

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

Monday 16 July 2018

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

In attendance: Marcial Boo, Chief Executive
Vicky Fox, Director of MP Support Services
Head of Policy and Assurance
Senior Executive Assistant and Board Secretary (Minutes)
Publication and Validation Manager, Item 4 only
Director, PA Consulting, Item 5 only

Apologies: Alastair Bridges, Director of Corporate Services
Head of Communications
John Sills, Director of Regulation

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 20 September 2018

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 27 June were approved as a correct record, subject to four minor amendments.

Actions arising from the previous meeting

- 2.2 The actions from the previous meeting had not been included in the meeting papers, and the Board agreed to consider them at its next meeting.

3. IPSA's Draft Public Engagement Strategy

- 3.1 The Board considered the draft proposals on IPSA's future public engagement strategy. The Board agreed that IPSA's approach to engaging the public should be consistent with the organisation's overall strategy for 2018-22 which had been published in March 2018. There was also a recognition that some discussions had previously taken place with external stakeholders on the role that IPSA could play externally. Now that IPSA is more established and has resolved aspects of its core remit, including on MPs' pay and the regulation of MPs' business costs, the organisation could now become more proactive in engaging others externally.
- 3.2 The Board agreed that this issue needed a longer discussion at its autumn strategy day, and the Executive committed to including a more substantial paper on IPSA's public engagement strategy at that meeting. Meantime, the Board agreed that IPSA should plan to host an external conference of other organisations that regulate politicians' salaries and costs, with a view to this taking place in early 2019.

4. Consultation on Publication Policy and revisions

- 4.1 The Board received a paper from the Head of Policy and Assurance which set out the responses that IPSA had received during its consultation on IPSA's Publication Policy. The paper made three recommendations, based on the evidence received. It was recommended that the Board:

- Confirm its previous decision to cease publishing the names of MPs' landlords for security reasons; and
- Amend the wording of the policy to confirm that costs claimed by MPs through direct suppliers will also be published, alongside claims made through the expenses system.

4.2 The Board noted that last year's terrorist attack at Westminster and other threats to MPs meant that it was right for IPSA to respond to the growing security concern. The Board therefore accepted the recommendations of the paper, and approved the new Publication Policy that would be put into the public domain later in July.

4.3 During its discussion, the Board also noted that some respondents to the consultation had queried whether it was necessary for IPSA to publish the class of MPs' travel, as our Scheme simply stated that the cost of the journey should not exceed a standard single fare, not that first class travel was prohibited. IPSA's Executive explained that we publish this information because it is currently collected from MPs when they make their claims. IPSA has a duty under Freedom of Information legislation to publish such data. IPSA's Board asked that we consider whether we need to continue to collect information about MPs' class of travel when the new IT claims system is implemented.

5. Evaluation Report of New MPs' Experiences in the first months of being an MP

5.1 The Board received, for information, an evaluation report produced by the House of Commons on the experience of new MPs following the 2017 General Election. The report made 12 recommendations that IPSA should implement in advance of future elections. The report also noted the positive collaborative work between IPSA and the House during and after the General Election.

5.2 The Board welcomed the report and noted its recommendations and looked forward to their being implemented over the coming year in advance of any further election.

6. IPSA Online Highlight report

6.1 The Board discussed the delay to the launch of IPSA Online and the progress being made towards identifying a new launch date. The Board welcomed reports that MPs and their staff were now being trained on the new system and that they had received it positively.

6.2 The Board noted that the Executive was re-negotiating the IT contract with the current supplier to ensure adequate support to IPSA and to MPs both before and after we go live with the new system. The Board would continue to receive regular updates on progress over the coming weeks, including in August.

7. Financial position and management account

- 7.1 Given the early date of the Board's meeting, the Board received an oral update on the financial management accounts for June. They noted that there had been little change since May's accounts, with an under-spend on MPs' staffing.
- 7.2 The Executive would send IPSA's management accounts to the Board following its meeting.

8. Chief Executive's report

- 8.1 The Board received an update from the Chief Executive on IPSA's work. Apart from the delay to IPSA Online, other work was progressing well.
- 8.2 He also briefed the Board on continuing work to find a new office for IPSA when its lease on its current 30 Millbank premises expires at the end of March 2019. Three potential new offices had been shortlisted and we hoped to make an offer on the best of these by the end of July. All three were centrally located and well appointed, as well as within budget, although some were cheaper than others. IPSA's Staff Focus Group would shortly be visiting two of the properties on the shortlist. The Board welcomed this work and agreed that all three properties sounded acceptable. The Chief Executive would liaise regularly with IPSA's Chair and inform the Board of any decisions made.
- 8.3 The Board noted that the Committee of Standards in Public Life had just published a report on MPs' outside earnings. The Board noted the report and that it would inform any future work at IPSA on MPs' pay.

9. The Board's programme of work

- 9.1 The Board agreed to move the proposed Board strategy day from September to November in order to maximise the chance that the newly-appointed Board member would be able to attend. Other minor changes to the work programme were proposed.
- 9.2 The Board agreed to discuss the proposed programme in further detail at its next meeting.

10. AOB

Compliance Officer

10.1 The Board welcomed the new Compliance Officer, Tracy Hawkings, to IPSA and looked forward to receiving her first report in September 2018.

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

Meeting closed