



Steering Board Meeting Note

Date: Thursday 11 April 2024

Time: 10:00-15:05

Location: Concept House, Newport, B3

Attendees:

Chair: Harry Rich

Steering Board Members: Andy Bartlett (Deputy CEO), Laurie Benson, Harriet Kelsall, Andrew Lawrence, Hilary Newiss, Lopa Patel, Adam Williams (CEO), Eli Johnson (DSIT)

Executive Directors: Sian-Nia Davies, Neil Hartley, Ben Llewellyn-Jones, Chris Mills, Penny Phillpotts, Steph Dales

Non-members: Laura Fleck, CEO Office, Secretariat

Apologies: Lindsay Jamieson (DSIT)

Presenters: Julie Griffiths, Natasha Chick, Connor Evans, Robin Stout, James Porter, Mark King, Nathan Abraham

SB24/15 Chair's Introduction

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting, noting that Eli Johnson was attending on behalf of DSIT.

The Chair provided an update on the recruitment process for non-executive directors. Interviews had now taken place and recommendations were with the Secretary of State for a decision.

The Chair also advised that he had met with the Strategic Delivery Partner for Transformation and had conveyed the Steering Board's focus on the project.

SB24/16 Apologies

The Chair noted apologies from Lindsay Jamieson (DSIT).

SB24/17 Declaration of Interests

There were no new declarations of interest.

SB24/18 Approval of Minutes – 6 February 2024

Under SB24/06 – should read 'similar studies for females had taken place'.

AGREED: that the minutes of the Steering Board meeting held on 6 February be approved as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

SB24/19 Action log

The action log was noted.

It was reported that the Effectiveness Review would be progressed once the scope and the timing of the Cabinet Office Arms Length Body review had been announced.

Steering Board Members were advised that the SME Sub Strategy was likely to be ready for discussion in Quarter 3.

Performance and Delivery

SB24/20 CEO's Introduction

The CEO reported that the IPO was ending the financial year on a positive note, having had the highest salary increase across the civil service and noted the role that the pay team had played in achieving this. As a result, morale within the office was good, with an engaged workforce. The attendance position had also been well received across the office. Efficiency and customer service targets had also been exceeded for the year.

Positive feedback had been received following the visit of the WIPO Director General. The visit had showcased the whole UK IP system and had provided an opportunity to deliver some key messages on UK positions.

The refreshed strategy had been completed and Directors were focussed on embedding the strategy within the organisation.

A governance review was being undertaken, focusing on IPOB and the Tier Two Committees to ensure that Board time was focussed appropriately.

The new IP Services Directorate had been implemented on 1 April, made up of restructured business areas around the new 'Service Model' for the future transformed One IPO Service to provide a more customer focussed service.

In the current financial year, Directors were focussed on a number of challenges facing the IPO including embedding the new strategy and governance changes, continuing to work on the organisational culture, addressing the legal personality issue and preparing for a potential general election.

Steering Board Members sought further information on the governance review and were advised that the Board were seeking to ensure that their attention was focused on strategic issues, whilst still ensuring that sufficient time was given to assurance items. It was acknowledged that the focus would be on the Executive Board and Committees and that the Steering Board role would need to be taken into account with this review at a later stage and that consideration would need to be given as to how to engage the Steering Board in the process. The governance experience held by Steering Board Members was also noted as being a source of information for the review.

ACTION: Consideration to be given as to role of Steering Board in the Governance review, including an appropriate time to bring an update to Steering Board (Steph Dales/Laura Fleck)

SB24/21 Executive Board Report and Corporate Priority Delivery Report (SB(24)10)

The Steering Board received the Executive Board Report covering the period January – March 2024 and the Corporate Priority Delivery Report for Month 11.

Steering Board Members welcomed the launch of NatWest's IP Finance. They were advised that the project was being run by NatWest and that the IPO were providing promotional support and were encouraging NatWest to monitor uptake.

In response to a query around sickness absence rates, it was confirmed that the IPO sickness rates were consistent with other government departments and the public sector. The IPO had a good track record in bring people back to work following long term absence.

Steering Board Members advised that they were keen to receive updates on the SME Support programme and it was noted that work was ongoing and would be brought to Steering Board by the end of 2024.

The Steering Board welcomed the progress and success of the Storage Scheme.

Further information was requested on the reputation tracking and this would be provided to Eli Johnson.

Steering Board Members requested further details on the breadth and depth of research work undertaken by the IPO and it was agreed that this would be included as a future agenda item.

Overall the Steering Board welcomed the detail contained in the EBR and Delivery report and noted the progress made the by the IPO over the last quarter.

ACTION: Details of the Reputation work to be provided to Eli Johnson (Steph Dales)

ACTION: Details of the Research Function (including analysis publications) to be included in as a future agenda item (Steph Dales/Secretariat)

SB24/22 IPO Strategy and Corporate Plan Launch Update (SB(24)11)

The Steering Board received the refreshed strategy and Corporate plan, together with details of the proposed launch details. The strategy was due to be launched on 2 May, followed by the Corporate Plan on 8 May. The strategy launch was mainly focused on an internal audience. Local strategy champions would help refine the message and host events in their areas as well as providing feedback on how the organisation was changing in accordance with the strategy. Significant work had been completed to ensure that the culture element of the strategy would be communicated effectively across the organisation.

Steering Board Members welcomed both documents and the work on the communications plan, noting the importance of balancing change and continuity when communicating the revised strategy.

SB24/23 DSIT Verbal Update

Eli Johnson (IPO Sponsorship team at DSIT) provided a verbal update. Recruitment to the Sponsorship team was almost complete, with one position left to be filled. David Kenyon had recently joined, reporting directly to Lindsay Jamieson. The team continued to build relationships with the IPO and were working closely with the Strategic Co-ordination team. This included working to ensure that the IPO were supported in working with other government departments and working on the IPO legal identity issues.

DSIT were also preparing an evidence base in readiness for the spending review, due by November. Preparation was also underway for a potential general election. It was noted that the operational work of the IPO would continue unaffected by a general election.

Steering Board Members sought clarity over the Cabinet Office Arms Length Body review and were advised that it would consider the sponsorship element of the IPO but was likely to be light touch in the first instance.

Discussions were ongoing in relation to the effects of the headcount on the IPO.

SB24/24 ARC Verbal Update and ARC October 2023 Minutes

Steering Board received and noted the minutes from the ARC meeting held on 30 October 2023.

The Steering Board received the draft notes of the ARC meetings held on 4 March together with a verbal update on the meetings. ARC had undertaken an Assurance Deep Dive which had included the annual security report, business continuity, the annual counter fraud and error report and risk management and appetite. An update on progress with the annual accounts had been provided and the ARC had been advised of a concern that the IPO had around the methodology being used to value Concept House. Steering Board Members were advised that this had now been resolved and previous valuation methodology was being used.

ARC had also undertaken their Annual Governance Workshop on 4 March, which provided information for the Annual Governance Statement. Key areas of governance had been considered and Executive Directors attended to present key challenges. Recent Internal audit reports had also been received.

SB24/25 IPO Risk Management & Risk Appetite Statement 24/25 (SB(24)12)

The Steering Board received the risk appetite statements, which had been subject to the annual review and update by IPOB. Members were advised that a number of the statements had been updated to reflect the current climate and frameworks the IPO were required to work within. Some also now included an arrow to demonstrate where the IPO currently was and where it would like to be.

Steering Board Members welcomed the inclusion of the arrows but queried the absence of net zero as a statement. It was confirmed that this would be added to future risk appetite statements.

In response to challenge from Steering Board Members as to why some statements couldn't be moved to 'open', it was stated that rigid processes and government frameworks meant that some statements, such as commercial or reputation, could not move to 'open'.

Executive Directors confirmed that the risk appetite statement was actively being used to inform decision making, particularly in relation to Transformation.

ACTION: Net zero to be added as a category to the risk appetite statement (Julie Griffiths)

ACTION: Explanatory commentary to be provided setting out rationale for changes to risk appetite categories in future.

The Steering Board received the Strategic Risk pack, which included the IPOB and Committee risk exposure maps together with the risk registers. A new risk on Leadership Management Capability had been added to the strategic risk register and a number of risks had been closed or de-escalated.

Steering Board Members noted that the wording of the new risk, S106 Leadership Management Capability was unclear and suggested that this be reworded.

It was noted that S103, Supporting Innovative SMEs had been closed and the work was being monitored at Committee level.

Overall, the Steering Board welcomed the clarity of, and information contained in the risk pack.

ACTION: Risk S106 to be reworded (Penny Phillpotts)

SB24/26 One IPO Transformation Update (SB(24)13)

An update on the One IPO Transformation programme was received. It was reported that Release 2a which included five new features for trialling with the patents pilot customers had been completed and was receiving positive feedback.

SB24/27 Copyright and AI (SB(24)14)

The Steering Board received a presentation introducing the IPO's policy work on AI and copyright. It summarised the government's policy approach, noting that it was a challenge to find a balance which would allow the AI and creative sectors to grow in harmony. A number of key issues were highlighted including licensing and exceptions, rights holders control, transparency and global alignment.

It was reported that the EU had recently introduced an AI Act and that legislation was unlikely to be brought into the UK ahead of a general election, however international dialogue on AI positions continued.

The Board noted that the presentation and discussion provided a useful introduction to a complex topic.

SB24/28 Introduction to IPO Tribunals (SB(24)15)

A presentation on the work of the IPO Tribunals service was received. The service was a statutory function under the Intellectual Property legislation and was a level below the court system. The service dealt with disputes over registered rights (trademarks, patents and designs) as well as company names and copyrights. It could also award damages, costs and compensation.

The Steering Board were advised that Hearing Officers were full time IPO employees appointed into the role. Legal representation was not necessarily a requirement at the hearings and casework officers provided advice on the process to those involved in hearings. The costs of bringing a hearing were reasonably low. All decisions made by the Tribunal service were published and sometimes attracted media attention.

Steering Board noted the significant role the service played in the IP system and welcomed the clarity of the presentation.

SB24/29 A.O.B and reflections on the meeting

There were no items raised.

Reflections of the meeting:

- Deep dives were interesting.
- Continuous Improvement Benefits lunch presentation was interesting.
- Tribunals item provided useful insight into service.
- Good to think of Steering Board as a source of advice.
- Good balance of learning and challenge.
- Useful to have breakout sessions in future.
- Transformation Update provided assurance.
- Good insight into the organisation.