

Minutes of Internet Watch Foundation Board Meeting
Tuesday, 14th October 2003 at 3 pm.

Room A588, Old Main Building, London School of Economics

Present: Roger Darlington (Chair), Charlotte Aynsley, John Carr, Mark Gracey, Howard Lamb, Sonia Livingstone, Claire Milne, Jim Reynolds, Camille de Stempel, Nick Truman

IWF Staff: Peter Robbins (Chief Executive), Brian Wegg

Apologies: Mark Stephens

Item 1- Apologies and introduction

Chair welcomed Mark Gracey and Nick Truman to their first meeting and noted apologies.

Item 2 – Minutes of last Meeting

Board approved the minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 22nd July 2003.

Item 3 - Matters Arising

Responses to the identified “ACTIONS” from the last minutes were summarised:

- A formal IWF response on the Mobile operators’ Code had been circulated to Board members and sent to the consultant co-ordinating responses. An “open day” had been arranged for 21st October when the feedback would be reported. IWF will be represented at the event.
- The changes to the software section of the website had been carried out.
- Chief Executive reported that a meeting had taken place with an official from the Home Office to discuss our request for more comprehensive Criminal Records Bureau vetting for staff and Board members. We had had the opportunity to outline our case and reasons for the request and to raise important issues with regard to clause 48 of the Sexual Offences Bill and the authorisation of IWF. In the mean time Board members would, where necessary, obtain police checks through their local police station.

ACTION: Executive to circulate the Cambridgeshire Police documentation as examples of the forms involved.

Board members expressed concern that we needed to be clearer for both staff and Board members on what checks we will be carrying out and what offences we will disregard in respect of Hotline staff, other IWF staff and Board members.

ACTION: Executive to prepare a draft policy on Board and staff vetting. The policy to be included in the Members Handbook and a statement on data protection to be included in appropriate documents for staff and Board members on who will know about the outcome of vetting and how the data will be stored.

- Arrangements for Board selection would be reported on in the main agenda.
- Chief Executive reported that he would be discussing the issue of Pay Per View web sites hosted in the USA with the Home Office at their next meeting. He reported that he had approached the FBI directly about a specific site.
- Chair reported that he had written to a specific ISP, that had declined to join the IWF, asking for their support but he had not received a response. Board considered the next course of action with regard to ISPs who were receiving added value services other than just notice and take down from IWF but had refused to support the organisation financially. Industry representatives expressed concern that ISPs which funded IWF are subsidising the notice and take down service to those who had refused.

Board concluded by expressing their concern again that:

- a number of leading players were not subscribing to IWF;
- Chair had received no reply to his letter of 25th July 2003;
- there was a need to consider how best to proceed on this issue in conjunction with other industry players.

- Executive had produced a draft complaints policy for the Code of Practice and this would be sent to Standing Counsel for comment.

Item 4 – Chair’s report – see attached

Chair introduced his report, highlighted some particular events and invited questions. He drew attention to a particularly encouraging seminar hosted by the civil libertarian pressure group Liberty and the opportunity to continue a dialogue with them.

Camille de Stempel told the meeting that she would be resigning from her Board and Funding Council positions from 31st December 2003 because of maternity leave.

Item 5 – Chief Executive’s report – see attached

Chief Executive introduced his report and highlighted particular issues. He asked Board to be aware of the delays IWF had encountered in getting the EU to pay instalments due under the INHOPE contract and he would keep Board informed on this problem. Attention was also drawn to some other issues with regard to the EU contract where the Chief Executive felt the IWF should have claimed for a proportion of management on costs. More realistic apportionments would be made in future contracts bids.

The progress with negotiations on renewals and the additional new members were noted. The range of companies, including hardware manufacturers, software companies and search engine companies was encouraging.

Chief Executive described discussions he was having with a software company who wished to show their support for our work. They were offering a package which included a cash payment, anti-virus software, the offer of a Board presentation on current security trends and access to some research on an issue of our choice. Board concluded that this was an offer the Chief Executive should pursue and although a presentation may not be relevant at this stage, IWF should discuss the possible area for research.

ACTION: Executive to liaise with John Carr and Sonia Livingstone as discussions on the research develop.

Chief Executive reported that Clause 48 in the Sexual Offences Bill had not been finalised. IWF was still seeking a recognised status through authorisation but the outcome was not clear and the discussions continued.

Chief Executive reported on a very encouraging meeting with the senior detective who will be heading up the police’s POLIT team. She would be happy to attend a future Board meeting to discuss her work and any areas of mutual interest.

Item 6 – Hotline Feedback to reporters

The Chief Executive pointed out that there had been a change in the profile of reports being received by the Hotline and this had resulted in a significant increase in workload. He outlined a number of the efficiency improvements which the IWF Hotline had introduced and the impact of the improvements which had enabled staff to focus on unique reports. There have been two noticeable trends in the reports being processed. Firstly, an increase in the proportion of the reporters who wanted feedback on their reports but secondly, a decrease in the proportion of reports which after investigation are judged to be potentially illegal child abuse material. The IWF Hotline has always replied to reporters who have asked for feedback. The responses are taken from a set of standard replies and include reference to whether the material was assessed to be potentially illegal, the next steps in the process and are usually “topped and tailed” by the Hotline staff. The increase in the number of reports and the higher proportion seeking feedback has resulted in a significant increase in the workload of replying to reporters. Chief Executive felt that there may be a case for changing our current commitment to sending tailored replies and he was seeking Board views on this matter.

Following a discussion, Board felt that reporters must continue to receive some form of reply but a detailed response including a specific assessment of the material may not be necessary.

Board concluded that one standard automated reply to all reporters should be implemented. The reply should include the reports unique reference number, a thank you for the report and a brief description of the next stages for all reports. If reporters required more information they could make use of the feedback form and the unique report number. The executive will monitor reaction and feedback on the change and report to a future Board meeting. Two Board members offered to view and advise on the draft response letter.

ACTION: Executive to produce a draft reply.

Item 7 – Board Vacancies

Executive updated Board on the progress and timetable for appointment. Interviews would take place in week beginning Monday 24th November and the panel would be Roger Darlington, Jim Reynolds, Camille de Stempel, Baroness Valerie Howarth and the consultant from Hudson Resource.

Item 8 – Funding Council Constitution – Information item

Mark Gracey briefed the Board on progress with the review of Funding Council Constitution and some of the issues under consideration.

Chair stressed the importance of having a full complement of Industry Board members present at the next Board meeting. The difficulties with periods of notice for changes to the constitution and notification of elections were noted. Chair asked Industry Board members to consider alternative arrangements to ensure a full Industry presence at the next Board meeting on 27th January 2004.

ACTION: Chair of Funding Council.

Item 9 – Any other business

Jim Reynolds drew attention to the INHOPE conference in Berlin.

Item 10 – Dates of Board meetings for 2004 :-

Tuesday 27th January (location to be confirmed)

Tuesday 27th April

Tuesday 20th July

Tuesday 12th October

Meeting closed at 5-35 pm.