

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL
Minutes of the 7th meeting of the Press Recognition Panel Board
held on 26 May 2015 at 107-111 Fleet Street, London EC4A 2AB

Present: Dr David Wolfe QC (Chair), Harry Cayton, Emma Gilpin-Jacobs, Carolyn Regan, Harry Rich and Tim Suter

In attendance: Susie Uppal (Executive Director), Rick Borges (Regulatory Manager), Sadie East (Communications and Stakeholder Manager), Jonathan Gorvin (Regulatory Manager), Holly Perry (Head of Governance), Rosalind Stevens (Regulatory Manager), Megan Archer (JS2 Ltd)

BOARD MEETING – PUBLIC SESSION

Welcome and Apologies

9. The Chair **welcomed** Members and attendees to the seventh meeting of the Press Recognition Panel Board.
10. The Chair also **welcomed** the members of the public who were in attendance, who confirmed that they were happy to be named as having been present:
 - James Connal, Capital PR
 - Dr Evan Harris, Associate Director, Hacked Off Campaign (from paragraph 27)

Declaration of members' interests

11. There were no new declarations to note.

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2015, outstanding actions and matters arising

12. The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April were **approved** subject to amending the wording at the end of the last bullet of paragraph 5 to 'acting lawfully'. The Chair would sign a copy of the minutes as a correct record.
13. The log of outstanding Board actions was **noted** and **agreed**.
14. In relation to matters arising, the Board **noted** that:
 - action 16 – the Board **agreed** that the most appropriate time for the Chair to write to the House of Lords Communications Select Committee was the point at which new membership had been

confirmed post the General Election;

- action 19 – in relation to the National Audit Office's (NAO) audit of the Panel's accounts, Megan Archer reported that JS2 Ltd had been liaising with NAO regarding the use of the SORP framework for the Panel's accounts. The NAO had been unable to advise formally whether or not the Panel should adopt the SORP framework, but confirmed that they did audit accounts which used this framework (which was widely used in the charity sector). NAO was expected to respond formally to JS2 Ltd shortly, and the Board would be provided with a further update at the 30 June 2015 meeting;
- action 24 – JS2 Ltd were now progressing the action to take forward the necessary arrangements to secure Board insurance, following Gavin Sturge's departure. The Board requested a full update on progress at the 30 June 2015 meeting.

Update on resourcing issues – paper PRP28(15)

15. The Board **considered** a short update paper prepared by Holly Perry which updated the Board on the actions taken since the 21 April 2015 meeting in relation to resourcing to support the approach to recognition and the overall work programme.
16. The following points were **noted** in discussion:

Staff resourcing

- the Executive Director clarified that the role of the Research Officer would be to collate and codify responses to the consultation, and would be offered on a fixed term, three month contract. The job title had been considered carefully, but it had proven difficult to think of an alternative job title that was meaningful;
- the Executive Director clarified that there may be a need for a piece of research to be carried out, which had not yet been separately budgeted for in 2015/16. The intention was to submit a paper to the Board in September or October setting out the options for commissioning research;
- in relation to Mark Ogle, who was assisting with media handling around the consultation, it was agreed that 10 days was an appropriate length of contract;
- it was reported that Sheraine Rowe had joined the Panel as Communications and Events Coordinator on a fixed term, three month contract;

HR policies and contracts and HR services

- the Executive Director reported that the staff contract paperwork had

now been received from Peninsula, however it was legalistic in tone there were some inaccuracies (for example it referred to the PRP as “the company”) and required some reworking to reflect the Panel’s values and approach. It was **agreed** that the Executive Director would issue the original version once accurate to staff as soon as possible, and would follow up with Peninsula, asking if they could redraft the documentation in a more user-friendly style;

Premises

- the Executive Director reported that she had now extended the contract with Regus at Wood Street by two months, as agreed by the Board on 21 April 2015, and had negotiated £500 worth of free meeting room space per month as part of the negotiations;
- work was underway to secure the services of commercial surveyors to provide options on suitable premises available from the end of September. There would be no cost for this work. Proposals for future accommodation options would be presented to the Board’s 30 June 2015 meeting;

Finance support

- Harry Rich, the Board Member with designated financial responsibility on behalf of the Board, would be meeting JS2 Ltd on 1 June 2015, and he would provide a report back to the Board at the next meeting;

Information Technology and website

- IT problems were ongoing, arising from the size of the shared line supplied by Regus and this was continuing to significantly impact on the Panel’s download speed. The Board **requested** that the Executive Director write to Regus on the Board’s behalf, setting out formally the Panel’s concerns with this and other issues relating to the service;
- the work on file sharing and back up arrangements were close to conclusion.

17. In summary, the Board:

- **noted** the further staff and contractors who had been engaged since 21 April 2015;
- **noted** the update in relation to HR activity;
- **noted** the update regarding the Panel’s premises arrangements;
- **noted** the update regarding finance support;
- **noted** the update regarding IT; and
- **noted** the update regarding the Panel’s website.

Finance Report May 2015 – paper PRP29(15)

18. The Board received a paper which set out a bank-reconciled set of accounts as at 31 January 2015 for the Board's consideration. Megan Archer of JS2 Ltd was in attendance to present the figures, and to respond to the Board's questions. It was emphasised that the format had been kept relatively simple – comments and suggestions from Board Members were invited on the detailed information that ought to be included in future reports. An explanation was provided of how the surplus had come about.
19. It was **agreed** that a footnote would be added to the income and expenditure reports in future to explain any variances (in addition to being covered in the text of the cover paper).
20. The Board:
 - **noted** the position regarding the Panel's income and expenditure as at 30 April 2015, including the net surplus after costs of £60,016;
 - **noted** that JS2 Ltd would continue to provide updates on the Panel's financial position at monthly meetings of the Board; and
 - **noted** that a further sum of money was expected to be transferred to the Panel from the Exchequer via the Ministry of Justice early in the new financial year, and a further update would be provided at the 30 June 2015 meeting.

Final draft business plan and budget 2015/16 – paper PRP30(15)

21. The Board considered a paper which attached the final draft business plan and budget for agreement and sign off.
22. The Board raised the following points in discussion:

Business plan

- some specific textual amendments were agreed, including:
 - the penultimate sentence of the Chair's foreword would be redrafted to read, 'I am committed to establishing independent oversight of an effective system of press self-regulation in the UK. That system will help to secure the public interest and ensure we continue to have a free and vibrant press which acts in accordance with the lessons learned through the Leveson Inquiry';
 - the final sentence of the Executive Director's introduction would be redrafted to read, 'There is a lot of work to do to a challenging timetable and I am confident that the focused and flexible team I have put in place will be able to deliver a robust and effective

- recognition system'
- references to 'standards' would be amended to 'approach' throughout the document;
 - the wording 'and other materials' would be added to the reference in the second objective under objective 5 to the website; and
 - a check would be undertaken in relation to the consistency of the language with the wording of the Panel's document setting out its mission and approach.

Budget

- some specific textual amendments were agreed, including:
 - an amendment to the comments column on page 13 from 'awarded' to 'granted'.
23. The Board:
- **agreed** the business plan for 2015/16 subject to the comments raised in discussion; and
 - **agreed** the budget for 2015/16.

Update on stakeholder meetings – paper PRP31(15)

24. The Board considered a paper which updated the Board on the latest position with regard to the meetings with those with an interest in the Panel's work, further to the update provided at the Board's 21 April 2015 meeting.
25. The following points were raised in discussion:
- it was **noted** that the minutes attached to the paper were draft, and had not yet been agreed by the attendees;
 - in terms of general trends and themes coming through, it was noted that the hyperlocal sector was potentially a significant player, many of the larger of which were likely to meet the 'relevant publisher' definition. It was also noted that smaller hyperlocals might opt to be part of a recognised regulator, in order to secure cover for the risk of litigation costs (or threat of litigation costs);
 - in relation to hyperlocals, the boundaries, definitions and cut off points were unclear, and the picture, particularly in relation to digital developments, was very fast moving;
 - in relation to the meetings with IPSO, the Financial Times and the Guardian, it was clear that while there was no appetite for seeking formal recognition, each had shown interest in the Panel's work and were keen to contribute to the discussion. There was a high degree of interest in interpretation of the criteria;

- beyond the meetings yet to be confirmed or scheduled, and the planned consultation events taking place across the UK during June and July, the Board **agreed** that there was no need for further meetings with stakeholders to be scheduled for the time being. The Panel's position was to welcome ongoing discussion and dialogue with any interested party, however these discussions would now be held over to a different phase of work. The exceptions to this were adjacent regulators (including the ASA, Ofcom, ATVOD and others) which needed to be engaged specifically in the forthcoming consultation process.

26. In summary, the Board

- **noted** the draft minutes of the stakeholder meetings held on: 6 May 2015 with academics from Cardiff University; 12 May 2015 with William Perrin of Talk About Local; 12 May 2015 with IPSO; 13 May 2015 with Guardian & News Media; and 13 May 2015 with the Financial Times;
- **noted** the planned meetings with the Independent group and National Union of Journalists on 26 May; and
- **agreed** that no further stakeholder meetings were required at the present time, beyond the consultation events taking place in June and July 2015.

Final plans for public consultation – Paper PRP32(15)

27. The Board received a paper which provided an update on the plans for consulting on proposals for receiving and assessing applications for recognition, further to the paper considered at the 21 April 2015 Board meeting. Board Members had also had the opportunity to comment by email to a more developed version of the consultation plan between meetings.

28. The following points were raised in discussion:

- it was **noted** that the consultation period would run from 8 June to 31 July 2015;
- in relation to the Welsh language, it was **noted** that the Welsh Language Act 1993 did not apply to the Panel however in keeping with the Panel's commitments set out in its Welsh language policy, the consultation document would be translated into Welsh;
- the Board **noted** that invitations had been issued to some 800 contacts on the Panel's database. The Panel had been asked to consider running an event in Bristol in addition to the scheduled events. It was agreed if assistance could be secured in relation to hosting an event, this would be followed up;
- the launch event would take place at the London School of Economics,

and would be hosted by Damian Tambini. As well as the Panel Chair, other panel members would include William Perrin of Talk About Local and Jonathan Heawood of IMPRESS;

- the event in Birmingham on 8 July would be particularly targeted at hyperlocals, but would be open to all;
- a webinar was taking place on 15 June, and other Board Members (in addition to the Chair) were welcome to join;
- in terms of collecting feedback, notes would be taken by a member of the staff team at each event, and responses from individual attendees would also be heavily encouraged;
- a significant number and range of third sector bodies – both local and regional – had been invited to each event;
- the Chair was now attending all events, and so would lead on introducing the events – the Chair would prepare some bullets for the events and would share these with Board Members. A ‘frequently asked questions’ document was also being prepared and would be circulated;
- the Head of Governance would be in touch with Board Members individually regarding travel arrangements;
- it was **noted** that there would be proactive media during the consultation period, and local media would be utilised for the individual events;
- in relation to advertising, free advertising would be pursued wherever possible. Where this wasn’t possible, it was agreed that there would be advertising in local press. It was **agreed** that the Chair and Emma Gilpin-Jacobs would sign off the final text for the advert.

29. Subject to the points raised in discussion, the Board **agreed** the plans for consultation.

Closing discussion

30. The Chair invited the members of the public who were in attendance to make any observations and to raise any questions. following points were made by the visitors:

Evan Harris, Hacked Off

As the Panel’s profile increased, it was possible or even likely that articles would begin to appear in the press that were not entirely accurate – Dr Harris asked whether the Panel planned to ensure that the public were not misinformed by inaccurate or misleading coverage. The Chair responded that the Panel was very conscious of this risk, and had staff, Board Members and others in place with expertise in this area who would help to

manage such an eventuality. The Panel would respond to all misleading or inaccurate press coverage requesting letters of correction.

Any other business

31. The Chair reported that he would shortly be in touch with individual Board Members to arrange one-to-one meetings, to be completed in the next month to six weeks.

Date and time of next meeting

32. The Board **noted** that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would be held on Tuesday 30 June 2015, 10.00 to 17.00 (exact timings to be confirmed).