

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 22 January 2014 at 10.30

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

PresentConsumer Panel/ACOD

Jo Connell (Chairman)

Kim Brook

Jaya Chakrabarti (by telephone, items 1 - 7 and 11 - 12)

Chris Holland

Craig Tillotson

Bob Twitchin

In attendance

Eleanor Berg

David Edwards

External visitors from PhonepayPlus (item 10)

External visitor from Lloyds Bank (item 5)

Karen Keaney

Fiona Lennox

External visitor from BIS (item 3)

External visitor from Jigsaw (item 6)

External visitor from Resolver (item 8)

Other Ofcom colleagues

Apologies

Mairi Macleod

1. Declarations of interest

1.1 Chris Holland reminded Members of his occasional work as a consultant across all dispute resolution schemes offered by IDRS, including CISAS. There were no other interests to declare.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 16 December 2013 and matters arising

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

2.2 Libby Kenny had recently stepped down from the Panel and Members **NOTED** the valuable contribution she had made. Arrangements would be made for recruitment of a new Member to represent Northern Ireland.

2.3 Members had been provided with an information note on work planned by Ofcom's Market Research and Market Intelligence teams for 2014/15.

3. Online dispute resolution

3.1 Members were joined by a colleague from BIS who briefed the Panel on an EU Directive on online dispute resolution (ODR); work being undertaken by BIS to implement the Directive in the UK; and plans by the Commission to set up an ODR platform. Members made a number of comments including a

concern about potential consumer confusion; about issues of privacy and consent; and about the benefits of standardisation. Members **NOTED** that BIS was planning a consultation on ODR at the end of February 2014 and the Panel signaled its intention to submit a response.

4. Consumer Experience report (CER)

4.1 Members had been provided with a paper providing highlights of Ofcom's *The Consumer Experience of 2013* market research report and a related policy evaluation report, both due to be published on 28 January and with a stakeholder launch event to be held the same day. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion.

4.2 Members welcomed the research, commenting on issues including the positive effect of competition in relation to cost and value but with less evidence of its effect on driving quality; on indoor mobile coverage; DAB radio; levels of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction; and bundling issues as a potential disincentive to switching.

4.3 Members **NOTED** that the Panel Chairman would attend Ofcom's CER launch event and speak about the Panel's areas of focus; summary findings of the Panel's *Going round in circles?* research; the Panel research on microbusinesses; and the Panel's draft workplan 2014/15.

5. Lloyds' Digital Business Index

5.1 A colleague from Lloyds Bank joined the meeting and delivered a presentation on the UK Digital Business Index which the bank had been working on.

5.2 Members **NOTED** the initial findings, and that the Index measured the digital maturity of small businesses and charities in the UK.

6. Panel Micro-business research update

6.1 Members had been provided with a paper providing details of initial themes and findings emerging from the pilot interviews in the Panel's research project on how micro-businesses engage with communications services. There would be further interviews in February and March. Colleagues from Ofcom and Jigsaw joined the meeting for discussion and took note of a number of comments from Members. Members **NOTED** that high level research results were expected to be available in late March.

7. 700 MHz spectrum

7.1 Members had received a paper outlining potential change of use of the 700 MHz spectrum and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom was in the process of conducting a cost benefit analysis assessing the case for change of use and planned a consultation. Issues discussed included the likelihood of future demand for spectrum for mobile broadband services; use of existing masts and mast sharing; aerial replacement and TV retuning.

8. Resolver

8.2 A colleague from Resolver joined the meeting to explain and demonstrate the Resolver website and app, designed as an assisted consumer complaint handling tool covering multiple service sectors, including travel, communications, energy and water. Members **NOTED** that amongst its various attributes, the app allowed users to set up an email address for their complaints and case files; could facilitate switching; and create market metrics.

9. Vodafone coverage update

9.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting and provided a brief oral update on Vodafone's compliance with its 3G coverage obligation. In July 2013 Vodafone had failed to meet the obligation but, following intervention by Ofcom, had implemented a plan to bring itself into compliance as quickly as possible. Ofcom had just received updated data and a subsequent coverage assessment showed Vodafone's 3G network to be compliant with its licence condition. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom would now consider what further action, if any, to take as a result of Vodafone's breach of the 3G coverage obligation.

10. PhoneyPayPlus workplan

10.1 Colleagues from PhoneyPayPlus joined the meeting for discussion of the latter's workplan. Members made a number of detailed comments and it was **AGREED** that these would be provided to PhoneyPayPlus as a written response to the consultation.

11. Ofcom Annual Plan

11.1 Members had been provided with a paper and summary details of Ofcom's Draft Annual Plan, out to consultation until mid-February. Members made a number of comments. The Panel would provide a written response to the consultation in the form of a letter to the Ofcom Chairman.

12. Panel and ACOD workplan 2014/15

12.1 Members had been provided with the latest draft of the Panel workplan 2014/15 and now made a further round of comments. The workplan would be updated, taking account of comments, and would go out to consultation in February, in English and in Welsh.

13. Any other business

13.1 Members reviewed the All Party Parliamentary Group's and the Culture, Media and Sport Committee's conclusions and recommendations on nuisance calls.

13.2 Members also discussed Government and opposition plans and initiatives related to communications services.

13.3 The Panel Chairman would write to Patricia Hodgson to congratulate her and welcome her appointment as the new Chairman of Ofcom.
13.4 Members **NOTED** that there was debate about iPad/iPhone access to BT's Next Generation Text Relay service, with the main service launch due in April.

.....ChairmanDate