

Report to the Board from the Appointment Panel recommending Appointment of New Board Members

The board asked the Appointment Panel to appoint two new board members with legal or regulatory experience. The positions were advertised during the period 11 May to 8 June in the following publications and websites:

- IMPRESS website, twitter and LinkedIn feeds
- Ed Procter's LinkedIn feed
- The Law Society Gazette & website
- Black Solicitors Network
- Black Barristers Network
- Women on Boards
- NED On Board
- Targeted approaches from IMPRESS executive

37 applications were made for the positions. Ed Procter did an initial sift and discounted 21 of these applications which did not meet all the advertised criteria. The remaining 16 were evaluated at an Appointment Panel meeting and five candidates were shortlisted for interview.

Ed Procter spoke to the five candidates ahead of the interviews and covered the following ground:

- Board impartiality requirements including conflicts of interest;
- Significance of the Code of Conduct;
- Media scrutiny of Board social media activity and other public statements;
- Background to the 2017 impartiality review. All candidates received the report;
- The main strategic challenges for IMPRESS.

As in previous interviews, we used a similar set of questions for all candidates (listed below) but spent most time on their legal and regulatory credentials. Sometimes their answers led to different sequencing of questions/wording to cover the same ground.

1. Why do you want to do this role, what will you get out of it?
2. If you were to describe IMPRESS succinctly to a friend, what would you be saying to them?
3. What will success look like for IMPRESS?
4. How do you see the news landscape evolving?

5. How would you describe the difference between being an Executive and a Non-Executive Board member?
6. What do you see as the key legal responsibilities of directors of IMPRESS? (What legal responsibilities does IMPRESS have when it receives a complaint?)
7. What role do you think board members should play in ensuring that IMPRESS becomes a more diverse and inclusive organisation?
8. What ethical dilemmas have you faced in your business life and how did you resolve them?
9. What has been the most important experience in your career that will help you should you be appointed to the Board?
10. Individual IMPRESS Board members have been targeted by supporters of the alternative regulatory regime - is there anything from your past that unscrupulous press might use against you?

All interviews lasted around 45 minutes. There was strong consensus amongst the interviewing group on the candidate choices and that the overall standard of the candidates was extremely high.

Out of the five candidates only one wasn't appointable due to having experience that was too broad and diverse, and didn't lend itself to applicability to the IMPRESS Board.

Two other candidates, while appointable, lacked the strengths that were offered by **Cordella Bart-Stewart** and **Debrah Harding**, but might have been considered if the preferred candidates did not accept appointment.

Cordella Bart-Stewart was thoughtful and reflective, and talked interestingly about developing her own business as well as her vast legal experience. Cordella has excellent experience as a judge and spoke well of the challenge she would bring on diversity issues, whilst making clear that she would expect the Board as a whole to rise to the challenge.

Debrah Harding had some excellent experience, strong knowledge of and an existing relationship with IMPRESS and its business, and presented extremely well. Debrah is Managing Director of The Market Research Society, has a strong background in regulatory decision-making and is a trained accountant.

The Interviewing Panel recommended the appointment of **Cordella Bart-Stewart** and **Debrah Harding** and this view was endorsed by the IMPRESS Appointment Panel by email. In the view of the Panel, both are individuals who can act fairly and impartially in the decision-making of the Board. Walter Merricks spoke to both selected candidates and they are willing to take the appointment. Satisfactory references have been received.

The Appointment Panel therefore nominates **Cordella Bart-Stewart** and **Debrah Harding** for appointment to the Board.

Caroline Instance
Chair, Appointment Panel, 9 July 2020