
MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING
Held on Tuesday 8th December 2020 at 10.30 a.m.
Via Video Conference Call

Present: Lord Edward Faulks (Chairman)
Lara Fielden
Charles Garside
Eddie Gray
Matthew Lohn
Ian MacGregor
Brendan McGinty
Barry McIlheney
Mehmuda Mian
Ruth Sawtell
Claire Singers

Attending: Charlotte Dewar – Chief Executive Officer
Vikki Julian – Head of Communications
Michelle Kuhler – PA/minute taker
Tonia Milton – Head of Systems
Lauren Sloan – Head of Complaints

Observer: Miranda Winram – Complaints Committee Member

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Martin Trepte.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 November 2020 were approved.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's Report – oral

The Chairman discussed the online harms debate and noted that he anticipates that this will come to the forefront in 2021.

6. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive noted the recent launches of the trans research and Islam guidance, both of which had been highly positive and had led to IPSO making contact with new stakeholder groups.

The Chief Executive noted that she had a number of external meetings scheduled for December and January, including with the Campaign Against Antisemitism, the Metropolitan Police, Stonewall, and others.

The Board approved one further three-year term for Helyn Mensah on the Complaints Committee.

The Chief Executive took questions from the Board.

7. Complaints Report

The Head of Complaints noted good progress in developing the complaints team and improving the stability of the function. She welcomed the return of Neil Watts as complaints reviewer and noted that although he had identified some delays and matters requiring attention, he had seen improvements in more recent months, which was welcome. The number of investigated complaints going to the Complaints Committee was also increased.

The Head of Complaints also noted that the format of complaints statistics reported to the Board would change in the new year.

One Board member noted that she had recently attended a Complaints team internal meeting and congratulated the Head of Complaints on the team's interaction, discussion, enthusiasm. She noted that the quality of the discussion reminded her of a Complaints Committee meeting.

The Head of Complaints took questions from the Board.

The Board noted the report.

8. External Affairs Report

The Head of Communications discussed an analysis of IPSO mark usage by regulated publishers, noting that uptake had been higher than previously appreciated.

She took the Board through the reasons why some publishers are unable to use the mark and set out proposed steps to address this. In the new year more work would be done to raise the profile of the mark.

The Board noted the report.

9. Finance and performance at IPSO

The Chief Executive noted that there were no significant changes to report in the accounts, although as previously discussed legal costs remained elevated due to ongoing legal matters. She noted that the performance report was not an end of year final version, as it was intended to continue to June 2021.

The Chief Executive took questions from the Board.

The Board noted the reports.

10. 2021 Draft Budget

The Chief Executive introduced the draft budget for 2021 and discussed plans for the year including the recruitment to new roles.

The Chief Executive took questions and suggestions from the Board.

The Board noted that some activities budgeted for would need to be approved separately once further detail had been provided.

The Board approved the 2021 budget.

11. Appointment of auditors

The Chief Executive described the process followed for the appointment of auditors process and the grounds for recommending Sayer Vincent.

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee thanked the Chief Executive for conducting a robust process and was happy to endorse the selection of Sayer Vincent.

The Board approved the appointment of Sayer Vincent as IPSO's auditors for 2020.

12. Remuneration Committee report – oral

The Chair of the Remuneration Committee gave the Board an update from the recent meeting. She noted the importance of the staff being remunerated in a fair and transparent way. She welcomed the revamped midyear appraisal forms, which would also be used as the basis for the end of year appraisals. It had been a positive change.

She finished by informing the Board that staff bonuses were discussed and the banding has been changed to create a new “outstanding performance”. The Committee proposed to conduct a thorough review of the bonus scheme and pay rise system in 2021.

13. Risk Reporting

The Chief Executive introduced the risk reporting, informing the Board that there had been little change in the register since the previous meeting.

The Chief Executive took questions.

14. Health & safety plans update during COVID

The Head of Systems introduced her report. She noted that IPSO’s health and safety approach to Covid had evolved. Initially the greatest attention had been given to considering how the office could be made safe for working, but this had shifted fairly quickly to ensuring that staff are working safely and well where they are, which is mainly at home. This included ensuring that staff had proper home working environments and support for mental health and wellbeing.

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

15. Reflections on Islam guidance

The Head of Communications took the Board through the report, which reviewed what had gone well and less well in the process of producing the guidance.

The Head of Communications and Chief Executive took questions, suggestions and feedback from the Board.

16. Any other business

There were no other business.

17. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as being 9 February 2021.

Michelle Kuhler

PA to Chairman and CEO