

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 17 March 2016 at 10.30

Riverside House, 2A Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Jo Connell (Chair)

Jaya Chakrabarti

Rhys Evans

Rick Hill

Chris Holland

Mairi Macleod

Craig Tillotson

Bob Twitchin

In attendance

Jenny Borritt

David Edwards

Karen Keaney

Fiona Lennox

A colleague from BIS (item 5)

A colleague from Ipsos Mori (item 8)

Colleagues from BSkyB (item 9)

Sharon White, Ofcom Chief Executive (item 11)

Other Ofcom colleagues

1. Declarations of Members' interests

1.1 Jaya Chakrabarti reported that she was now acting-chair of an anti-domestic violence charity called Gender Free DV. Of relevance to item 5, Craig Tillotson reminded members of his roles as Chief Executive of the Faster Payments Scheme Limited and as Executive Chairman of the Mobile Payments Services Company.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 25 February 2016 and matters arising

2.1 Subject to minor amendment, the minutes of the meeting of 25 February were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair.

2.2 Members **NOTED** that a meeting would be arranged with Ombudsman Services (OS) to discuss OS's response to the Panel's recent letter proposing that OS publish complaints data and that there should be a shorter time period before consumers can resort to ADR; that the Panel would respond to PhonepayPlus's consultation on revised guidance; and that a response from Virgin Media to the Panel's letter urging free CLI remained outstanding.

3. Consumer update

3.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and Members had received a paper to update them on the recent activity of Ofcom's consumer teams and the latest iteration of Ofcom's Consumer Action Plan.

3.2 Members **NOTED** that as a result of Ofcom's Strategic Review of Digital Communications (DCR), a number of priorities in relation to consumer empowerment and protection had been identified, with some projects being planned and re-prioritisation taking place. There would also be changes in Ofcom's Consumer Group, including appointment of a Director of Consumer Strategy.

3.3 Issues raised by Members included Ofcom's Standalone Landline Review, stating that fixed broadband costs were disproportionately allocated to line rental and that customers buying "calls only" could be paying too much for their service; and EPG reform to benefit consumers with visual impairments, when it was suggested that Ofcom make greater use of "soft powers" to secure improvements.

3.4 It was **AGREED** that the Panel would closely liaise with Ofcom about its work on TV access services, including EPGs. An Ofcom colleague would pursue a number of queries and requests from members, including reporting back on the expected publication date for the DCMS consultation on broadband USO and noting the Panel's desire to have sight of the UKRN report on price comparisons prior to its publication.

4. 700 MHz update

4.1 Issues discussed included the speed of the clearance programme, the effect on viewers, the need for viewer support, future pricing for consumers; potential coverage obligations arising from the use of the 700 MHz band for mobile data and a Panel desire for improved rural and indoor coverage; learnings from digital switchover; state aid and value for money arguments.

4.2 Ofcom expected to publish a call for inputs on managing the effects of 700 MHz clearance on PMSE and on DTT viewers at the end of the month and the Ofcom team was urged to bear in mind the Panel's recommendations on drafting/conducting public consultations and would return to the Panel for further discussion at the June Panel meeting. Members **NOTED** that creative spectrum management would also be an agenda item at a future meeting.

5. BIS switching initiative

5.1 BIS had published *Fixing the Foundations: Creating a more prosperous nation* in July 2015, which included an intention to introduce clear new principles for switching. BIS had followed this up with publication of a call for evidence in October to gather consumer experiences of how the switching process worked for them and the views of regulators, industry and other interested parties.

5.2 The BIS initiative was across sectors, including communications, energy and banking. A colleague from BIS joined the meeting for discussion and reported on responses to the call for evidence. In summary there had

been broad support for the principles and findings included switching complexity as a result of the bundling of communications services and a “fear factor” on the part of non-switchers.

5.3 Members commented on issues including a lack of coterminous contracts experienced by some consumers; trust and the ability to withstand risk, for consumers on low incomes in particular; comparison tools and inclusion of Quality of Service (QoS) and customer service metrics; and Northern Ireland, with its very low levels of switching. BIS slides would be copied to members and BIS would be provided with links to the Panel’s published views on switching.

6. Monthly issues update

6.1 Members had been provided with the latest iteration of the monthly report on stakeholder engagement activity related to the Panel’s key policy issues. Members discussed the report, providing brief updates on a number of Panel initiatives/work areas. It was confirmed that BDUK and Ofcom’s TPS contract renewal team should be invited to meet the Panel. The Panel would respond to a letter received from BT on nuisance calls and a Member would provide an update by email on recent stakeholder engagement activity.

7. Access services - VOD

7.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and Members had received a paper on steps to make VOD more accessible. Issues discussed included the discrepancy between linear and VOD versions of programmes, when subtitles could be absent from VOD versions; metrics and data collection; devices and iPlayer support on certain set-top boxes (STBs). The Ofcom team would follow-up the STB issue and would return to the Panel in September to report on a number of activities, including Ofcom engagement with industry stakeholders and steps to encourage inter-platform cooperation.

8. Digital footprints research update

8.1 A colleague from Ofcom and a colleague from Ipsos Mori joined the meeting to brief Members on the initial survey findings from the Panel’s Digital Footprints research project. Ipsos Mori would follow-up a number of points/requests made in response to the findings and return to the next Panel meeting.

9. Sky access services

9.1 Colleagues from BSkyB joined the meeting and delivered a presentation on Sky product accessibility for viewers with hearing loss and/or visual impairments; website and app accessibility; and customer service, BSkyB maintaining a dedicated accessible customer service team in Dunfermline. Issues discussed included the reasons why access services differed on linear and catch-up services; building accessibility into STBs and new services from the design stage. Members were invited to visit the

BSkyB call centre in Dunfermline.

10. Ofcom communications and website update

10.1 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom was pursuing a number of initiatives to maximize the impact of its publications, including a communications toolkit for Ofcom colleagues with a style guide, and there were website developments, including an improved search engine. The Ofcom team present was alerted to the Panel's recommendations on drafting/conducting public consultations.

11. Sharon White, Ofcom Chief Executive

11.1 Ofcom's Chief Executive joined the meeting. There was discussion of Ofcom's work to make communications work better for people and covering a wide range of issues, including the DCR; QoS; consolidation and convergence; rurality; pricing and choice. The Panel welcomed Ofcom's increased consumer focus.

.....ChairDate