

Minute

Minutes of a meeting of IPSA's Board

Wednesday 14 April 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

Guests: Senior Policy Advisors
Assurance Analyst

Apologies: None

Status: Submitted for approval at the meeting of the Board on 9th June 2021.

1. Welcome, including declarations of interest

1.1 The Interim Chair opened the meeting.

Members were invited to declare any new interests not already on record. No additional declarations were made.

2. Minutes and outstanding action list

2.1 The minutes of the Board meetings of 3 March 2021 and 11 February 2021 were approved.

2.2 All actions were reviewed and updated.

3. Audit, risk, assurance and governance: Compliance Officer's report

- 3.1 The Compliance Officer sought the Board's approval for amendments to the 'Complaints Against the Compliance Officer for IPSA' and also 'Procedures for investigations by the Compliance Office for IPSA, 4th Edition', initially presented to the Board for consideration at the February 2021 meeting and revised following feedback and consultation.
- 3.2 The Compliance Officer summarised activity and the cases worked on during the first quarter of 2021.
- 3.3 Quarter 4 of 2021 saw a rise in complaints which was likely triggered by the Annual Publication.
- 3.4 The Chief Executive informed the Board that an improved system is in place, which ensures that systemic recommendations made by the Compliance Officer are considered and implemented where appropriate.

4. Chief Executive's report

- 4.1 The Chief Executive presented his report to the Board for discussion and gave an update on activity.
- 4.2 Amendments to the Corporate Plan 2021 had been finalised and the IPSA Values had been updated to be more meaningful. The Plan is to be shared externally with MPs and their staff. Work on embedding the values into the overall culture at IPSA was ongoing.
- 4.3 The Chief Executive informed the Board that the MP Support Team had been focussed on Year End activities. Lessons on improved communications had been learnt and the team were now working collaboratively with MPs' offices. Year-End webinars had been offered to MPs' offices and the reintroduction of named account managers had made positive impacts.
- 4.4 Inbound call taking is planned to resume from 26 April 2021. The MP Support Team will be the initial point of contact with IPSA, via phone or email, once the new system is in place.
- 4.5 The Chief Executive Officer updated the Board on progress made on the 'legacy data issue' which concerned 185 MPs who had had budget adjustments made by IPSA, to their Year End data, which totalled £160,000 approx. This was a large project where the MPs needed to be personally contacted, advised of the situation and the impact the necessary adjustments would have on their Year End budgets. MPs were asked to give their approval for the adjustments to be made.
- 4.6 In response to questions, the Chief Executive assured the Board that improvements made to MPs' dashboard will help MPs monitor their spending more accurately, along with the implementation of other lessons learned regarding better communications and taking action sooner.
- 4.7 The Chief Executive updated the Board on the House's progress in the procurement of a security provider contract. He noted the need for a more strategic debate about security provision in general at a later date.

4.8 The Chief Executive confirmed that following a competitive process, chaired by the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, RSM has been re-appointed for the next 3 years.

5. Assurance review – General Election 2019

5.1 The Assurance Analyst presented the Board with an overview of her key findings from the General Election Assurance Review for publication.

5.2 Various points were noted by Board members, including ensuring that departing MPs retain access to their e-mail accounts until they have completed all of the necessary tasks prior to departure, the ownership and accounting for IT equipment, and the use of payment in lieu of notice.

5.3 Following a discussion on assuring the public that MPs' expenditure was independently reviewed, the Board agreed to publish the report, subject to drafting amendments prior to publication

6. MPs' pensions

6.1 The Senior Policy Advisor gave the Board a verbal update on progress in relation to the McCloud pensions issue.

6.2 The consultation process was summarised. This was centred on the Interim Chair and the Senior Policy Advisor's interactions with stakeholders, MPs and the Pension Fund Trustees.

6.3 In terms of moving the agenda forward, the Board agreed that pursuing legislative change would not be a desirable approach. Caution was also urged in relation to individual engagements, where IPSA must not provide financial advice. The need to work with the House to set up clear signposting to appropriate services was noted.

7. Report from the Change Oversight Committee (ChOC)

7.1 The Director of Strategy and Change gave a verbal update and presentation to the Board on the revised KPIs for 2021-22.

7.2 The Director of Strategy and Change informed the Board that the outstanding action on KPI data quality was being actioned by the Head of Risk and Assurance and that a technological solution was being considered.

7.3 The Board were given a preview of the new dashboard that will allow members to keep track of progress on IPSA's four strategic objectives. The nine original KPIs have now been supported with more detailed management information. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are also in place and due to be refreshed with definitions added.

7.4 In regard to the new inbound call system, the Board were advised that customer service training was underway and due to be completed by the end the week.

7.5 The Director of MP Services noted that IPSA's culture was moving from 'waiting to be asked for help' to proactively contacting offices where we can anticipate help being required, or the offices that are known to be frequent enquirers.

8. Pooled Services

8.1 The Senior Policy Advisor presented the draft guidance on Pooled Service provision for publication.

8.2 Further to the Board meeting of 16 December 2020, minor amendments had been made to the draft guidance, as requested by the Board.

8.3 The Senior Policy Advisor informed the Board that the proposal will be supplemented by greater engagement and communication with the service providers. Having the guidance and formal agreement in place would support IPSA in addressing any breaches.

9. Financial position and management accounts

9.1 The Director of Finance and Corporate Services presented the Board with the latest financial position and management accounts, since February 2021. Overall, the financial position was good as IPSA approached Year End (subsequent to audit adjustments that were still coming through).

9.2 The Board noted the report.

10. Board forward look to June 2021

10.1 The 'Board Forward Look' for June 2021 agenda will be added to by the Interim Chair and confirmed shortly.

10.2 The Interim Chair advised that future Board meetings will have fewer and more strategic agenda items and that this indicated the Board's increased confidence in the new Executive Leadership Team and the future work programme.

11. AOB

11.1 The Interim Chair paid respects to Dame Cheryl Gillan MP who sadly passed away in March 2021, recognising her support to IPSA and also her leading membership of SCIPSA. He had shared his condolences with her team, staff and family following her death.

END