

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD**on 26 February 2014 at 10.30****Riverside House, 2A Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA****Present**Consumer Panel/ACOD

Jo Connell (Chairman)

Kim Brook

Jaya Chakrabarti

Chris Holland

Mairi Macleod

Craig Tillotson (items 1 to 6)

Bob Twitchin

In attendance

Eleanor Berg

David Edwards

Fiona Lennox

External visitor from Broadband Delivery UK (item 7)

External visitor from Consumer Futures (item 4)

External visitor from DCMS (item 10)

Other Ofcom colleagues

1. Minutes of the meeting on 22 January 2014 and matters arising

1.1 The minutes were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair.

1.2 Members **NOTED** that the Panel and ACOD were recruiting for a Member to represent the interests and opinions of people living in Northern Ireland, the closing date for applications was 14 March 2014; and the Panel had published its draft Work Plan and the document was out to consultation until 19 March.

2. Consumer Update

2.1 Members had been provided with a paper and an Ofcom colleague joined the meeting for discussion of ongoing Ofcom work related to consumer empowerment; consumer protection; citizen access and inclusion; and the regulatory framework. There was discussion of a range of issues including consumer switching and Members **NOTED** that a 'road map' of related workstreams was under development and details would be provided to the Panel in due course; customer service; data on complaints handling; and affordability.

2.2 A Member drew attention to a recent Channel 4 Dispatches programme (Secrets of Your Credit Rating) that had highlighted examples of erroneous data being used by credit rating agencies. Members **NOTED** that this had implications for a person's likelihood of being accepted for communications contracts.

3. Political update

3.1 An Ofcom colleague provided members with an oral update on relevant

Government and legislative issues. Members **NOTED** that the Public Bodies Order had met opposition in the Lords; the Consumer Rights Bill was at the Commons Committee stage; the Lords Communications Committee had concluded its Inquiry into Media Plurality and had published its report; and Ofcom had given evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport (CMS) Committee Inquiry into Online Safety.

4. Consumer Futures - vulnerable consumers

4.1 A colleague from Consumer Futures joined the meeting and gave a presentation on work undertaken in relation to vulnerable consumers and the market. Issues covered included the BSI standard on inclusive services; types and variations of regulatory intervention; government guidance; and regulatory approaches to and perceptions of vulnerability. Members **NOTED** that Consumer Futures was undertaking research in this area and its findings would be shared with the Panel in due course.

5. Text to speech

5.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to brief Members on an Ofcom project on the feasibility of applying text to speech technology to set-top boxes, thus making EPGs more accessible. Members **NOTED** that, as part of an information gathering exercise, Ofcom would host a roundtable with groups representing visually impaired people and EPG providers on 2 April. Panel member Mairi Macleod would attend the event.

6. In contract price increases update

6.1 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to update the Panel on work on mid-contract price rises, reporting on recent guidance to communications providers on “material detriment” under General Condition 9.6; on how providers had responded; and on how Ofcom would monitor compliance. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom intended to publish a consumer guide that would include a comparative table to show which providers were offering fixed price contracts, which were offering tiered variable price contracts and which were offering variable price contracts. The draft guide would be copied to Members to allow them to comment prior to its publication.

7. Broadband Delivery UK

7.1 Members were joined by a colleague from BDUK to update them on the Superfast Programme and its extra funding to extend coverage to the final 5%; the Super Connected Cities Programme and the 16 cities that had launched Connection Voucher Schemes; projects under the Rural Community Broadband Fund; procurements and premises upgrades as part of the Rural Broadband Programme; and rollout under the Mobile Infrastructure Project. Members **NOTED** that the UK Broadband Impact Study published in November 2013 and commissioned by DCMS had indicated that the rural programme would deliver returns of £20 for every £1 invested. Members would be provided with a note

as a digest of the update and BDUK would supply details by email in response to a number of questions raised in discussion. A considerable number of households receive broadband speeds below 2 Mbit/s and the Panel continues to believe that this situation requires action.

8. Measuring Online Copyright Infringement

8.2 Members had been provided with a paper and an Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to present findings from four waves of Ofcom research on online copyright infringement, conducted over the period May 2012 to May 2013, and two subsequent 'deep dive' reports, one that analysed the data from the six-month period of the first two waves and the second that considered the behaviour of the most active copyright infringers over the 12-month period. Members **NOTED** and expressed concern that 44% of all UK internet users claimed not to be confident about what was and was not legal online.

9. Next Generation Text Relay update

9.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and gave an oral update on NGTR which was due to be launched by 18 April 2014. Members **NOTED** that BT had confirmed that at launch its service would work from existing textphones and Braille readers as well as via a downloadable 'app' on mobile phones and tablets running Android. Ofcom was in discussion with BT about the latter's steps to ensure that its NGTR service would be available on iPhone and iPad devices (subject to Apple approval) as soon as possible. Ofcom would keep the Panel informed of developments.

10. DCMS - Digital Communications Infrastructure Strategy

10.1 A colleague from DCMS joined the meeting to brief members further on the Digital Communications Infrastructure Strategy. The strategy would examine user needs for the period 2015 - 2025/30 and identify broad policy and regulatory steps Government would need to take in partnership with industry. DCMS was committed to publication of an interim report in July 2014 and a final report by December 2014.

10.2 Members highlighted that it was important to include a number of other areas in the project scope, eg initiatives related to digital inclusion and to delivery of digital government services. DCMS reassured Members that these and other issues would not be ignored and were being addressed by other initiatives. Members **NOTED** that the project was at the intelligence gathering stage and DCMS was planning a related stakeholder event, which could involve the Panel. It was agreed that details of the Panel's micro-business research project would be shared with DCMS.

11. CSR update

11.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting and Members had been provided with a paper to update them on work currently being carried out as part of Ofcom's corporate responsibility programme. There was discussion of issues

including the importance of diversity in recruitment; the establishment of Ofcom’s Women’s Network; the role of Ofcom in influencing its suppliers of goods and services; work experience; and volunteering.

12. Any other business

12.1 Mairi Macleod would keep in touch with Citizens Online in relation to Highland projects. The Panel’s Chair and Executive Director would shortly meet with Baroness Hayter to discuss the Consumer Rights Bill. Members would be provided with further details of the High Street Skills programme, aimed at training SMEs, and the Media Access Australia review of how the quality of closed captions and subtitles for use by deaf and hard of hearing people was being controlled internationally. Enquiries would be made in relation to Ofcom’s use of BSI standards. The Panel would respond to the consultation on the Consumer Futures workplan.

.....ChairmanDate