

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 20 October 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

Millie Hyde-Smith (item 11)

Fiona Lennox

A colleague from the Information Commissioner's Office (item 3, by telephone)

A colleague from the Financial Conduct Authority (item 6)

A colleague from the Government Digital Service (item 10)

Other Ofcom colleagues

**1. Minutes of the meeting on 22 September 2016 and matters arising**

1.1 The minutes of the meeting of 22 September were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair.

1.2 The Panel would return to discussion of ADR with Ofcom at the next meeting. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom was in the process of gathering ADR-related data from communications providers.

**2. Consumer update**

2.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting. A paper had been provided to give Members an overview of Ofcom's consumer priority work areas, progress, next steps and milestones. Members **NOTED** that there had been recent discussion by the Ofcom Board of the key market developments which were causing or had caused detriment to consumers, of the priority policy areas underpinning Ofcom's consumer strategy, with a particular focus on vulnerable consumers and possible policy responses; and that the Board had supported the approach set out by the Executive.

2.2 Members discussed a range of Ofcom's consumer priority areas including complaints handling; mobile switching; broadband speeds policy and codes of practice (the latter it was **AGREED** would be discussed with Ofcom colleagues at a future meeting); Ofcom's mobile coverage research app and coverage checker; digital skills; and 'older elderly' people, in terms of vulnerability.

### 3. Information Commissioner's Office

3.1 An Ofcom colleague was present and a colleague from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) joined the meeting and updated Members on the remit and work of the ICO and on Operation Linden.

3.2 Issues raised in discussion included the prospect of personal liability for directors of companies making nuisance calls, something that would require legislation; the Telephone Preference Service (TPS); and the work of Action Fraud, the UK's national fraud and cyber crime reporting centre. Action Fraud would be invited to meet the Panel. It was **AGREED** also that the ICO would meet the Panel on a half-yearly basis; and that a joint Panel/Ofcom/ICO session to discuss the TPS could be useful. Reference was also made to law enforcement in relation to nuisance calls/scams and the Ofcom colleague present would let the Panel know about work in this area by Ofcom or other agencies.

### 4. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

4.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to brief Members on Ofcom's current work on CSR, including the regulator's annual Diversity Report which informed Ofcom's Single Equality Scheme, and which was a report that the Panel wished to see prior to publication. Discussion also included Project Agile, set up by Ofcom to deliver the required working environment and working practices; the Modern Slavery Act 2015; and the Ofcom Women's Network speed mentoring event to be held in November, with participation by some Panel Members. Members commented that it was important to keep accessibility front of mind in relation to current office accommodation and in Project Agile.

### 5. Quality of Service (QoS) working group

5.1 Arising from Ofcom's review of digital communications and its work on QoS, the Panel had an interest in the industry working group to co-ordinate service quality across organisational boundaries. An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to update the Panel on progress in this area and Members **NOTED** work with an existing industry working group overseen by the Office of the Telecoms Adjudicator (OTA). It was **AGREED** that discussion would be taken forward by inviting the OTA to meet the Panel. Ofcom would assist in making arrangements for this to happen.

### 6. Price comparison websites

6.1 A colleague from Ofcom joined the meeting with a colleague from the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The latter briefed Members on a report on/review of price comparison websites (PCW) published recently by the UK Regulators Network (UKRN). Both Ofcom and the FCA were members of the UKRN.

6.2 The Panel welcomed the report. There was discussion of issues including the multi-sector nature of the larger PCWs; a need for inclusiveness and sites to cater for vulnerable consumers and those with

atypical profiles, e.g. residents in Northern Ireland who could not access certain deals; a need for PCWs for use by small and microbusinesses; a lack of accreditation of some PCWs and lack of accessibility features; and Consumer Futures PCW research undertaken in 2013 and a need for more up-to-date findings. It was **NOTED** that the Competition and Markets Authority was expected to commission research as part of its investigation of digital comparison tools, including PCWs. The CMA would be invited to brief the Panel.

## 7. Ofcom research update

7.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting. Members had been provided with a paper to update them on recently completed Ofcom research projects and current/forthcoming projects. There was discussion of projects and questions were raised in relation to the International Communications Market Report (ICMR); a QoS report; research on fixed broadband speeds; the affordability omnibus study; and interviews to understand the impact of non-geographic number regulations. Ofcom would report back to Members on the queries raised and it was **NOTED** that Ofcom colleagues would attend the next meeting to discuss non-geographic numbering.

## 8. TV Access services

8.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to update the Panel on work on Access Services. Members **NOTED** a contribution made by Ofcom at a recent Public Bill Committee session on the Digital Economy Bill in relation to the provision of access services in the video on demand sector. The Panel welcomed the Action on Hearing Loss amendment and would support it. Other issues discussed included live subtitling, latency and monitoring (more details could be provided by email) and speaking EPGs. Ofcom would be hosting a VOD access services roundtable with consumer groups and providers in early December and Members expressed an interest in taking part.

## 9. Broadband and 4G rollout

9.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and briefed Members on Ofcom's Connected Nations report which was being prepared for publication. Ofcom would report on data at a more granular level than in previous years; provide a data visualisation tool; and integrate messages from the ICMR, Broadband Scorecard, Smartphone Cities and UK Home Broadband Performance reports. There was also discussion of 4G rollout and it was **NOTED** that to date there were positive signs that O2 coverage obligations would be met.

## 10. Government Digital Service (GDS)

10.1 A colleague from the GDS joined the meeting and delivered a

presentation on the organisation's approach to delivering accessible GOV.UK digital services, based on a set of Digital Principles and a Digital Service Standard. The Panel would promote/share details of GDS activity, eg via the Panel's newsletter.

**11. Panel Communications Strategy approach**

11.1 Members had received a paper to support discussion of the Panel's communications strategy, i.e. communications goals and practical activities in support of the Panel's objectives. Time constraints curtailed extended discussion and this would continue by email and at the next meeting.

**12. Any other business**

12.1 It was **AGREED** that an update on post would be included in the agenda of the next meeting.

.....Chair .....Date