



Steering Board Meeting Note

Date: Wednesday 27 January 2021

Time: 10:00am

Location: Remote meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Attendees: Tim Suter (Chair), Tim Moss, Lopa Patel, Andrew Lawrence, Laurie Benson, Kevin Orford, David Rawlins (BEIS Sponsor), David Holdsworth, Neil Hartley, Karen Powell, Maria Ciavatta, Secretariat

Apologies: Mike Fishwick

Presenters: Steve Dadswell, Ben Buchanan, Beth Kenure, Paula Brooks, Simon Haikney, Sarah Whitehead, Andy Bartlett

Shadows/Observers: Afriqnmun Lovejoy (BEIS Board Mentoring Scheme), Hannah Parfitt

Chair's Introduction

1. Tim Suter welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies

2. Apologies were received from Mike Fishwick.

Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting

3. Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

Actions

4. All actions were noted as closed.

Declarations of interest

5. None.

6. Governance and Performance

6.1. Executive Board Report

- 6.1.1. Tim Moss provided an update on highlights since the last Steering Board meeting. He first acknowledged the success of teams across the business in delivering the work involved in the end of the EU Exit Transition Period on 31 December. Tim noted that 2 million rights were uploaded over the New Year with minimal disruption and that praise had been received from the Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys. Tim explained that this work along with recent successes for POCAS, Renewals, AI customer pre apply

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and the Examiner Assist tool was showing the IPO was building a track record of delivering significant change.

- 6.1.2. He said operational teams received an unprecedented volume of Trade Mark applications and were actively reducing the patents backlog.
- 6.1.3. Tim updated that the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement was agreed before Christmas and acknowledged the huge collective effort across teams within the IPO for their input into the IP chapter.
- 6.1.4. Tim updated the Board on the Transformation Programme, which had moved forward and there was significant progress around recruitment and commercial to prepare for the next phases. Tim said that teams were working incredibly hard and achieving significant successes.
- 6.1.5. Tim recognised issues staff had faced with well-being due to the impact of tight lockdowns and factors such as school closures with staff balancing work and home life. Tim said the Executive Board recognises the importance of supporting staff at this time
- 6.1.6. Neil Hartley summarised the ongoing conversations with GPA regarding the transfer of the asset, Concept House. Tim added that an agreement needs to be reached by the end of February to afford time for the handover process to be completed by the end of March and recorded in Annual Accounts.
- 6.1.7. Tim told the Board about the IPO's role in wider vaccine discussions. Tim reported involvement in two conferences with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and that the IPO had played a key facilitating role between WHO and industry. Tim added that these events had been around engaging on the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool and sharing knowledge and data. He said that discussions with WHO have been beneficial and WHO have complimented the work the IPO had been doing. Tim reported a shift in narrative from IP being perceived as a blocker to vaccine development to an understanding that manufacturing capability and rollout was an issue. David provided additional context that the IPO had developed a strong narrative and policy position and was working to ensure it was coordinated with central government.
- 6.1.8. The Board thanked Tim for the update and congratulated staff throughout the business on the handling of the end of the transition period. The Board conveyed thanks to all staff involved for their collaborative efforts and excellent performance.
- 6.1.9. The Board asked if there was an update on the position of IP lawyers working in the EU. David responded that the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is the policy lead but the IPO was engaging with the MoJ and FCDO.
- 6.1.10. The Board queried the outcomes of the research on IP Valuation. Tim acknowledged that the sample size and evidence base for the research was small, noting a larger sample size and data would be required to take the research forward. Tim said

that the IPO recognises the importance of intangible assets and that a full-time staff member had been recruited to take IP Finance forward; however, Tim recognised that this was a challenging area of work. The Board offered that, given the outcomes of the research meant that this work had reached a hiatus an active decision could be made to not take it further for the time being. Tim said that this was a good challenge and one to consider.

- 6.1.11. The Board commented on the number of patent applicants that do not pursue an application following initial registration and asked for the reasoning behind this and the IPO's approach to these applications. David explained applicants register for a priority date, noting this initial stage does not add workload pressure. The Board discussed the importance patent applications could have in businesses' ability to fundraise.
- 6.1.12. The Board asked for additional detail on whether automated processes have been introduced to manage customer expectations as demand increases. David said the automated response was amended at the end of last year.
- 6.1.13. The Board requested an update on the end of the transition period, noting issues with customs clearance for businesses. David reported that the IPO facilitated conversations between other government organisations and industry.
- 6.1.14. The Board noted that GDS had appointed a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and asked if IPO had yet had the opportunity to begin working with them. Tim reported that the IPO is looking to build a strong relationship and that the two organisations had been working well together at a team level. Tim said that he will propose a discussion with the new CEO when they are in post and make sure they understand our Transformation approach.

6.2. BEIS Update

- 6.2.1. David Rawlins introduced the paper and welcomed questions. David highlighted the suggestion that BEIS work closely with an IPO representative at a cross-Whitehall group on Innovation for future reporting. Regarding updates, David explained that Louise Dunsby would be moving to a different role and that recruitment for a new Steering Board chair was ongoing.
- 6.2.2. The Chair added that Ada Jabarou had been selected as the new Board apprentice, adding that the last two Board apprenticeship placements had provided a good experience.
- 6.2.3. The Board asked for additional detail on the new Secretary of State's approach to the Innovation agenda. David said that the new Minister has not yet got into the detail but had spoken about Research and Development and Innovation being key.
- 6.2.4. Tim Moss said that there have been several meetings with Amanda Solloway and roundtables with industry and that there have been positive comments about strengthening the Innovation agenda and the role IP plays in that.

6.3. Update on the end of the transition period

- 6.3.1. Tim Moss highlighted the successes in delivering the transition agenda. He said that there was still some outstanding work to finish off before this migrated to business as usual work so the project closure date was now 19 February.
- 6.3.2. The Board expressed their congratulations and noted that it was a significant achievement for the organisation.

6.4. People Survey Update

- 6.4.1. Tim Moss introduced the item and commented that it was positive to see the results of the work that had been ongoing throughout the year to support staff.
- 6.4.2. Paula Brooks noted that the overall results were fantastic but said that the team were reviewing more detailed analysis to understand if there are any areas of concern. Paula explained that a lot of work had been undertaken within individual directorates, the Diversity and Inclusion and MI team to produce the results. Paula welcomed comments from the Board.
- 6.4.3. The Board agreed that the results were excellent and commented that any feedback did not detract from great survey results. The Board noted that the pay and benefits section results were lower than other areas and questioned if this should be addressed if the IPO wishes to attract others into the organisation.
- 6.4.4. Tim Moss responded that it was our lowest area, but that it did go up by six points in comparison to last year. Tim acknowledged that it could be difficult to recruit into skilled or senior roles but that there is no easy resolution as the IPO was linked to Civil Service pay scales.
- 6.4.5. The Board asked if there is one approach that helped the organisation reach the wellness score. Paula replied that the myriad of support from the in-house counsellors, mental health first aid network, Yammer groups and individual social activities within teams and directors are thought to have helped.
- 6.4.6. The Chair commended the efforts of individuals throughout the organisation, as these contributions make the IPO a high achieving organisation.

6.5. Transformation Programme Support business case

- 6.5.1. Andy Bartlett introduced the item and provided a summary of progress, noting the team are actively in the phase of developing the business case for phase 1. Andy reported that the team have sought clarification on the approvals process and with BEIS and Cabinet Office, and if both need to approve the business case, this would impact on delivery go-live planned for the summer.
- 6.5.2. Andy explained that the team had taken on board feedback from the last Steering Point, with a key element being to engage as early as possible to allow time to contribute. Andy, in particular, thanked Kevin Orford and Laurie Benson for their input.
- 6.5.3. The Board queried the approvals process and asked if any action had been taken to mitigate risk. Andy said that meetings were held with BEIS Commercial Directors and that the team were mitigating risk by using government frameworks for procurement and undergoing scrutiny through gateway reviews. The Board suggested that the team reach

out to the National Audit Office for advice. Andy responded that the team will consider this.

6.5.4. The Board asked for clarification on the timeline and when internal resource would be required to deliver the programme. Andy assured that there was a comprehensive plan that included engagement with staff and external customers.

6.5.5. The Board praised how they have been able to structure their engagement with the Programme more purposefully.

6.6. Discussion on Draft Corporate Plan (Business Planning 2021/2022)

6.6.1. Neil Hartley introduced the item and updated the Board on progress since the last meeting. Neil added that there had been a lot of socialising of the corporate plan amongst the Senior Manager Group (SLG) and Committees. He noted the good level of engagement and that the team were in a good position with the level of development.

6.6.2. Neil explained the next steps were further discussions with IPOB, SLG and Committees. Neil said that a regular comment heard from discussions so far was that the IPO is trying to do too much; however, this feedback was not specific and there have not yet been suggestions about work that could be stopped. Neil added that the team would be turning their focus onto what the pinch points might be and looking at the dependency on individuals and resource gaps.

6.6.3. The Board questioned if the language and tone used was aligned with central government and if more active, positive language could be incorporated. Neil responded that the team recognised the need to use positive language and align the language and tone with central government, noting that the next steps included redrafting.

6.6.4. The Board commented that they could not see reference to the new Minister's priorities, such as net-zero and levelling up, in the plan. Neil responded that there were references to these priorities but that at the time of drafting the list of Secretary of State's priorities were not available.

6.6.5. The Board discussed the historical references used within the plan and if these were appropriate given that the IPO is an organisation focused on future innovation.

6.6.6. Tim Moss praised the quality of the draft plan and said it was a step ahead of where we have been in previous years. Ben Buchanan thanked the Board for their feedback and that their comments would be taken on board.

6.7. Customer Strategy Update

6.7.1. Simon Haikney introduced the item, summarised progress since the last Customer Strategy update in July 2020 and welcomed the Board's views on the progress of the strategy and where to focus in the future. Sarah Whitehead explained that there had been good progress in many areas and noted the enthusiasm for improving the customer experience across the organisation. Sarah reported the Q3 satisfaction score is 84.7%, noting the data had not yet been quality checked.

6.7.2. Sarah said that there were issues with the timeliness for Trade Mark and Patent applications which have been proposed as key areas for next year. Sarah added there

were longer-term issues related to IT and legacy systems and that many of these would be addressed as a part of the Transformation Programme. Sarah said that the team were considering activities alongside this, such as a review of the IPO's website and guidance for customers.

- 6.7.3. The Board questioned how the team are managing the number of activities included within IT prioritisation. Simon acknowledged that it was a balance between pushing Transformation forward and managing an aging legacy estate.
- 6.7.4. The Board discussed improving the website and customer guidance and how to improve the customer experience. The Board commented that a common focus for improving guidance was to simplify it, but this can lead to customers applying for rights that they cannot progress or enforce. Sarah said that alongside the general guidance explaining what a patent and trade mark is it is important to be clear, realistic and highlight the practicalities of enforcing rights so that customers can make informed decisions. Sarah added that the customers' choice to use an attorney should be because it is right for their business, not because IPO's system is too complicated.
- 6.7.5. The Board said that some of the issues have been ongoing for years and requested further detail. Sarah said that the dashboard was a snapshot from the customer perspective, but the team would look to include to show where decisions had been made to not progress work for the time being.
- 6.7.6. Tim Moss praised the work of the team and noted the improvements in data quality over the last two years.

6.8. Information Papers

- 6.8.1. The Chair requested any questions or comments for discussion. The Board queried the Risk Register and the number of risks at the top of the heat map. Tim Moss suggested that this might be a presentation issue and would be clarified at ARC meeting.

6.9. AOB

- 6.9.1. Tim Moss commented that it was Tim Suter's last Steering Board meeting as the Chair. Tim noted that the Chair had made a huge contribution to the office, not just in terms of the Steering Board but also work in the Copyright and Policy areas. Tim added that the Chair had played a key part in the organisation's progress and transformation. Tim thanked the Chair on behalf of the IPO for their support, advice and leadership.
- 6.9.2. The Chair thanked Tim for his comments and noted the significant progress of the organisation in the last seven years. The Chair highlighted the Customer Strategy and Transformation Programme as indicators of the focus of the organisation and noted it was a pleasure to work alongside him.

7. Reflections of the meeting and close

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

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 1 April 2021