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Peter J Lawrence OBE
Chief Executive, Civil Service Commission
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

By email only

28 September 2020

Dear Peter,

Succession planning for the Press Recognition Panel (PRP) Board Members

Further to my letter of 14 May 2020, I am writing to confirm that the PRP's recruitment process for the search and selection of two Board members has now concluded and two candidates have been selected for appointment. The purpose of this letter is to seek your assurance, in accordance with Article 4.2 of the Royal Charter on Self-Regulation of the Press, that the process followed in the selection of the members was fair, open and merit based.

As part of its consideration for succession planning, the Board critically discussed the future needs of the organisation and future trends in the Industry and identified the areas where key skills/ specialist experience would be beneficial for the Board. The recent impact of covid-19 on the Industry and the current governmental discussions concerning self-regulation, continue to raise the need for the Board to ensure that it has the relevant experience to thoroughly understand the wider issues that are affecting press self-regulation and the success of the recognition system at this time.

As I mentioned in my earlier correspondence, the Board were committed to ensuring that the recruitment process was fair, open and merit based and attracted candidates from a diverse background.

Following the recommendations of the Nominations Committee, the Board agreed that the engagement of recruitment agencies that specialised in sourcing applicants from a diverse background, that potentially may not have necessarily considered applying, would be beneficial. Following a competitive tender exercise, the Board agreed at its meeting on 25 February 2020 to appoint Green Park Interim & Executive Ltd (Green Park) for the executive search and selection of candidates.

The Selection Panel throughout the process consisted of the Chair and Board member Carolyn Regan. The Nominations Committee Independent member, Cindy Butts, was also in attendance in an advisory capacity.

A robust and clear recruitment process was established with regular dialogue maintained with Green Park, noting the potential for covid-19 to disrupt the campaign. The Green Park bespoke microsite, providing details of the role, person specification (attached at Annex A) and application process, went live on 24 April 2020 and closed on 2 June 2020. Green Park implemented a targeted online social media recruitment campaign to reach the widest possible diverse audience. We published the advert on our website and promoted it on the PRP's Twitter account too. We received over 35 applications for consideration.

The Selection Panel met on 9 June 2020 to discuss the applications. Noting the constraints that the Charter provided in respect of the mandatory criteria that must be met by the future Board members, the Selection Panel identified 12 candidates for further one to one interviews with Green Park. The shortlisting exercise took place on 22 July 2020. The Selection Panel identified 9 candidates for interview; however, one candidate withdrew their application on work commitment grounds and potential conflict of interests.

The Selection Panel met on 7 September to agree the list of questions and the domestics for the interviews. A draft selection of possible questions had been circulated to the Selection Panel prior to the meeting. These were reviewed to generate a list of 8 questions with one as the preannounced question provided to the candidates. The interviews were scheduled in hour slots and held through Microsoft Teams due to the current situation with covid-19. The candidates were offered the opportunity to speak to the Chair prior to the interviews and most availed themselves to this opportunity.

The interviews were held on 16 and 17 September 2020. The Selection Panel were provided with a form detailing the questions, the person specification and the Final Panel pack (as prepared by Green Park). The Selection Panel, with the Independent

member of the Nominations Committee, were also supported by the Chief Executive and Executive Administration Manager who were in attendance for the duration of the interviews.

The Selection Panel held a further meeting on the 22 September 2020 to agree the recommendations for the Board. Due diligence research and references were obtained for the final candidates to be put forward for selection by the Board. Following discussion with the Selection Panel at each of the recruitment stages, constructive feedback was provided by Green Park to the candidates to aid future professional development.

As required by Article 7 of the Charter, the responsibility for selecting and making the appointments lies with the serving Members of the Board. The Board met on 28 September to discuss the conclusion of the recruitment process and consider the Selection Panel's recommendations. The Board noted that the diversity data collated by Green Park demonstrated that the outreach campaign had been an innovative and effective one that generated a diverse and competent field.

The Board agreed that the process had been fair and open with merit based decisions made objectively at each stage. The Board discussed and agreed to invite Kathryn Cearns and Annie Mullins to be members of the Board with effect from 3 November 2020. The Board paper and discussion concerning the final candidates remains confidential; however, the published minutes of the Board meeting will include the Board's decision.

I trust the above provides sufficient detail to enable satisfactory consideration of the recruitment process. Please do let me know if further supporting paperwork or a conversation would be helpful.

My letter and your response will be published on the PRP website in accordance with our policy on openness and transparency. I look forward to your early response.

Yours sincerely,



Susie Uppal
Chief Executive, Press Recognition Panel

ROLE DESCRIPTION

The Role

The key responsibilities of the Board are as follows:

In relation to the Royal Charter:

- Making decisions to recognise or withdraw recognition from a Regulator in accordance with the Scheme of Recognition.
- Making decisions to undertake an ad hoc review in accordance with the Scheme of Recognition.
- Making proposed amendments to the Royal Charter (which must be ratified by a resolution that has been passed unanimously by all Members of the Board).
- Agreeing the Scheme for charging fees to Regulators.
- Approving reports relating to any success or failure of the recognition system.
- Approving the annual report and financial statements about the activities of the PRP – including whether it has granted recognition to, or withdrawn it from a Regulator – prior to the laying of the report before Parliament and the Scottish Parliament.
- Surrendering of the Royal Charter, and subsequently winding up and otherwise dealing with the affairs of the PRP in a manner which the Board considers fit.

In relation to the running of the organisation:

- Approving the PRP's strategy and forward programme of work.
- Approving the PRP's communications strategy.
- Approving the PRP's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Approving the PRP's annual budget and any material changes to it.
- Approving the PRP's annual accounts.
- Making a decision to commence or defend significant litigation.
- Approving major items of PRP policy that raise new issues of principle.
- Approving of the publication of any PRP public consultation paper and major decisions following that consultation.
- Approving the PRP's response to any significant external consultation of strategic importance to the PRP.

In relation to management issues:

- Decisions relating to the PRP's executive structure.
- Determining the PRP's remuneration strategy.
- Approving and monitoring health and safety policies.
- Oversight of the capability/capacity of the PRP to meet its statutory objectives.
- General oversight of the discharge by the Executive of the PRP's business.
- Contractual and other obligations with third parties including Approving contracts valued at over £25,000.
- Reviewing performance against the PRP's strategy, objectives and budget.

In relation to governance:

- Appointing or removing Board Members.
- Undertaking regular reviews of the performance of the Board and Board committees.
- Approving and reviewing the governance framework.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The Person

We are seeking to appoint two individuals demonstrating confidence, independence, resilience and experience from a diverse range of backgrounds. They will need to be effective communicators, strong team players and have an outstanding reputation for fairness and propriety.

Essential criteria

- Senior level experience in the public, private or voluntary sector;
- An understanding of the context within which a regulator operates;
- Clarity and rigour of thought, with strong analytical skills and the capacity to examine issues and reach judgements in an impartial way on the basis of the relevant evidence;
- A participative approach to decision making; and
- Effective communication skills, with the ability to convey complex issues clearly and compellingly.

And, one or more of the following:

- Knowledge or experience within the press, media or in news publishing, which might have been built in digital or social media;
- Legal qualifications and skills, together with an understanding of the legal framework within which the Board must operate;
- Financial skills, including experience of delivering value for money;
- Experience of public policy;
- Experience of consumer rights;
- An understanding of the national and regional environments within Great Britain that are relevant to the work of a Regulator.

Successful candidates will also need to demonstrate a reputation for personal integrity, professional conduct and credibility, with an exceptional sense of propriety and regard for the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#).