Registry Advisory Council Design Group

Meeting 1

15th March 15:00-16:00 UTC via Zoom

Attendance

- James Bladel, GoDaddy (Chair)

- Ashley La Bolle, Tucows

- Rieke Poppe, One.com

- James Tuplin, domain investor

- Paul Woodland, sole trader

- Nominet representatives to assist with actions: Rowena Schoo, Nominet and Nick Wenban-Smith, Nominet

Notes

The meeting began with introductions from each participant followed by a discussion of the purpose of the Registry Advisory Council:

- **Importance of "teeth"** – the Registry Advisory Council should fill the gap between what members would like Nominet Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) to do and what they can do in reality (due to confidentiality and responsibilities as board members) e.g. improve transparency, have a strong voice for members, ask for accountability on why decisions are made or suggestions not proceeded with.

- **Transparency** - This could occur through a recorded monthly meeting and a formal expectation that the Nominet Board will respond to recommendations and explain why they are not proceeding (where recommendations are not taken up). There should be a bias towards following the Registry Advisory Council's advice unless there are strong reasons not to follow it – these reasons should be formally communicated. Possibly in a similar way to the ICANN board rationale statement/sentence/report.

- **Engagement** – Discussion of whether there are sufficient opportunities for large and small members to engage with Nominet. It appears the staff are accessible but there is little ability to understand why the board makes certain decisions.

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- **Membership** – Discussion of the pros and cons of including non Nominet members. There was a desire for this group to put forward a strong view on behalf of the members. There was also a desire that it could include views of non members. We discussed how this may work in practice, the difficulty that some external stakeholders (e.g. law enforcement and government) may be interested in some issues but not others, and may have other avenues for communicating their views and achieving change. Some discussion of parachuting external experts in for particular issues or having other interest groups for those stakeholders.

- **Pace** – The group agreed they would like this to be an agile process and agreed there may be some initial issues to iron out but that it was important to keep the momentum and launch the Registry Advisory Council on the agreed date: June 2021.

- **Conflict** – Discussion of how the potential conflict of registrars (as customers of domain registration) could be managed e.g. around pricing discussions.

- **Scope** – Agreement this group would consider scope and some items of Nominet's activities would be outside of scope e.g. registry services for other clients such as Amazon, or the operation of gTLDs (.cymru and .wales) which should be considered under ICANN processes.

- **Focus** - Discussion of what was likely to be the first tasks for the Registry Advisory Council – Members of the Design Group voiced requests to include Expiring Domains and transfers.

In summary, the group had a productive discussion of the issues/problems. They agreed it was now their job to begin building up the solutions. The Registry Advisory Council Design Group would then go to Nominet's Board and say this is the recommended scope of the Registry Advisory Council, these are our robust working practices, this is how we will ensure transparency and accountability, this is how we will represent the diverse membership and seek their input on issues, and when we make decisions we expect the Nominet Board will follow our advice or provide a public explanation as to why they have chosen not to.

Actions

- Nominet to circulate feedback on the proposed Terms of References prior to next meeting

- The group will continue to meet every second Monday at the same time (unless anyone expresses a desire to change the time/frequency)

    o Future meetings to discuss: Registry Advisory Council Scope, Composition, Working Methods, Other