

**PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL**  
**Minutes of the meeting of the Panel with the Independent Press Standards**  
**Organisation (IPSO), held on 12 May 2015 at IPSO's offices,**  
**Gate House, 1 Farringdon Street, London, EC4M 7LG**

**Present:**

*From IPSO*

Sir Alan Moses, Chair

Matt Tee, Chief Executive

*From the Press Recognition Panel*

Dr David Wolfe QC, Chair

Tim Suter, Board Member

Susie Uppal, Executive Director

Holly Perry, Head of Governance (taking notes)

**Welcome and introductions**

1. Sir Alan Moses (AM) welcomed the Panel to IPSO, and introduced his colleague Matt Tee (MT).
2. Following introductions, David Wolfe (DW) set out that the meeting with IPSO was one of a series of meetings which the Board was holding in order to seek early input to how the Panel could give life to the Royal Charter recognition criteria.
3. In terms of timescales, the Panel had now started preparing documentation setting out proposals for how it intended to go about the task of receiving and considering applications for recognition. There would be two parts to the documentation: the criteria themselves, as set out in the Royal Charter, and accompanying guidance. The Panel expected (between May and July 2015) to consult widely on its proposals before publishing them in final form later in the summer of 2015.
4. DW emphasised that the Panel would very much welcome input from IPSO on the proposals for assessing applications for recognition. Regardless of whether or not there were any formal applications for recognition, the Panel's processes and guidance would be regarded as the benchmark and therefore the Panel wanted its approach to be helpful, useful and well informed. It was hoped that the IPSO would be willing to assist on this basis.

## Discussions

### *General points*

5. AM reported that IPSO was in the process of changing its rules, and hoped this work would be concluded by the summer.
6. In relation to a regulator seeking recognition, AM enquired whether or not the Panel envisaged that the process would involve assistance and dialogue along the way. DW confirmed that it would, and that pre-application dialogue would be an important step in the process.
7. AM confirmed that IPSO did not intend to seek recognition, but asked how the Panel intended to assess the Royal Charter criteria. DW responded that the Panel would take a clear line – only if all 28 criteria were met would a regulator be recognised. If a regulator met 27 of the 28 criteria, it could not be approved – the Charter did not allow for a lower assessment of ‘good enough’.
8. DW explained that the Panel would develop guidance to accompany the criteria, and that this guidance would be public. A regulator would be in a position to be able to assess its rules against the criteria and the Panel’s guidance without having to submit a formal application. AM asked whether the Panel would give guidance at a level of detail which would mean that the Panel would not then need separately to reach a judgement on compliance with each individual criterion. DW responded that the guidance would not remove the need for the Panel to assess and make judgements on individual criteria.

### *Extent of public consultation on applications for recognition*

9. MT enquired about the extent to which the Panel envisaged that there would be a public element to the application process. For example, where a regulator decided to apply, and the Panel gave the regulator advice following dialogue, what would be the role and purpose of the public in the recognition process? DW explained that the Panel had not yet decided on its approach, and this was an area on which the Panel would seek comment during the forthcoming consultation. Feedback to date had been mixed; some stakeholders felt that if the Panel had consulted publicly on its process, there would be no need to consult publicly on any subsequent applications. Other stakeholders had argued that the application process should be fully in the public domain. The Panel was likely to frame the public element as a ‘call for evidence’.
10. AM queried what the Panel would do if it was deluged with information as part of the call for evidence, for example, information on individual complaints. TS

responded that information not relevant to the application would be put to one side. DW added that only evidence relating to compliance with the criteria would be relevant and it was important to give the public the opportunity to comment.

#### *Role of IPSO in assisting the Panel*

11. DW emphasised that IPSO had considerable knowledge, experience and expertise in relation to a number of the criteria. The Panel wanted its approach to be helpful, useful and well informed. It was hoped that the IPSO would be willing to assist on this basis.
12. AM explained that IPSO would need to be clear about the limit to which it would be able to assist. It now had 87 publishers, including some small, not for profit publishers on board.

#### *Range of media covered by the Royal Charter*

13. In relation to smaller publishers, DW explained that the Panel was cognisant of the issues relating to micro publishers (or 'hyperlocals'). Their numbers were in the 100s, and some of these might be considered 'relevant publishers' for the purposes of recognition. The recognition process was likely to provide benefit to them.
14. AM observed that from a regulatory perspective, the lines of demarcation were becoming blurred, with television, radio, printed press and web based publications now merging ever more closely. DW explained that the Panel had a role to cater for publishers of all shapes and sizes, and in specifying the criteria and guidance, would not wish to set any barriers. The Panel would approach its task in a way which recognised the issues arising in relation to the full range of relevant publishers, including hyper locals.

#### *Timetable and reporting*

15. MT asked when the Panel expected to be open for business. DW responded that this was likely to be mid-September 2015, with publication of the final criteria for recognition and accompanying guidance. The Panel would publish its first report on the state of press regulation (as envisaged by the Royal Charter) one year from this date, so around September 2016. The Panel had already started to consider what its annual report on press regulation might cover. There were questions for the Panel to determine regarding whether the report would be simply factual, or whether it would be a fuller narrative on the regulatory landscape. Even if no regulators had come forward for recognition,

it was nevertheless likely that the Panel would wish to comment on the wider landscape.

16. AM explained that IPSO intended to report annually itself, and expected to have been subject to an external review before the Panel issued its first regulation report in 2016. MT added that the report of the external reviewers was IPSO's means of being publicly accountable, since it did not intend to seek recognition. DW added that the criteria and guidance published by the Panel would effectively stand as a benchmark, against which regulators were likely to self-assess. MT acknowledged that it was possible that the mood of publishers towards recognition might change over time.

#### *IPSO developments*

17. MT explained that IPSO had inherited its complaints system from the Press Complaints Commission but was making some changes to that system. It also now had a whistleblowing hotline in place. In dialogue with the industry, IPSO was gradually making changes to IPSO's regulations. Other work streams included: changes to the Editors' Code; standards investigations work and development of an arbitration scheme.
18. In relation to an arbitration scheme, AM had observed that it was preferable that newspapers bound themselves to a scheme without the complainant having to. There was a need to engage a filter to scheme, to stop vexatious complainants fettering the process. It needed to be clear to complainants that the scheme was a substitute for court, and not a variation on the process for complaints.
19. MT reported that IPSO would be consulting on its proposed arbitration scheme along a similar timetable to the Panel's proposals for the recognition system. The consultation would be open to the public, but would be focused on the industry. While there wouldn't be public meetings, there would be proactive engagement with the representative bodies. AM envisaged that the arbitration scheme would be up and running by the autumn of 2015.
20. DW emphasised that the Panel was mindful that what it produced needed to fit the whole regulatory landscape, and would therefore be interested in learning from what IPSO was developing. TS added that as the Panel was one step removed, the practical application of the criteria was difficult and it would be very helpful if IPSO could help inform the Panel's thinking.
21. AM reported that IPSO had appointed a Director of External Affairs.

22. While the IPSO has a role of regulating the standards, it does not own them. This was an important point for the press. DW explained the concerns the Panel had with the Code: while it didn't have any locus in relation to the Code, it was not feasible for it to be interpreted in any way necessary to suit the industry (in relation to a dealing with a complaint). AM agreed that there needed to be boundaries, and decisions needed to be made regarding whether complaints fell within the bounds of the Code.

#### *Size of IPSO and scale of current complaints handling*

23. In light of the volumes involved, DW acknowledged that there was a role for the Panel to assist the public in sign-posting their complaints accurately, or providing the public with some sort of triage service.
24. MT acknowledged that while speedy complaint resolution was a key aim, it was not always possible to say how well the complaint had been dealt with given IPSO did not always play a role in complaints resolution between the complainant and the newspaper. This was not ideal, but the balance was difficult to strike.

#### *Other questions*

25. SU enquired whether IPSO was collecting data, in order for example, to conduct systemic reviews. MT responded that the standards team was continually assessing data, and if it found a publication had a series of complaints in one area (e.g. privacy), IPSO might look in more detail at the situation.

#### **Closing comments**

26. DW concluded the session by inviting IPSO to submit additional information as it wished. DW thanked IPSO for hosting the meeting and for offering such important insights at a critical time for the Panel. It was hoped that the dialogue would continue.