

Minutes of the IPSA Board Meeting – 21 September 2010

Present:	Sir Ian Kennedy (Chair)	Andrew McDonald (Chief Executive)
	Scott Baker	Kate Mathers (Director of Operations)
	Jackie Ballard	John Sills (Director of Policy)
	Ken Olisa	Tony Lord (Policy)
	Isobel Sharp	Belinda Brown (Secretariat)
		Martyn Taylor (Secretariat)

1. Welcome

1.1. The Chair welcomed Board Members.

2. Minutes and matters arising

Paper: Minutes

2.1. The Board approved the minutes of the 23 August Board meeting.

2.2. The Board sought a reassurance that the terms of employment for all members of staff included confidentiality clauses

3. Chief Executive's Report

3.1. Andrew McDonald delivered an oral report to the Board. The Board noted that over the coming months the executive team would focus on:

- making improvements in the quality management of IPSA's work;
- reducing costs both in-year and in subsequent years; and
- building its relationships with its service users and other interested parties.

3.2. The Board noted that it would welcome a strong culture of measurement in the organisation and a structured approach to relationship management, in particular with any liaison groups that IPSA sets up.

3.3. The Board further asked to see a comprehensive business plan.

4. Annual review: consultation and review topics

Paper: IPSA/210910/3

4.1. John Sills presented a paper which set out the broad objectives, time-line and structure of the review, and considered a number of options for engaging interested and affected parties, including the public. The Board commented as follows:

- the review needs to capture public attitudes to the question of MPs' expenses and will need to be informed by what provides value for money to the public purse;
- as part of the review of the Scheme, consideration should be given to whether, and if so, how the rules could be simplified;
- any proposed changes to the rules would need to be backed by evidence – both from IPSA's own data and additional evidence provided by any MPs requesting changes;
- the consultation paper should include a section listing those areas of concern that IPSA has already addressed and will therefore not be reconsidering;
- any matters that might arise at the time a general election is called and that are not currently dealt with within the rules of the Scheme will need to be consulted on as part of the annual review;
- the resources available for the review were limited and would need to be closely controlled; and
- the Board would need sufficient time to consider any proposed changes to the rules in advance of their implementation.

5. Expenses Scheme – practical operation of policy decisions

Paper: IPSA/210910/4

5.1. John Sills presented a paper which provided details of the types of applications for access to contingency funds. IPSA has received and set out a number of areas both where the scheme may have been interpreted differently from what may have been intended and where some flexibility has been applied in order to avert unfair outcomes. It also provided details of some areas where the impact of the scheme may have had some unintended consequences or where, since agreeing the rules in March, the cost/benefit calculus may have changed.

5.2. The Board noted the paper and requested that:

- as a part of its programme of work, IPSA should continue to explore the provision of constituency offices in a manner that could provide improved continuity of service to constituents and better value to the public purse, along the lines of space provided by local authorities, as set out in IPSA's original consultation paper; and

- IPSA explore options for re-using, recycling or disposing of the office equipment of MPs who leave Parliament either during or at the end of a Parliament.

6. Parliamentary Questions

Paper: IPSA/210910/5

- 6.1. Tony Lord presented a paper to the Board which provided details of the number and nature of the Parliamentary Questions (PQs) IPSA has received in the five weeks in which it has been answering PQs, and an estimated cost to IPSA of answering these PQs.
- 6.2. The Board noted that IPSA had received an unexpectedly large number of PQs and that the cost of providing answers was significant. It further noted IPSA's constitutional status and the importance of maintaining its independence from Government and Parliament. In light of this position, the Board agreed:
 - that IPSA should adopt the UK Statistics Authority model for answering written questions, where answers provided would not be subject to change by the member of the Speaker's Committee for IPSA under whose name the answers are currently laid;
 - that IPSA would resist any requests to answer oral PQs; and
 - that the Board would keep its position on answering PQs under review.
- 6.3. The Board further agreed that IPSA would publish PQs received and answered on IPSA's website, and the cost to IPSA of answering them.

7. Publication of claims for expenses

- 7.1. Andrew McDonald presented a paper setting out the resource pressures presented by the publication programme. The Board noted the challenge IPSA faced and agreed that IPSA should explore further a number of options to reduce the pressures. It requested some further advice setting out various options and associated costs and risks attached to each option.

8. Evidence requirements, review and assurance

- 8.1. Kate Mathers presented a paper seeking the Board's view on its appetite for risk in the assurance and review of expenses claims.
- 8.2. Andrew McDonald reported that the first internal audit report would form the basis for tightening internal controls, as appropriate.
- 8.3. The Board agreed that the current approach to risk, as set out in the paper, was appropriate and of a satisfactorily high standard.
- 8.4. The Board further agreed that the assurance and review team's work was central to informing the appetite for risk IPSA may adopt in future, and stressed the importance of high levels of assurance.
- 8.5. The Board requested that the assurance and review team have a clear plan of work and provide the Board with an assurance mechanism that would give both

the Board and IPSA's accounting officer (the Chief Executive) the reassurance that all relevant evidence is submitted and effective controls are in place.

The meeting was closed.