

PRESS RECOGNITION PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the PRP with Sir Joseph Pilling and Ms Zoe Gannon held on 5 May 2016 at Mappin House, 4 Winsley Street, London W1W 8HF

Present:

From the External IPSO Review

Sir Joe Pilling

Zoe Gannon

From the Press Recognition Panel

Dr David Wolfe QC, Chair

Tim Suter, Board Member

Susie Uppal, Chief Executive

Holly Perry, Head of Governance (taking notes)

Welcome and introductions

1. David Wolfe (DW) welcomed Joe Pilling (JP) and Zoe Gannon (AG) to the PRP and introduced the PRP attendees.
2. JP explained that he was meeting a range of stakeholders in order to gather evidence for the IPSO external review. JP also noted the framework within which the PRP operated, which had been dealt with in correspondence ahead of the meeting, which meant that the PRP had not needed to form a view formally about IPSO, as it had not applied for recognition.
3. DW explained that in accordance with the PRP's policy in relation to meetings with stakeholders, notes would be taken and then agreed by all attendees before being published on the PRP website.

Discussion

PRP consultation on recognition criteria

4. JP asked for further information about the PRP's consultation on discharging its responsibilities as set out in the Royal Charter, including the outcome of the consultation process and the extent of public engagement.
5. By way of background, DW explained that the PRP had come into formal existence in late 2014 and, early on met with a wide range of stakeholders to consider how it might go about the task of receiving and considering applications for recognition.

6. In summer 2015 the PRP consulted widely on the recognition framework: questions were asked in the consultation about the 29 criteria themselves (numbered 1 to 23), as set out in the Royal Charter, and also about accompanying guidance in the form of proposed indicators and examples of possible evidence. Some criteria were specific, and required little elaboration; others were open to interpretation and needed specificity via guidance. The indicators were intended to assist the PRP in assessing any further applications for recognition.

Stakeholder engagement

7. A number of stakeholder events were held across the UK as part of the consultation process, including in Belfast, Glasgow, Cardiff and London. The range and extent of engagement was more than the PRP had anticipated. A [large number of written responses](#) were also received. Many of the responses made similar points, while a number made highly technical and specific observations about particular criteria.
8. JP asked about the extent of engagement from different elements of the industry. DW and TS responded that all the major newspaper groups, as well as industry representative groups such as NMA had engaged. Meetings had also taken place, including with the [Financial Times](#), [Guardian](#), [IPSO](#). The PRP had also met with smaller publishers, including hyperlocals.
9. JP asked whether the PRP had received questions relating to the content of the Editors' Code as part of the consultation exercise. DW replied that some respondents felt that the PRP should be more 'hands on' in relation to scrutiny of the Editors' Code than perhaps the Royal Charter envisaged (for example, defining public interest). The PRP's view was that its role was limited to making observations in broad terms and in accordance with the parameters set out in the Royal Charter. This point illustrated the interconnected and indivisible nature of the criteria, including that the criteria required the Code to be cleared by a Code Committee and main Board, which themselves needed to be constituted by reference to other Royal Charter criteria.

Outcome of consultation on recognition framework and indivisible nature of the Royal Charter criteria

10. The public consultation closed at the end of July 2015, and the PRP [published the framework and accompanying guidance in final form](#) on 10 September 2015, ahead of 'opening of applications' from press regulators. At the same time, the PRP published the responses to the consultation. The final framework reflected a number of changes adopted in response to points raised in the consultation – a number of observers felt the PRP had gone

beyond its remit in proposing additional guidance, others felt that the PRP had not gone far enough.

11. The PRP had made clear in its final documentation that a regulator needed to meet all 29 criteria to be recognised, emphasising the importance of the interaction between them all, and the fact that they represented a single, coherent and indivisible package that had arisen from an expensive and lengthy public inquiry as enshrined in the Royal Charter. There was no possibility of an assessment of 'good enough' – not meeting all of the criteria would mean a regulator could not be recognised and the public interest secured by compliance with all 29 criteria would not be achieved.

Developments since the public consultation on the recognition criteria

12. The PRP has recently consulted on the [process for conducting cyclical and ad hoc reviews](#), and had also now received an [application for recognition from IMPRESS](#), which also had a public consultation element.

Timetable issues and the PRP's state of recognition report

13. Given the coincidence of timing, JP explained that some stakeholders with whom he had met had suggested that the IPSO external review was being carried out to neutralise the possible conclusions of the PRP's state of recognition report. JP explained that his broad position was that his review would take as long as necessary, but that it would be helpful to know more about the PRP's state of recognition timetable.
14. DW explained that the PRP had two reporting requirements which it intended to combine: firstly, a report on the number of applications for recognition received, to be published annually from the first anniversary from the date the PRP opened for applications; secondly, to make observations on the success or failure of the recognition system. The first report was intended to be published in the first or second week of September 2016.
15. DW added that the PRP was in the middle of a [consultation \(call for information\) in relation to the state of recognition](#), and that more information was available on the PRP website about the information the PRP was seeking, and what would be covered in the report.
16. DW clarified that while the report was intended for the public at large, there was a requirement to lay the document in Parliament and the Scottish Parliament, and that the PRP had agreed to provide copies to the Welsh and Northern Irish Assemblies. The PRP had checked the dates of Parliamentary

recess in the early autumn period, and had concluded that there was a short window between the end of summer recess, and party conference recess during which Parliament was sitting and when the document could be laid. If any problems were encountered, the PRP would publish the document at the earliest possible opportunity in the autumn.

17. DW added that the PRP would not form a view in relation to the IPSO external review report and its timing, or indeed whether the public was well served by the current system, as this would equate to impermissibly re-opening the conclusions of the Leveson Report and the Royal Charter, which had been agreed by a cross-party process. The state of recognition report would simply look at the number of regulators that had been recognised or not, and why. The report would also look at incentive mechanisms and the impact these did or did not have. Put simply, the report would consider whether the system of press recognition as envisaged by the Royal Charter was succeeding or failing, and the reasons why.

Other questions

18. ZG asked whether the PRP had any questions about the IPSO external review. DW responded that the PRP had no role in relaying any general or specific impressions of IPSO unless and until it made an application for recognition.
19. DW indicated that we had issued a general invitation for those interested in doing so to reply to our call for information for the state of recognition report. JP explained that it would not be appropriate for him to comment during the process of the IPSO external review.

Closing comments

20. JP hoped that the PRP would find his final report of interest, and that comments on the PRP's work in some shape or form within the report was inevitable, given the nature of the territory being reviewed. However, it was agreed by all that the PRP's state of recognition report, and the IPSO external review report were differently constituted, and were responding to different external requirements.