

## IAPB MEMBERSHIP & GOVERNANCE REVIEW

### ANNEX 2: PERSPECTIVES FROM INTERVIEWS

*This is a summary and synthesis of views and perspectives expressed during a series of interviews with IAPB members. A total of **25 interviews** were conducted, with **9 Group A members, 2 B, 7 C, and 9 other people involved in IAPB**, including Regional Chairs, Chair, Chief Executive and a Patron.*

#### 1. Governance purpose and collective culture

- In the past a level of mistrust in the leadership has been observed on occasion, with consequent defensive or self-interested behaviour in Board and Council meetings, obstructing good governance
- Significantly improved leadership has resulted in improved levels of trust, but not yet changes in the way members approach meetings
- The structure of governance (including ‘buying of seats’) encourages individual organisational interest, rather than collective responsibility
- There is a tendency for individual members, or people in distributed leadership/representation positions, to see their contribution to IAPB as a separate individual activity and not as part of the collective IAPB efforts ; this undermines a sense of collective ownership and achievement.

#### 2. Governance structure

##### a. Board

- The Board is too big to do its job well – near-universal view
- ‘Buying your seat’ is an inappropriate way of structuring governance – widespread but not universal view
  - Disenfranchises, disengages and disaffects others
  - Constructs a board not based on the skillsets needed for good governance
  - Creates the wrong motivations for contributions (focused on interest of individual organisations, not collective responsibilities of trustees)
- Regional chairs have an operational role in their regions. Because this is not related to governance, they can’t do what they want from a seat on the board – widespread view from those who aren’t regional chairs; frustration amongst regional chairs that they don’t get heard by being there

- So a smaller board is needed; the most common view was:
  - Exclude regional chairs
  - Reduce numbers of others
  - Elect Board members
- However, many fear (and have seen previous history that suggests) that there may be reluctance to stand down and/or reduction of fees from those currently 'buying their seats'
- Many interviewees, asked to propose solutions to the conundrum, found a constructive way forward difficult to find; commonly, the response was 'well, there you have it – if it were that easy, we'd have done it already'
- Those who did have a view suggested focusing a smaller governance body strictly on the prudence and stewardship aspects of governance, and enabling wider engagement, especially of bigger organisations, in strategy and prioritising discussions
- On exploration of what they want from paying for their place on the Board, many A category members agreed with this suggestion:
  - Most want access to, and influence in, decisions on priorities and strategy; they're more than happy to cede responsibility for other aspects of governance to others – provided there's transparency and access to papers.
  - However, 2-3 members do want access to the whole range of governance responsibilities, and would want to reduce their financial contribution without this.

#### b. Committee Structure

- Broadly, the **Executive Committee** is considered to be working well; after a history of mistrust at this level, it seems most board members are now confident of its role and responsible execution of it
- There is some debate about the extent of the **Audit Committee's** remit, but a widespread view that it functions well and responsibly
- There was little mention in interviews of the **Nominations Committee**;
- There is quite widespread dissatisfaction with the way the **Advocacy Committee** functions; a view that it rarely makes decisions is common, and there is contention over who should be there, and whether current numbers make it impractical
- There is some confusion about the difference between governance committees – sub-committees of the Board – and groups of members set up for implementation of parts of the strategy or exchange of best practice in specialist areas

### **3. Regional structures & the centre**

- Most interviewees would see a large part of the Strategy being delivered at national level, with support from the regions; effective regional structures are important to them.
- There is a widespread view that Regional Chairs' presence at the Board does not deal with their need to be heard. Amongst non-Regional Chairs, this is about them having a non-governance role and trying to intervene in governance discussion; amongst Regional Chairs, this is more of a frustration about their issues not being prioritised.
- A common understanding expressed in interviews was that the role of Regional Chairs is essentially one of strategy delivery (complicated by a history related more to VISION 2020 than to IAPB itself), rather than governance at regional level. So while they have a crucial role in ensuring IAPB's success (since much of the Strategy must be delivered at national and regional levels), and their perspectives from the regions are crucial to planning and prioritisation, this is more about operational management than governance. This is the underlying confusion that creates dissatisfaction with their participation in the Board.
- Interviewees see the quality and style of delivery of the Regional Chair's role as varying widely across regions, depending on the individual in the role, their (and others') ability to raise resources, and the degree of commonality of need across the region. There is a common view that Regional Chairs need a clearer, and more actively used, Role Description; and that resourcing of the regions needs sorting out.
- Almost all interviewees who had views on the subject felt that regional coordinators should be line managed from the centre, not by regional chairs, though clearly they recognised the importance of a close working relationship between regional chairs and coordinators.

### **4. Membership categories**

- A corollary of interviewees' views on fees (see below) and their relationship to positions in governance is that they see a need to change from the current A/B/C category system. There is no felt need to create categories according to size of organisation, or type of organisation (NGO, hospital, professional association). There is a case, felt by most, for keeping it simple for the majority of members and not categorising at all.
- Beyond this, there is a recognition amongst a few members that corporate supporters and individuals need to be treated differently.

- So this would suggest just three categories for members: Organisational members; Patrons or Corporate members; and individuals (those nominated directly to the Board, possibly regional chairs if they do not come from organisational members, 'distinguished' individuals)

## **5. Fees**

- Delinking fee payment from governance influence is something almost all interviewees would like to see
- There is recognition that membership fees could not and should not be discretionary
- This suggests for most a system of fees determined by ability to pay: based on organisational income or expenditure, or on expenditure on eye health
- But there are differences of view about the level at which fees should be set. There is a view that, if members commit to an ambitious collective strategy, they should be willing to commit the resources, through fees, to deliver the whole of that strategy. There is an opposing view that fees should be set at a level which does not prevent organisations from joining (or remaining) – so should be relatively modest, and designed to cover a tight definition of IAPB's core expenditure – but that larger members should be given the opportunity to select which parts of the strategy they support in addition to their fee, through project support
- This raises for some the question of whether members should be paying the staff team to raise additional resources from outside of the membership pool - seen as letting members off the resourcing hook, and creating the potential for competition between IAPB and its members for grant resources.