

IPSO Board Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 26 March 2015 14:00

Present: Sir Alan Moses (Chairman)
Kevin Hand
Anne Lapping
Charles McGhee
Richard Reed
Charlie Wilson
Bill Newman
Dame Clare Tickell
Rick Hill
Keith Perch
Martyn Lewis

Attending: Matt Tee, Chief Executive
Charlotte Dewar, Director of Operations
Michelle Kuhler, Assistant, minute taker
Alistair Henwood, Arbitration Researcher – present for point 10 only

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Ros Altmann.

2. Minutes

The Board approved minutes of its meeting of 4 February 2015.

3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

Sir Alan Moses informed the Board that declarations of Conflict of Interest would now be an agenda item and recorded for all future Board Meetings, this would be at the beginning of the meeting.

The Board had a discussion on whether in future members should refrain from writing occasional opinion articles for newspapers. The Board agreed that requests to do on a variety of topics were a reflection of the experience and profile of Board members and writing such articles on an occasional basis did not raise any issues.

Mail Group complaints – Issue

At its February meeting, the Board had approved a policy relating to the recording of complaints against DMG Limited print titles and Mail Online. Following further

discussions the Board was asked to consider a small revision to the policy. The amended policy would read:

"IPSO complaints about articles which appear in substantially similar form in print and online will initially be treated as complaints against the print title.

If, on receipt of the complaint, the newspaper takes the view that the complaint concerns an element that has been introduced by Mail Online, it will immediately notify IPSO of its view that the complaint should be recorded as a complaint against Mail Online. IPSO will accept the request unless it believes that this would be inappropriate in the circumstances. If IPSO refuses the request, it will write to the newspaper to explain its reasons.

If the complaint includes elements that relate either only to the print edition or only to the online edition, the newspaper will immediately notify IPSO of its view that the complaint should be recorded separately as against the newspaper and Mail Online. IPSO will accept the request unless it believes that this would be inappropriate in the circumstances. If IPSO refuses the request, it will write to the newspaper to explain its reasons.

Because of the need to ensure transparency and consistency for complainants, once IPSO's investigation or active mediation of a complaint has begun, IPSO will refuse requests to change the recording of the complaint unless it would be unreasonable to do so."

The Board agreed the revised policy and said that similar principles should apply to other publishers.

4. Chairman's report

Sir Alan Moses reported to the Board on issues that had arisen since the last meeting. These included the publication of IPSO's decision in the Sunday Mirror/ Brookes Newmark case; his attendance at the Regulatory Funding Company Board meeting; appearances in front of the Commons Select Committee and the Liberal Democrat Policy Committee; his lecture on regulation at the LSE, and his attendance at both a Regulators' Dinner and the Press Awards.

5. Chief Executive's report

The Chief Executive presented his report. He highlighted three points in particular: Funding for 2015 and the way it would be handled for accounting purposes had been agreed by the RFC. IPSO had investigated concerns about the legibility of the new logo in newsprint and these had been allayed by putting a box round it and specifying a minimum size. Finally, the Chief Executive was expecting to announce the appointment of an External Affairs Director the following week.

6. Commercial influence on editorial policy

The Board had a discussion on the issues raised by Peter Osborne's departure from the Telegraph. Several points emerged from the discussion:

A number of Board members felt that these were not new issues, although the economic pressures facing publishers may have exacerbated them recently.

While these were issues of concern, it was difficult to see how rules might be drafted to address them, given that there might be many reasons why a publication did not publish an article about a specific issue.

Some Board members suggested that publications could be more transparent with their readers in publishing more details of their commercial relationships.

Many Board members felt that the public did not know enough about these issues and that IPSO might have a role in publishing a paper that might educate them.

The Chairman summarised the discussion and indicated that it would be helpful to have a further discussion or presentation at a future meeting, based on a paper or presentation that looked at current practice and issues.

7. Complaints measures

The Director of Complaints presented a paper on measurement of IPSO's effectiveness in handling complaints. The approach proposed measurement looks at four objectives as set out in the business plan: Make it as easy as possible to complain; support complainants throughout the process; achieve resolution as quickly as possible; and be seen as fair by both the public and the press. To measure how well IPSO is achieving these it will monitor time taken for each stage of the process; survey complainants and publishers and review samples of complaints files.

The Board supported the proposals in the paper and looked forward to receiving regular reports.

8. Annual reporting: initial proposals

The Director of Operations presented a paper on annual reporting by publishers. The paper proposed that the initial reporting period be September to December 2014 (the annual report for 2014) and thereafter based on the calendar year. The paper also proposed that IPSO conduct a consultation from March to early June on proposals for the content of the annual reports. This would lead to a paper for the June Board meeting.

The Board thanked the Director of Operations for her paper and endorsed her proposals.

9. Financial report

The Chief Executive presented the Finance Report and the most recent management accounts. He reported that IPSO was financially healthy. Funds were being received

from the RFC in line with the agreed schedule and expenditure was in line with budgets, allowing for a slight delay in filling some posts in the structure. The Board had a short discussion about desirable reserve levels and the Chief Executive committed to bring a paper on this to the next Audit and Risk Committee.

10. Arbitration Project

Alistair Henwood, the Arbitration Project Manager, joined the meeting. The Chief Executive presented the scoping paper for the project to the Board and Alistair outlined progress so far. A proposed consultation document would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

11. Any other business

- i. Anne Lapping raised some points on payments for stories, in the context of recent prosecutions. This prompted a general discussion and Anne volunteered to write a short paper for the next Board meeting.

Richard Reed left the meeting at this point.

- ii. The Chairman announced to the meeting that this was Dame Clare Tickell's final Board meeting. He proposed a vote of thanks, which the Board carried by acclaim. He reported that a new Board member would be appointed after Easter.