



# The Institute of Professional Investigators

5 Westcott, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL7 2PP

Minutes held of the IPI Annual General Meeting  
Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020 by Zoom at 10.00am

**Present:** Board members; RC Cumming (RC), Brian Collins (BC), Steve Smith (SS), John Bateman (JB). Glyn Evans (GE). The following members also joined the Zoom AGM meeting; Duncan Place, Nick Adair, Graham Dooley, David Palmer, George Roberts, Michael Bishop-Saunders, Paul Read, Ian Bignold, Guy Cooper, Debbie Craven, Mark Eve, Alan Roberts, Lord Byron Davies, Michael Whittington, Simon Smith, Steve,

1. **Introduction** to the meeting made by RC and GE listed those who had submitted apologies (all giving proxy votes to the Chair); Richard Lee, Paul Barcham, Valerie Thompson, Richard Newman, Susan Ward, Michael Pettitt, Douglas Stanners.

2. **Principal's address - Richard Cumming;**

**RC** welcomed **Lord Byron Davies** to the meeting. **RC** asked **Lord Byron** if he would be able to provide anything in the way of an update regarding Private Investigators accreditation etc. **Lord Byron** thanked the IPI for his invite and was very grateful for his Fellowship. There was no update as such, but **Lord Byron** will speak with **BC** and **RC** to further the matter in the near future. **Lord Byron** will be delighted to pursue any matters in Parliament on behalf of the IPI. **RC** continued;

I hope that you are all safe, and welcome to our first virtual AGM. It's now a well-worn phrase, but the world had changed since our AGM last year and we're doing our best to help members adapt to it. In a practical sense, we have continued to streamline our operation throughout the year and, as you will hear later, bank balances are looking healthier. As a Board, we take the view that provided we pay the bills and have some contingency, there is no point in accruing members subscriptions unnecessarily, so our savings have enabled us to reduce membership subscriptions for the 2021/2022 year for Members and Fellows from £170 to £140. A small saving that will hopefully demonstrate our commitment to members in these difficult times. Other membership classes will be reduced accordingly [Associate £140 to £115, Retiree £80 to £65]. We hope to maintain our subscriptions at these reduced figures and will review the effects on Institute finances each year. Last year, I laid out our blueprint for 2020, obviously with no idea what was in store. We have nevertheless been able to achieve our 6 goals set out last year:

1. I hope that you have seen our new logo and upgraded website which incorporates a more streamlined application process. The website also contains an extensive library of documents, which members can refer to and use as templates. We endeavoured to retain the history of the institute by drawing inspiration from the previous logo and I hope you will agree that it's an improvement. We also simplified our membership categories to Life Member (awarded by the Board for outstanding services to the IPI), Companion (awarded by the Board for outstanding contribution to the Institute), Fellow (can now also be awarded by the Board for meritorious service to the Institute in addition to the previous academic based award), Member, Retiree and the new Associate Membership for those signing up to the IPI Foundation Course.

2. Our new ID cards have taken longer than we hoped to roll out, with production problems that I won't bore you all with, but those of you who have provided photos will be receiving them shortly. If you haven't provided a photo yet, it would be helpful to send one in so you're ready for when business picks up.
3. We have created a new Corporate category of membership, which we hope will encourage suppliers to join the IPI and promulgate properly validated products and services to our members. The level of fees for corporate members will be decided by the Board and be dependent on the size and nature of the business. Our aim is to achieve discounted rates for members.
4. We have streamlined our operation and cut costs in several ways including a change of accountant and office address, which we will cover in more detail in the Treasurer's Report.
5. You will hear more about training later, but we now offer the Skills for Justice Level 3 accreditation and Surveillance Course (Level 4), (formerly IQ accreditation), alongside our IPI Foundation Course and Person Tracing Course. Furthermore, we are working on developing other courses which would qualify for Continued Professional Development (CPD) credits.
6. We have streamlined our communication with members by the creation of a WhatsApp group and through other social media. The WhatsApp group has been particularly successful and I would encourage you all to join, in order to view and share work opportunities.

We have also set up a Private, closed, members only Facebook group which is titled 'IPI Workshare and Resource Group'. The purpose of the group is to share work information and requirements, resource requests, etc. This will ensure that work you require assistance or support with is offered to a fellow IPI member who is accredited and vetted by the Institute. We will also be circulating the Newsletters, Journals, etc via this media platform.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2539764582912074/>

We have also set up an open IPI Group on face book which non-members as well as members are open to join without a specific invite. This site is for generic investigative news and no invite is required. This group serves a different but useful function to the private but we would encourage you to join this group as well.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/InstituteofProfessionalInvestigators/>

It's been a difficult year for most of us and whilst there may be light at the end of the tunnel, we don't know how long that tunnel is. So, I would encourage you all to think ahead to when we emerge into the daylight again and in the meantime think of opportunities that the Institute can provide to improve or enhance any rusty skills, renew or make new contacts within our network and emerge better equipped to take the opportunities which will surely arise. Thanks for your continued support.

### **3. Minutes of last year's (2019) AGM;**

**RC** explained that these minutes were circulated last year and that they had been on the website. **BC** put them on the zoom website for all to see. **RC** outlined the minutes and the previous minutes from 2018, with outstanding matters dealt with. Members present were given time to read the minutes following which **RC** asked for a proposal to accept them as a true and accurate reflection. **SS** proposed and

seconded by **BC**. Members in favour by a show of hands displayed a majority. **David Palmer** and **Graham Dooley** stated they could not confirm accuracy as they were not present at last years AGM and therefore abstained. Motion carried. Additionally, **BC** placed the recent EGM notes on the screen for all members to read. **RC** explained to members the purpose of the EGM. **BC** explained that the minutes were also on the website for information.

#### **4. Adoption of Accounts and Treasurers Report including Membership;**

**Finance;** As at 31/03/2020 the IPI balance stood at £19,313.00. A full set of Accounts for Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> March has been circulated via email prior to the meeting. As agreed at last years AGM the Board had proposed to reduce overheads and continue generating income in order to turn around previous performance (2019 seeing a deficit of £11,362). The Board (in particular Steve Smith), after much hard work, has managed to get the IPI accredited in order that we can again offer courses – Foundation Course, Tracing Course with further work taking place during this financial year to introduce a Surveillance course – this will be reported on at next year’s AGM. These courses have previously and are continuing to generate good revenue for the IPI, with the added benefit of some of the clients going on to join the IPI. We have continued to work hard at reducing costs and generating income which I think will be demonstrated even further in next years account report.

Additionally to the Board making the savings explained last year;

- Significant reduction of monthly website costs.
- Significant reduction of management costs.

we have managed to dispence with our virtual office deal completely at a saving of £140 per month. This is due to John Bateman kindly undertaking to take all calls made to the IPI, post being either sent to myself or John and the decision to hire a room on a one off basis as and when (and if) we need to hire one.

Further, by changing accountants, we have managed to halve our accountancy fees (these savings will be seen fully in next years financial report).

On the income side, the Board continue to actively seek ways to increase membership; be it corporate, company or individual. We also are keen to give more to the members in the way of help, guidance (useful template page on the website), and other value for money options – due to good housekeeping and taking account of projected expenditure we have currently agreed a reduction in fees for members next year.

The Board are confident that the IPI will flourish with these changes and the positive signs are already there, showing a funds increase in the IPI account from the end of March 2019 to this current time (£19313).

**RC** – referred to Page 3 of the accounts (2019) which he stated tells the story relating to the accounts. **RC** outlined the operating expenses. **RC** outlined that the accounts are now very good and recorded a ‘well done’ to **GE**. Members also thanked **GE** for his hard work. **David Palmer** wished to record a vote of thanks to the board for their hard work and dedication in basically saving the IPI from fininacially becoming non-existent.

**BC** recorded thanks to **GE** and **Duncan** who have taken work at a reduced cost and those who continue to work for no payment at all.

The breakdown on our current level of membership is; - 96 renewed members with 10 still outstanding to pay/renew, totalling 106 (18 life members). Membership cards have now been received following some issues that were caused by the pandemic, but they are now with me and will be on their way to those of you who have supplied photographs. **GE** showed members the new cards.

A reminder please to any members to send their photographs to **GE** if they wished for new cards and also a reminder to members that have not yet paid this years subscription to please do so if they wished to continue as an IPI member.

Additionally, **GE** stated that at the last AGM **Dick Smith** wanted a breakdown of monthly costs for the website. **GE** outlined the outgoings were previously £1200 per month but are now running at £200pm plus VAT as an outgoing per month. **GE** outlined what was included for that fee, additionally the IPI paid £12.00 per new student which covered invoicing/admin. It was noted the significant role played by **Duncan** in making this possible whilst also maintaining and enhancing the website for members in conjunction with **BC**. This together with the reduction in management fees were necessary to enable the IPI to continue functioning as similar expenditure over the next two years would have seen the IPI in severe financial difficulty.

**The accounts were proposed by JB and seconded by BC. Members show of hands indicated a unanimous vote for adoption of accounts.**

#### **5. Election of Directors;**

**GE** outlined the re-election – 3 members were due for renewal or change. **GE** had 8 people voting to keep those to remain. Voting was as follows;

**RC** – show of hands for re-election – unanimous.

**Brian Collins** – show of hands for re-election – unanimous.

**John Bateman** – show of hands for re-election – unanimous.

All three re-elected to the Board. **GE** welcomed them back to the Board and thanked them for all their work during the past three years.

#### **6. Training Report;**

This item was read and discussed prior to the item 3 in order for documents to be palced on zoom for all to see, in order to save time. **Stephen Smith** introduced himself stating;

The IPI has gone through a period of time where our very existence was in doubt. Many hours of toil and application has allowed us to turn a corner. Without pointing fingers, the poor record keeping and the failure of high-level decision making has been an ongoing issue, highlighted whilst dealing with a serious issue related to training. Today, our IPI Foundation Course is proving popular, especially during these lockdown times of COVID. Also, the Person Tracing Course continues to attract learners. Our thanks go to **Duncan Place** (our online guru), and **David Palmer** CIPI and Life Member, for their continued support in these areas. During the year we

have moved away from Proqual as our qualifications Awarding Organisation and returned to IQ - now Skills for Justice (SFJ). This means that we once again offer the SFJ - Level 3 Award for Professional Investigators and now deliver the SFJ - Level 4 Award in Covert Surveillance Operations (Intermediate) qualifications.

As a result, we have now successfully run 2 SFJ - Level 4 surveillance courses. However, COVID restrictions have hindered our ability to designate a place for learners to undertake the SFJ, Level 3 Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) papers (the first attempt at which is covered in the learner's sign-up fee for the IPI Foundation Course). We intend to rectify this as soon as practicable. Whilst, our newsletter keeps the membership in touch with all aspects of working as a Professional investigator, our intention is to develop and deliver IPI certificated Continuous Professional Development courses which will be of benefit in this everchanging world. Training and development are key factors in ensuring the credibility and professionalism of our IPI membership - onward and upward!

**BC** thanked **SS** for his hard work and continued commitment around training which has proved invaluable, echoed by all. **JB** thanked **BC** for his work around website, again echoed by all. **JB** stated that members should use the website and ensure that the information is correct and they should all keep their information updated and current.

**Q. Alan Roberts – SS** thanked for the interesting report. He would like to put staff through the initial training Course. Would like to have a feel for the volume of training within IPI. **SS** stated approximately 30 people have gone through IPI to date. **SS** explained that the intention for the Investigators exam, IPI will undertake a morning session covering the review of the course for the exam (refresher) and then Members can do the exam in the afternoon. **AR** stated it would be useful for his colleagues to give potential recruits an overall of the IPI and why people train with the IPI. **SS** stated maybe the website was missing some information and asked **AR** to provide details of those items he believes are missing from the website and it will be received positively and forwarded for action by the Board.

## **7. Any other Business;**

**Nick Adair** – I notice an abundance of white male faces within the IPI – proposed that we should try to progress membership within other ethnic/gender backgrounds. **JB/David Palmer** stated that Susan Ward have been part of the IPI Board but she resigned due to health, although remained a member and there are other female members too, albeit this is an area that we should continue to grow. **SS** stated that new members from BAME are taking up courses which hopefully would lead to membership.

**David Palmer** – disappointed at the lack of a journal. The newsletter is infrequent and very brief. **David Palmer** stated he appreciated it was a lot of work but would like a more substantial journal, including what the Board is doing, legal changes, practice changes. **JB** stated that there are so many platforms already. People don't always have time for all platforms.

**David Palmer** stated that he would like to see the journal brought back - there was a PDF delivered electronically. Although very few responses the benefits were inviting people to write articles and thesis and others kept us informed of their needs. It had an intangible benefit as well. **SS** explained the newsletter was produced 4 times a year but **Si Smith** was the only person who provided information for the newsletter. **DP** was offered the opportunity to produce the journal as he used to.

In answer to a question **SS** outlined that if someone registers for the Foundation Course they automatically become an AIPI.

**BC** asked **David Palmer** for an update on tracing courses he currently runs for IPI. **DP** stated 20 annually. Members asked if the tracing course was on the IPI website; confirmed.

**GR** – Will IPI Members have any chance of undertaking the Level 4 Course in the future (for those who have level 3)? **SS** stated it will be under discussion and this is the intention and will keep members updated by newsletter and website. We also wished to introduce courses for CPD.

**Alan Roberts** – in terms of attracting new members – with the IPI focus on membership growth maybe over the next year ask members *“will you find a member for the IPI”*? **AR** explained an organisation he was a member of as it was the centre of information sharing, discussion etc. on fraud. If IPI makes itself the centre of information, discussion etc. people will want to become a member of the IPI as a *“go to place”*.

**Q- Graham Dooley** - There may be some potential in working with paralegals who may wish to join, **RC** would discuss with Board Members and see if it can be moved forward. **David Palmer** stated he would provide details of two persons to move forward with from paralegal institute. **RC** asked for the information to be sent to **GE** at the admin IPI inbox and to refer to the conversations that **DP** has already had with the Paralegal Institute to progress.

#### **8. Date and time of next meeting.**

**RC** stated that the virtual meeting has been successful with more members attending. **RC** stated that the next meeting could be in person or by zoom depending on the state of the world –Next years AGM was set for Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

**RC** thanked those members for joining. **RC** stated he welcomed continued communication throughout the year.

Meeting closed 1115.