



## Steering Board Meeting Note

**Date:** Thursday 20 June 2024

**Time:** 10:00-15:05

**Location:** Concept House, Newport, B3 and VS10, London

**Attendees:**

**Chair:** Harry Rich

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

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

**Non-members:** Laura Fleck, CEO Office, Secretariat

**Presenters:** Guy Robinson, Julie Griffiths, Natasha Chick, Simon Haikney, Jamie Edwards and Caroline Rich

### **SB24/30 Chair's Introduction**

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.

The Chair provided an update on the recruitment process for non-executive directors. He reported that the appointments had not been made despite a two-month gap between interviews and the calling of the general election. As a result new non executive directors could not be appointed until new ministers are in post. The Chair was concerned that the process did not support effective governance. The Chair had discussed this with the DSIT Permanent Secretary. It was confirmed that Harry Rich, Harriet Kelsall and Hilary Newiss had all been reappointed for a further three year term.

The Chair advised that it was Lopa Patel's last Steering Board meeting. He thanked her for her for her immense and engaged contributions to the Steering Board Audit & Risk Committee, based on her powerful professional and business experience. She had provided strong and holistic inputs and her warm approach will be missed.

### **SB24/31 Apologies**

There were no apologies.

### **SB24/32 Declaration of Interests**

There were no new declarations of interest.

## **SB24/33 Approval of Minutes – 11 April 2024**

Under SB24/23 – headcount section to be reworded

Under SB/28 – replace ‘Act’ with ‘Legislation’

**AGREED:** that the minutes of the Steering Board meeting held on 11 April 2024 be approved as a correct record, subject to the above amendments.

## **SB24/34 Action log**

The action log was noted.

It was reported that it was anticipated that the Cabinet Office Arms Length Body (ALB) review would not be impacted by the General Election. The Chair stated that it was important that the Steering Board Effectiveness review was carried out, noting that this might be impacted by the appointment of new non-executive directors. The Framework document would be reviewed upon conclusion of the ALB Review.

Steering Board was advised that an update would be provided to a future Steering Board on the scope of the governance review.

## **Performance and Delivery**

### **SB24/35 CEO’s Introduction and Annual Performance Report**

The CEO reported that the IPO had retained the Investors in People Gold Award and were on a trajectory towards platinum (the highest award). British Standards Institute (BSi) ISO 9001 quality certification in customer standards had also been achieved.

Preparations for a new government were underway, with briefings being prepared. Steering Board members suggested that it would be helpful to demonstrate how Intellectual Property underpins the economy and the vital role the patent system plays.

Discussions on any changes to Civil Service headcount were continuing between DSIT and Treasury. The IPO was taking a cautious approach to recruitment, applying a number of controls and recruiting into only critical roles until the headcount position was clearer.

The IPO had played a crucial role in negotiating the ‘Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and associated Traditional Knowledge’ treaty at WIPO. The treaty had been agreed by consensus and the life sciences community had acknowledged that the treaty had achieved the most acceptable outcome, with the final text being within the UK principles.

IPO executive Board Structures were being reviewed to ensure that they were effective.

The Steering Board considered the Annual Performance Report. It was suggested that the use of the word ‘Under’ on page 16 should be removed and that the date be added to the target column on page 25.

Discussion also took place regarding the triggers for a fees review and the most appropriate time for this to take place. Steering Board were advised that a number of criteria could trigger a fees review and that the 5 year forecast was updated regularly to review cash flow.

**ACTION: Annual Performance Report to be updated.**

**SB24/36 Corporate Plan Delivery Update**

The Steering Board received an update on proposals for reporting against corporate plan delivery from Guy Robinson. There were now closer links between the corporate plan and the strategy. The corporate plan deliverables had been developed and consideration had been given as to how this would be monitored and reported on. A monthly and quarterly reporting structure had been developed. A quarterly report would be based on changes to finance, headcount and associated activities allowing for a strategic overview. Reporting outputs would begin in July, based on data from June, with the first quarterly report being in August.

It was intended that the approach would avoid duplication of effort and ensure that the reporting focused on the right measures.

**SB24/37 Update on Annual Accounts**

Neil Hartley provided an update on the audit of the 23/24 accounts, including consequences for the timing of publication. Steering Board was grateful for the update and supported the approach being taken, and suggested considering at what point the accounts could be signed.

**Action: Further update to be given at next Steering Board**

**SB24/38 ARC Verbal Update and Minutes of ARC meetings**

Steering Board received and noted the minutes from the ARC meetings held on 4 March 2024.

The Chair of ARC gave a verbal update on the meeting held on 24 May 2024, noting that the position on the annual accounts had progressed as outlined in the update already provided to Steering Board. At the meeting on 24 May, no significant issues had been raised on the annual accounts and the good working relationship between IPO and the auditors was evident. The meeting had examined the content of the annual report. ARC had also reviewed the final internal audit plan for the year, with the outstanding audits for the 23/24 year due to be received at ARC in July. It was noted that progress was being made on improving the relationship between the IPO and GIAA.

**SB24/39 DSIT Verbal Update**

Lindsay Jamieson (IPO Sponsorship team, DSIT) provided a verbal update. It was reported that preparation for a new government was underway. Whilst a new Secretary of State was likely to be appointed quickly, junior minister posts usually took a few weeks. A list of key decisions was being prepared, including the appointment of non executive directors. Meetings with new minister and the Chair of the Steering Board would also be arranged in due course.

It was noted that a positive relationship between DSIT and IPO was in place and the CEO and Chair met regularly with the Director General.

## **SB24/40 IPO Risk Management – Verbal Update on Risk Process and Activity**

Steph Dales provided a verbal update on recent changes to the risk process and associated activity. It was reported that a blank risk page exercise had been undertaken for IPOB and all committees and that revised risk registers would be in place for July. Governance and reporting structures had been refined, so that some risks would now be held by Directors. It was expected that it would ensure that the process of risk escalation de-escalation would be clearer, with a more active management of risk within departments.

Steering Board received the strategic risk register. Further clarity on the watch worry - 'Ownership of IP' was requested. It was reported that a small project group was in place to explore the issue and that it was linked to a risk on the DSIT risk register.

Steering Board Members noted that there were a number of risks linked to staff and morale. They were advised that whilst there had been a significant improvement in morale, a number of external factors such as headcount and pay case uncertainty was having an effect. There was a high level of engagement from IPO staff.

The retention and disposal policy was also queried. It was reported that work was underway to ensure that the retention of non formal records was appropriate, that strategic decisions were recorded appropriately and that corporate memory was retained. It was also necessary to ensure that the IPO was GDPR compliant.

Steering Board Members suggested that there was a risk around the relationship with Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs). It was noted that the SME sub strategy was being worked on and would be brought to Steering Board in September.

Steering Board Members advised that the British Library had published their lessons learned from their recent security incident and disaster recovery issues and suggested that it may be useful for the IPO to review it. The Steering Board were assured that significant disaster recovery work continued to be undertaken at the IPO, including the replacement of the storage area network and a table top exercise on disaster recovery. However IPOB was aware that the risk of security incidents remained.

## **SB24/41 One IPO Transformation Update**

An update on the Transformation Programme was received. It was reported that a further release had taken place as planned on 12 June. This had released new functionality to customers including change of representation, collaboration and transfer of ownership. Pilot customers had given positive feedback on the service. A major milestone had been achieved today as the first patent filing had taken place using the new system. There had been positive engagement across the IPO.

In terms of the wider phase 1 programme, the majority of functionality was due to be delivered into private beta in September. The current status of this plan was amber and work was ongoing to optimise delivery of Release 3.

Steering Board Members noted the positive news from the transformation programme and passed on their congratulations on the first patent application being received.

In relation to a query regarding the onboarding of customers, Steering Board were advised that customer numbers were intentionally kept low initially but this would be built

up after release 3 with as many customers as possible to be onboarded prior to public launch. Steering Board were reminded that public launch would only be possible once agreement had been given by the Government Digital Service.

#### **SB24/42 Customer Guidance Project Update**

The Steering Board received an update on the latest position on the Customer Guidance project which was aligned with the Transformation programme and would support customers to make full use of the IPO's new services. Customer guidance was being updated to ensure that it was factually correct, spoke the language of customers, shifted the channel to digital and was easily accessible. Phase 1 (ensuring information on patents was factually correct) was complete, with phase 1a (speaking our customers' language) due to be completed by October 2024. Phase 2 would focus on findability of web guidance and ensuring that Trademarks and Designs contents mirrored the work completed on patents. Phase 2 was a large undertaking and would align with phase of the transformation programme.

Steering Board was advised that tooling the customer journey was challenging as the webpages were hosted by gov.uk.

Steering Board noted the positive work being undertaken.

#### **SB24/43 A.O.B and reflections on the meeting**

There were no items raised.

*Reflections of the meeting:*

- Good to see the successes
- Papers were easy to read
- Positive to see Transformation progress
- Deep Dive on customer guidance useful
- Positive interactions and contributions
- Focussed and supportive meeting
- Need to ensure enough deep dive items.

Lopa Patel thanked the Board for her positive experience as a non executive director, noting it had been a privilege to work with the board and the IPO.