



## Steering Board Meeting Note

**Date:** Thursday 28 November 2019

**Time:** 10:15am

**Location:** Concept House, Newport B3 / 10 Victoria Street, London 3.10

**Attendees:** Tim Suter (Chair), Tim Moss, David Rawlins (London), Lopa Patel, Andrew Lawrence, Kevin Orford, Mandy Haberman, David Holdsworth, Ros Lynch, Mike Fishwick, Mary-Anne Venables, Secretariat, Maria Ciavatta, Nicola Smith (Observer)

**Additional afternoon attendees:** Adam Williams, Dominic Houlihan, Jessica Ashfield (Neil Hartley alternate), Guy Robinson (Pippa Hall alternate), Niki French

**Presenters:** Andy Bartlett, Simon Haikney, Sarah Whitehead

### Chair's Introduction

1. Tim Suter welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Nicola Smith as an observer.

### Apologies

2. Apologies were received from Neil Hartley and Pippa Hall for the afternoon session.

### Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting

3. Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

### Actions

4. All actions were agreed as closed, with the outstanding action on buddying to be covered in the meeting.

### Declarations of interest

5. None.

### 6. Governance and Performance

#### 6.1. Executive Report

- 6.1.1. Tim Moss presented the Executive Report and highlighted some key items. He said the results of the People Survey were due out on 9 December and the Executive Board would be reviewing the key messages and deciding on actions. Tim noted activity in the international sphere, particularly the WIPO General Assemblies and the recent trips to China and South America, highlighting the excellent reputation of the Office internationally. He said it was important to maximise this to ensure IP is seen as important. Tim also noted that the current term for the WIPO Director General was due to end in 2020 with an election due in March.

- 6.1.2. Tim noted that during the purdah period leading up to the General Election, there was ongoing analysis of party manifestos to understand potential impacts on the IP space. Tim highlighted that there had been documents leaked about trade talks with the US noting that some IPO staff had been mentioned by name. He explained that the documents were regarding patent differences between the US and UK IP law, and the IPO had been involved in initial discussions.
- 6.1.3. Tim passed over to David Holdsworth to give an update on customers and operations. David noted that there had been a reduction in the patents backlog which was a positive but said there was no overnight solution for tackling this completely. He explained that the team were assessing where small changes could be made to speed up the processes, and there would be a consultancy exercise to provide a plan for addressing the wider issue.
- 6.1.4. David noted that Trade Marks teams were staying on top of the 8% increase in volume, maintaining their performance in delivery. David gave a brief update on the Transformation Programme noting that there had been a positive outcome to the commercial dispute with the alpha phase supplier.
- 6.1.5. The Board thanked Tim and David for the update.

## **6.2. ARC Update and Self-Assessment**

- 6.2.1. Andrew Lawrence provided a verbal update on the recent Audit and Risk Committee meeting, highlighting the Annual Report and Accounts lessons learned and preparations for next year as a major item. He noted the other items discussed including the Transformation Programme, Brexit project lessons learned, and the Risk Registers.
- 6.2.2. Andrew highlighted the Internal Audit Report and noted the Committee expressed its concerns that there were not many reports provided and a number of issues had held up the timetable. He noted that after discussion the Committee agreed it was assured that the Executive and the Internal Audit team were working together to create a plan to overcome the challenges. Tim Moss reiterated this, noting that access to information and timings had been discussed with the Executive Board and a revised plan had been agreed so clear progress had been made.
- 6.2.3. The Board noted the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting and noted the ARC Annual Report, thanking the members of ARC for their work over the past year. The Chair noted the move towards a clear delineation between the role of ARC in scrutinising reporting of performance, allowing the Steering Board to be more strategic. The Board noted the Annual Report and Accounts Lessons Learned was a significant and positive body of work.

## **6.3. BEIS Update**

- 6.3.1. David Rawlins gave an update on the current priorities for BEIS, noting the focus was on preparation for the incoming government. David said BEIS had created a summary of the party manifestos and noted that all manifestos committed to strong spending on science and innovation which could impact the IPO. David circulated the summary to the Board.

## **6.4. NEDs interaction with the IPO**

- 6.4.1. Tim Suter and Tim Moss provided a proposal on the Non-Executive Directors' interaction with the IPO. They suggested that rather than a formal buddying system, the focus should be on three developments: more induction and update days to keep NEDs current with changes in the IPO; more away-day style open discussions; and focused opportunities for the NEDs to share their relevant experience.
- 6.4.2. Tim Suter noted the proposal would be in addition to discrete pieces of work that the NEDs may be asked to contribute to, such as Kevin Orford's involvement in the review of committees. Tim also asked if the Board were keen on an April "stay-day", with the annual Governance Workshop planned for the day before; the Board agreed.
- 6.4.3. The Board agreed to the overall proposal noting this would be a good way to build relationships and share their knowledge and experience more effectively. It noted that previously a list of IPO meetings had been shared so members could attend those which were of interest and requested this was considered as an option.

## 7. Strategic

### 7.1. Transformation Programme

- 7.1.1. Andy Bartlett presented an update on the Transformation Programme and work towards creating the roadmap. He highlighted the key priority of the programme was to revolutionise and modernise the tools and services for both customers and internal users.
- 7.1.2. Andy explained the progress on each individual project, starting with the Renewals project. Andy explained this was a genuinely transformational service reducing the renewals process from around a week to a few minutes beginning to end. He explained that since the launch of the private beta in July, there had been a clear change in customer interaction. He noted the plan to ensure 90% of renewals are completed via the online service in March to meet the Ministerial Target. The Board queried if there was an ambition to renew overseas patents through the system. Andy explained this was a long-term ambition but given the current fragmentation of the global IP system it was important to focus on ensuring our own services were appropriate before moving to an international link.
- 7.1.3. Andy explained the progress and next steps of the POCAS project to decommission a legacy finance system. He highlighted the success in challenging and stopping some historic services. Andy moved on to the AI project funded by Regulators Pioneer Fund, looking at adopting existing technology to create a pre-apply tool and examiner-assist service for trade marks.
- 7.1.4. Andy gave an update on the Manage My project, explaining that although not all deliverables were achieved in the Discovery phase there was a lot of valuable output. He said there was a need to close the gap between what was achieved and what was needed. He noted that the project was paused until the roadmapping exercise was complete to allow consideration of changes priorities before restarting.
- 7.1.5. Andy explained the ongoing work to create a roadmap to inform a holistic cross-organisation approach to planning, incorporating all IT-related activities and data requirements. The Chair noted that the roadmap will be a critical document for

understanding the delivery of the programme and timescales. He commended the work so far, particularly the learning that came out of the delivery dispute on Manage My.

## **7.2. Customer Strategy**

7.2.1. Simon Haikney and Sarah Whitehead presented this item to gain input from the Board on the building of the IPO Customer Strategy. They asked the Board to share what they might expect to see in the strategy, what they had seen elsewhere, and any advice from their perspectives. Sarah highlighted the strategy should be considered in the context of the ongoing work of the IPO, particularly the Transformation Programme. She explained the strategy aimed to bring focused, coordinated cross-office engagement with customers.

7.2.2. The Board noted the importance of segmentation of end-user customers. It recommended gaining an understanding of the potential number of customers and size of the market to gain a sense of how well the IPO is performing. It asked for a strong focus on impact measurement. It noted that whilst customer segmentation was valuable it could mean some customers would be excluded, and recommended listening to counter-cultural voices and considering the future customer not yet identified.

7.2.3. The Board noted that there were a number of reasons raised as to why a customer strategy was being built and recommended focusing specifically on what was the most important rather than trying to solve all problems. It stressed the importance of customer focus at a strategic level rather than operational aspects. The Board also highlighted the need for consideration of what is best for the UK in terms of encouraging innovation.

7.2.4. Tim Moss thanked the Board for their input. Tim said it was important to be clear on scope and overall the whole organisation should aim to make interactions with customers excellent at every point.

## **7.3. Steering Board Self-Assessment**

7.3.1. The Chair led the Board through a discussion of the Steering Board Self-Assessment results. He expressed gratitude for the way it was undertaken and thanked members for contributing. Tim noted the overall tone of the observations was positive but there were some weaker areas identified: the understanding of the Board's objectives and remit; understanding and engagement with BEIS; and the induction programme and ongoing development for NEDs. The Board discussed the points raised, noting that some actions were already in place or agreed on for addressing the issues. The Board agreed the ability to spend more time in the organisation was key for increasing the effectiveness of its input.

7.3.2. The Board agreed that the first three recommendations were in hand, although more needed to be done to understand the individual potential of the NEDs. It discussed how to gain more understanding of stakeholders, noting that events such as the AI Conference were very beneficial for this. The Board agreed the survey showed there was clear commitment from both the Executive and Non-Executive Directors, but there was some more to do. The Chair thanked the Board for their comments, noting that it was important that everyone was clear on the expectation between the organisation and the NEDs.

## **7.4. Steering Board Awayday Outcomes**

7.4.1. The Board noted the paper on Steering Board Awayday Outcomes. The Chair asked members to email any specific comments to him or Tim Moss.

## **8. IPO Ambition: Preparatory Discussions for Corporate Plan 2020/21**

8.1. The Chair welcomed the additional afternoon attendees. Tim Moss introduced the discussion session on the IPO Corporate Plan 2020/21. He highlighted the context and ambition, and explained the session was for the Steering Board to discuss, challenge and give a steer on the corporate goals and priorities for the next financial year, and give a steer on the expectations for the corporate plan and Ministerial targets. Tim said the top three priorities identified by the Executive Board were the Brexit and Trade agenda; delivering Transformation; and the impact of AI on the IP System. He noted that these are underpinned by the work on delivering our core services and the strategic discussions on the scale of our ambition for the future.

8.2. The Board agreed overall with the top three priorities, but also raised Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) as a potential priority given that it is key in many other organisations. It agreed with the recommended number and focus areas of the Ministerial Targets but highlighted that the language of Ministerial Targets is often muted and there should be consideration of the impact of meeting targets. The Board requested a call to discuss the priorities once signed off by the Executive Board. The group held workshop discussions on each Strategic Pillar to consider goals and focus areas. Tim Moss explained the next steps of the process and thanked the Board for their valuable input.

8.3. The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and closed the meeting.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 29 January 2020