

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

Monday 29 October 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

Alastair Bridges, Director of Corporate Services

Head of Policy and Assurance

Head of Communications

Senior Executive Assistant and Board Secretary (Minutes)

External Relations Manager (Item 3 Only)

Policy and FOI Adviser (Items 9 and 10 Only)

Assurance Analyst (Item 8 Only)

Publication Officer (Item 10 Only)

Oliver Pauley, (Item 3 Only)

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 13 December 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 20 September were approved as a correct record, subject to three minor amendments.

Actions arising from the previous meeting

- 2.2 The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that HR have commissioned work related to Directors' pay, and will provide an additional update at a later meeting.
- 2.3 The Board agreed to remove the third action from the Action Log relating to undertaking a lessons learnt exercise after IPSA Online goes live. This has been discussed with the Head of Audit, who will ensure it remains on the audit programme.
- 2.4 It was noted that an additional item, the payment card Freedom of Information request, would be discussed under agenda item 10, despite being absent from the agenda.

3. IPSA's Communications

- 3.1 The Board welcomed Oliver Pauley from Bunhill Limited, and thanked him for his work on IPSA's communication strategy. He then presented his views on how IPSA might want to engage more proactively with the public in future.
- 3.2 The Board discussed the benefits of increasing IPSA's public engagement. The Board agreed that it was important for IPSA to have a clear strategy for how to manage our engagement with the public, including our media presence.
- 3.3 The Board were generally content with the way that IPSA engaged with MPs and journalists, including through our one-to-one contact, bulletins and press notices. However IPSA could do more to reach the public more widely, but that it was important for any such communication to fall within our statutory remit.
- 3.4 The Board noted the significance of the 10-year anniversary in May 2019 of the first Daily Telegraph story about MPs' expenses. Oliver Pauley advised that this will

increase the media attention on IPSA. As good news does not spread as quickly as bad news, he advised IPSA to be on the front foot and be proactive in telling the story of how IPSA had resolved the problem around MPs' expenses identified in 2009.

- 3.5 The Board agreed to discuss IPSA's engagement with the public in more detail at the Board strategy day in November.

4. Review of MPs' Pay and Remuneration – Consultation report

- 4.1 The Board welcomed the final draft of IPSA's review of MPs' pay and remuneration, and recognised the changes that had been made to the report, including a clearer definition of unmarried partners.
- 4.2 The Board accepted the recommendations in the report in full and approved the report for publication.
- 4.3 The Head of Policy noted that she would now contact IPSA's lawyers and the trustees of the Pension Fund in relation to the changes. The changes are expected to be implemented, and the report published, in early 2019.

5. MPs' pensions – Equality Impact Assessment

- 5.1 The Board welcomed and noted the report, and commended the good work of the Policy team.

6. Annual Review of Assurance

- 6.1 The Board welcomed the final draft of the report, with the addition of a new conclusion and additional drafting changes, as previously requested.
- 6.2 The Board asked about the way that pay-in-lieu-of-notice (PILON) for MPs' staff is calculated, given that it is unlikely that MPs will issue notice to their staff on the day after they are defeated at a General Election. The Head of Policy agreed to review the way IPSA calculates PILON in advance of any future election.
- 6.3 The Board agreed to publish IPSA's second annual assurance report in November

7. Constituency Office Review

- 7.1 The Board welcomed the final draft of the report and its findings. The Board suggested some minor drafting changes before final publication, and agreed that IPSA should publish the report on 15 November.
- 7.2 The Board noted that the additional recommended work on constituency offices would be brought back to the Board in 2019.

8. Subletting Assurance Review

- 8.1 The Board welcomed the first draft of the report, and agreed that IPSA should amend its approach to MPs' subletting arrangements. All the recommendations in the report were accepted.
- 8.2 The Board were reassured by the quality of the assurance work that had taken place, and that IPSA had recovered all necessary repayments where subletting arrangements had been incorrect.
- 8.3 The Board asked how best IPSA could ensure that IPSA is repaid sums as appropriate from MPs' subletting arrangements. The Scheme of MPs' Business Costs and Expenses already allowed for property valuations when MPs rent from a political party. This could be applied to MPs who sublet their office too. It was important that there should be a straightforward process for MPs and IPSA to follow that also safeguarded public money. The Policy team agreed to give the Board further advice on the issue in 2019.
- 8.4 The Board noted that the report was due for publication in IPSA's third annual review of assurance in November 2019.

9. Consistency Mileage Lump Sum Pilot

- 9.1 The Board welcomed the updated proposals to pilot paying MPs' constituency mileage in a lump sum. In particular, the Board agreed to pilot the option whereby we would offer 25-30 MPs a £500 taxable allowance for 2019-20, to be paid at the start of the financial year, with IPSA paying any tax required, and MPs under no requirement to provide evidence to support their mileage costs.
- 9.2 The Board noted the importance of gathering data of sufficient quality through the pilot, particularly on the extent of MPs' mileage and the amount of time and money that the pilot might save both MPs and IPSA. This would enable the Board to consider, at the end of 2019-20, whether the pilot had been an effective and efficient

way of administering MPs' business costs, compared with the current approach which requires MPs to claim a refund for each journey.

10. IPSA's Annual Publication

- 10.1 The Board thanked the Publication team for their work on the annual publication of MPs' expenditure in 2017-18 that will be published 15 November.
- 10.2 The increase in security expenditure was noted, alongside the other data due for publication.
- 10.3 The Board discussed the impact of publishing the class of travel in which MPs travel. The Scheme currently stipulates that MPs can travel first class as long as it costs less than standard class economy travel purchased on the day of travel. The Board acknowledged that hitherto IPSA had published the class of MPs' travel, but asked that the need to publish this in future be discussed at the Board's December meeting.
- 10.4 The Board also noted that IPSA would be publishing a response to a Freedom of Information on the same day. This related to action taken to recover sums owed by MPs, including the cancellation of their IPSA payment card. IPSA had taken the view of the 'qualified person', as required by FOI legislation, whose opinion was that IPSA was required to publish the information to comply with the law and in the public interest. The Board discussed how the information could be presented to ensure IPSA's processes are correctly understood.

11. IPSA's IT Strategy

- 11.1 The Board noted and accepted IPSA's proposed IT strategy which suggested a simplified infrastructure which can be supported in-house. This will reduce the IT budget significantly, while improving the service provided to users.

12. IPSA Online Highlight report

- 12.1 The Board received an update on the progress of the IPSA Online improvement programme. The Board welcomed the work being conducted by Embridge who have provided on-site support and realistic targets for the go-live date. The Board noted that the executive were still confident that the potential go-live date in early 2019 remained achievable.

- 12.2 The Board also noted the importance of IPSA and our stakeholders being prepared for go live. The Board confirmed that go-live should not occur before IPSA were confident that this would be the case.

13. Financial Position and Management account

- 13.1 The Board received an update on IPSA's financial position.
- 13.2 The Board discussed the increase in costs of the IPSA Online programme due to the delay in launching the system. The Board also noted that the long-term benefits of the project will potentially mitigate this.
- 13.3 It was confirmed that this paper did not yet include all the benefits as well as the costs. The Board will receive a paper in 2019 that details the benefits the system will bring, alongside the additional costs caused by the delay.
- 13.4 A further update will be provided at the December meeting. This will be the draft 2019/20 to be received by SCIPSA on 19 December

14. Chief Executive's Report

- 14.1 The chief executive confirmed that the office move to 85 The Strand was progressing, with lawyers reviewing the terms of the lease. We expected to take possession of the property at the beginning of December. The Board thanked the chief executive for the update and for the work of the Finance and Facilities teams.

15. The Board programme of work

- 15.1 The Board agreed to confirm the dates of 2019-20 Board meetings by correspondence over the coming weeks.

16. Any Other Business

- 16.1 The Chair raised a concern about the use of MPs' staff time, following an article she had read the week beforehand in the Guardian. She wished IPSA to appear proactive in identifying whether there was a real risk that, as was alleged in the article, MPs' staff were being paid to conduct parliamentary work but were in fact conducting personal work at the behest of the MP. She asked that IPSA investigate the matter.

- 16.2 Following discussion, the Board agreed that this work should be commenced by preparing a terms of reference for a review that should be discussed at the Board's strategy day on 9 November. The Board would then consider how to proceed.
- 16.3 No further items were raised. The Chair thanked the Board and Executive for their attendance, bringing proceedings to a close.

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

Friday 9 November 2018

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

In attendance: Marcial Boo, Chief Executive
Alastair Bridges, Director of Corporate Services
Vicky Fox, Director of Regulation and Insight
Head of Policy and Assurance
Head of Communications
Senior Executive Assistant and Board Secretary (minutes)
Richard Lloyd, preferred new Board member (observer)
Georgia Wilson, future Director of MP Support Services (observer)

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 13 December 2018

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those attending. She particularly thanked the new Director and Board member for their attendance as observers, even though they were not yet formally in post. She also welcomed the Director of Regulation and Insight to her new role.
- 1.2 The Chair invited 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

- 2.1 No minutes or actions to consider

3. Staffing Review

- 3.1 The Board welcomed the draft terms of reference that had been prepared for consideration, and agreed that they were comprehensive. The Board thanked the Head of Policy and Assurance for her agreed the terms of reference that related to the proposed review of MPs' staffing budgets.
- 3.2 In respect of the potential extension of the review to cover the allegations that MPs had misused their staff's time to conduct non-parliamentary business, the Board agreed first to make contact with Gemma White QC who had been asked by the House of Commons to lead a review into to allegations of bullying and harassment of MPs' staff. The chief executive agreed to write to Ms White immediately to set up a meeting.
- 3.3 The Board hoped that IPSA would be able to work with Ms White both to provide information to her review and, through her, to assess whether there was a real concern that MPs' staff were being used, at public expense, for personal work for their MP. The Board would reassess that part of the review following the meeting with her, but that, subject to that discussion, the main part of our review of MPs' staffing budgets could go ahead.

4. Publication – 15 November

- 4.1 The Board considered the information that would be published on 15 November and reviewed the press release and handling plan. Following discussion, and subject to amendments, the press notice and handling plan were agreed.
- 4.2 The Board asked that the Head of Communications bring back to the Board a paper on media handling as part of wider work on IPSA's new communications strategy.