

Response to Governance Consultation, July, 2009

Changes to the Companies Act and the results of the council's self assessment in October 2008, identified the need to review the governance structure of the IfL. A review group was established as a sub-group of the council to develop a new governance structure. As an integral part of this review, members were consulted through an on-line survey and a series of café sessions conducted across the country by the chair and company secretary of the IfL council. The consultation identified four key issues that members wanted considered.

Elected members

The overwhelming consensus was that increasing the member representation on council to 40 members was welcomed. However there was still some concern that the ratio of elected members: stakeholder representatives (2:1) was still too small. Council has therefore agreed that the representation should shift to 3:1, elected member: stakeholder representation with 45 elected members and up to 15 stakeholder representatives.

There was a strong lobby to ensure a diversity within the elected member group that promoted equality. This related to professional grades of membership, part-time staff representation, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation and age, constituency context and a regional perspective. We have therefore created a number of reserved places on the advisory council to represent and address these issues. Candidates may wish to stand for one of these reserved places to promote specific perspectives such as gender or a region or may stand for a non-reserved place. In the proposed election in the Autumn there would be 23 reserved and 11 non-reserved places. The voice of other specialist perspectives can be developed through our on-line communities of practice that are currently being developed.

There was also concern that the advisory council should include front-line teaching practitioners; IfL will encourage these staff to stand for election through our usual communications channels but must rely on our members through the voting system to promote these practitioners.

Stakeholder representation

There was general agreement that the stakeholder representation should be no more than one third. We have therefore agreed that **up to** 15 places can be available for stakeholder representation. To date our stakeholders have been an enormous asset to the governance of IfL but in order to ensure continued commitment we will invite Expressions of Interest from stakeholders and have established robust criteria for eligibility. Government bodies will be invited to advisory council as observers with no voting rights.

Council member training and development

There was concern that new advisory council members should understand and carry out their role effectively. There will therefore be an induction process for new members to explain the history and structure of the IfL, the wider policy arena and context, the roles and responsibilities of advisory council members, procedures and protocols. New members will also be buddied with more experienced members. There will be a transitional arrangement to ensure consistency and continuity from old to new governance arrangements. The advisory council will regularly undergo facilitated, self assessment.

Council Working Practices

The full advisory council will generally meet no more than four times a year. Although some felt this might be insufficient we recognise the time and workload pressures on our members and are confident that well structured, full day meetings will enable us to explore and debate the key policy advice, formulation and implementation and how they align with the IfL strategy most effectively and efficiently. The outcomes and recommendation of these advisory council meetings will be forwarded to the non-executive board by the president of the advisory council.

There was general agreement that the non executive board was a good way forward and that this would meet more frequently to ensure business probity and accountability that reflect the IfL strategy. To ensure a comprehensive skill set within the board the facility to co-opt experts in the appropriate fields is available.

Communications

A membership of nearly 200,000 presents real challenges in promoting meaningful dialogue; however it gives us a powerful voice. We are working hard to meet those challenges by using as many channels of communication as possible within the constraints of a limited budget.

Current communication channels include:

InTuition

On the Agenda – e-bulletins

Website

REfLECT

Member surveys

Consultation events

Connections representatives

Governance

We recognise that communication is a two-way process and greatly appreciate member responses and engagement with us as we can only be as good as our members can make us. Many thanks to all of you who have contributed to this consultation about the governance review whether through the on-line surveys, the regional café sessions or through the council. We also wish to thank the organisations who hosted the café sessions. We look forward to working with you all into the future.

Sue Crowley (chair)