
MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING
Held at Gate House, on Tuesday 29th March at 10.30 a.m.

Present: Sarah Lee - Chair
Lord Edward Faulks (*remotely*)
Matt Brown (*remotely*)
Shrenik Davda (*remotely*)
Charles Garside
Eddie Gray
Michaela McAleer (*remotely*)
Ian MacGregor
Brendan McGinty (*remotely*)
Barry McIlheney (*remotely*)
Claire Singers (*remotely*)
Martin Trepte

Attending: Charlotte Dewar – Chief Executive Officer (*remotely*)
Vikki Julian – Head of Communications (*remotely*)
Michelle Kuhler – PA/minute taker (*remotely*)
Tonia Milton – Head of Systems
Robert Morrison – Head of Complaints (*remotely*)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, particularly Shrenik Davda as a new member of the Board. He noted that no apologies were received. He explained that he was feeling unwell and that Sarah Lee had agreed to chair the remainder of the meeting.

Sarah Lee chaired the remainder of the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8^h February 2022 were approved.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's Report – oral

The Chairman handed over to the Chief Executive.

6. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive asked the Board for their agreement to formally appoint Shrenik Davda to the Board and to approve Michaela McAleer's appointment to the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Board approved the appointments of Shrenik Davda to the Board and Michaela McAleer to the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Chief Executive updated the Board on IPSO's progress on commissioning an External Review. She also brought the Board up to date on the recent appointment of Sarah Hamilton as Complaints Reviewer.

She noted that plans were under way for the Chief Executive and Chairman to visit Glasgow and Dundee in late April and expressed her thanks to Brendan McGinty for his assistance with this.

The Chief Executive gave the Board some background on the appointment of consultants to assist with the development of a new long-term strategy for IPSO.

The Chief Executive finished by updating the Board on a recent meeting of the Media Literacy Taskforce Steering Board, which had also been attended by Ian McGregor on behalf of the Telegraph.

7. Operations and performance report

The Head of Complaints updated the Board on the implementation of agreed changes to complaints operations.

The Head of Communications noted the launch of the new training newsletter, a joint project between the Standards and Communications teams. The website had also been refreshed to include a new section on resources for publishers.

The Head of Complaints and Head of Communications took comments and questions from the Board.

Action point: Statistics on newsletter readership are to be brought to the next Board meeting.

The Head of Standards and Regulation noted the appointment of Beth Kitson as Engagement Officer. She announced that new guidance on court reporting had been well received and expressed thanks to Martin Trepte for writing a blog to coincide with the launch.

Refreshed social media guidance would be published over the following few weeks.

Standards staff had held meetings with stakeholders with expertise on domestic abuse as this would be the subject of a new information leaflet for the public later in the year.

The Head of Standards noted that at the next meeting the Board would discuss standards monitoring of the Jewish Chronicle.

Action Point: The Board to discuss standards monitoring of the Jewish Chronicle at its next meeting following the conclusion of the six-month review period.

The Head of Standards took questions and comments from the Board.

The Head of Systems presented to the Board a new draft Health and Safety Policy. She noted that the policy was lengthy and that staff would be directed to the most relevant sections relating to their responsibilities, when it was circulated in due course.

The Head of System took questions and comments from the Board.

The Board were asked to approve the draft Health and Safety Policy.

The Board approved the Health and Safety Policy.

The Board noted progress on the 2022 Activity Plan. The Chief Executive expressed her thanks to the Standards and Communications teams for their successful completion of a particularly busy programme of work in Quarter 1.

8. Strategic context

The Head of Communications presented to the Board a paper on IPSO's engagement with Parliamentary stakeholders. She noted that Members of Parliament engage with IPSO for a variety of reasons; for example, in relation to policy areas of interest, or on behalf of constituents. She discussed awareness of IPSO among Parliamentarians.

The Head of Communications took questions and suggestions from the Board.

9. Risk report

The Chief Executive presented an updated risk register to the Board and highlighted new risks on the register relating to hybrid working and IPSO's compliance with regulations and legal requirements.

The Board approved the updated risk register.

The Chief Executive noted that IPSO had introduced additional security around access to its electronic systems given the heightened risk of cyber attacks.

10. Finance and audit reports

The Chief Executive presented to the Board a draft statement regarding IPSO's going concern status and related documentation.

The Board confirmed its approval of the draft statement and its agreement that IPSO should be considered as a going concern.

The Chief Executive proposed to the Board that it should approve a planned overspend for 2022, which would represent spending that had been postponed from the prior year. This would be closely monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Chief Executive also proposed that IPSO should make a repayment of £53k on the concessionary loan in May.

Eddie Gray, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, confirmed the Committee's support for the proposal.

The Board authorised for the Executive to plan for an overspend in 2022.

The Board authorised a repayment on the concessionary loan from the Regulatory Funding Company of £53k, to be made in May.

11. Report on plan for significant IPSO projects

The Head of Systems presented to the Board a paper outlining a timeline for four major projects to be completed in 2022. She informed the Board that the timelines recorded in the paper could be subject to change.

Questions, comments and suggestions were taken from the Board.

The Head of Systems asked the Board for its approval of spending on the redevelopment of the IPSO complaints database. She explained that the Executive proposed to commission the work from an existing vendor and asked the Board for its approval to waive the requirement in IPSO's financial procedures to seek alternate bids to complete this work. She explained that this was due to the technical requirements involved and the benefits to IPSO continuing to use the services of a trusted provider who have a track record of completing similar work to a high standard.

The Board agreed on a one-off basis to the waive of the requirement in IPSO financial procedures to seek alternative bids to complete this work. The Board asked the Audit and Risk Committee to assist in monitoring the progress of the project closely and asked the Executive to conduct further due diligence on the supplier to ensure that risks were appropriately managed.

The Board authorised the £57,600 spend on the project.

The Board expressed concern about the proposed timings of the website and brand projects and asked that further consideration should be given to this, in view of the need to take account of the five-year strategy.

The Chief Executive proposed that the Executive should consider further the comments received and write to the Board with further proposals.

Action point: Audit and Risk Committee to maintain oversight of risks associated with the database development.

Action point: Chief Executive to report to Audit and Risk Committee on status of database supplier.

Action point: Chief Executive to write to the Board with an update after giving further consideration to the concerns raised about the timing of the major projects.

12. Staff Survey

All IPSO staff except the Chief Executive left the meeting for this item.

The Board discussed the results of the 2021 staff survey.

13. Any other business

There was no other business.

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 7th June 2022.

Michelle Kuhler, PA to Chairman and CEO