed; the current position means they do not have continuous service and therefore build the aligned allowances and rights.

It was agreed that:

- ***IPSA will change the Scheme to provide for MP parental leave cover fund (name tbc)***
- ***The allowance will be for a maximum 7 months cover on flexible basis***
- ***Guidance and comms, to be developed, should be clear about scope***
- ***There will be a review of the publication principles for this allowance as part of wider review in plan for 21/22***

The Chair was delegated to sign off the communication detail prior to implementation.

It was further agreed that:

- ***IPSA will change the Scheme to provide for Reservist leave***
- ***That such a change relates to mandatory training only***

3. 2021/22 Scheme amendments

- 3.1 A number of other proposed minor amendments to the Scheme were recommended for 21/22.
- 3.2 Members discussed the proposed changes but found them uncontentious.

It was agreed that:

- ***The intern pay range be amended to allow for 1% increase***
- ***The Scheme wording be amended to allow for in-year changes to the Living Wage Foundation's Voluntary (Real) Living Wage***

- ***IPSA remove the need for MP's to request the additional Covid staffing funding, making it available automatically and removing administrative burden***
- ***IPSA rename the Scheme to 'Scheme of MPs' staffing and business costs.***

4. Legacy Issues

- 4.1 The CEO updated the Board on a newly identified legacy issue which impacts on the presentation of the MPs' dashboard and can, in some circumstances, misrepresent their spend against budget. The issue may also affect 2019/20.
- 4.2 The need for a nuanced and personalised approach to comms on this issue was emphasised, being clear that we are proactively highlighting the problem, have a resolution and that it will result in more accurate publication data later in the year.
- 4.4 Board members expressed their concerns about this issue only coming to light now, when IPSA Online has been in place for nearly two years. They noted the reputational risk was exacerbated by this being the last month of the financial year and that there were other risks around using the Covid budget and contingency as offsetting measure.
- 4.5 It was proposed that Change Oversight Committee (ChOC) should receive a detailed paper explaining the year-end processes for 2020/21, including the technical accounting procedures, responsibilities and accountabilities to ensure that they issue does not recur.

It was agreed that:

- ***The 2020/21 year end process would be reviewed in detail, including technical accounting procedures, at ChOC in March***

5. AOB

- 5.1 The Chair noted that the formal public SCIPSA meeting had gone well and the Corporate Plan had been well received with the draft Estimate approved for 2021/22.
- 5.2 WL updated the Board that Veredus had been selected through a competitive process to support the Chair recruitment process; he will continue to liaise with the panel.
- 5.3 The potential reputational risk to IPSA around the recent media interest in the purchase by MPs of certain Apple products and the alleged donation of laptops to schools was discussed. The executive confirmed that the particular claim was legitimate and that the laptop donation story was untrue. The wider point would be picked up in the wider review of the Scheme scheduled for 2021/22.

END