

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 27 April 2017 at 10.30

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

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Jo Connell (Chair)

Jaya Chakrabarti (by telephone)

Rhys Evans

Rick Hill

Chris Holland

Craig Tillotson (item 8 onwards)

Bob Twitchin

In attendance

Jenny Borritt

David Edwards

Millie Hyde-Smith

Catriona Lawrence

Fiona Lennox

Mairi Macleod (by telephone) (item 8 onwards)

Other Ofcom colleagues

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The Chairman welcomed all those present.

2. Declarations of Members' interests

2.1 In anticipation of a discussion with Ombudsman Services later in the meeting, Chris Holland reminded Members of his role as Independent Complaint Reviewer for the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR). [Note: Ombudsman Services was unable to attend the meeting and would do so on a future occasion.]

3. Minutes of the meeting on 23 March 2017 and matters arising

3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 23 March were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair.

3.2 Members **NOTED** that the Panel would be responding shortly to Ofcom's consultation on the review of the market for standalone landline telephone services. It was **AGREED** that at a future meeting, the Panel would consider the commissioning of 'think pieces' by external authors, should funds become available. It was **NOTED** that the publication of the Panel's access services research report was expected to be in June. The latest iteration of the draft report would be copied to Members shortly.

3.3 In relation to 700 MHz clearance, the Panel had raised with Ofcom the issue of onscreen TV retuning messages and potential difficulties for people with a visual impairment. It was **NOTED** that Ofcom had shared this

concern with Digital UK (DUK - responsible for all viewer communications and dealing with outreach groups) and Ofcom and DUK would keep this issue under review during the Selkirk trial and early clearance events.
3.4 Ofcom had sent out invitations to its quality of live sub-titling roundtable (due to take place on 7 June) - the Panel would be represented.

4. Consumer update

- 4.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting. An update paper had been provided to give Members an overview of Ofcom's consumer priority work areas, progress, next steps and milestones.
- 4.2 It was agreed that there would be a discussion of triple-play switching at the next meeting. On nuisance calls, the Panel considered that Ofcom was making progress but raised the question of reasonable expectations, i.e. the best that could be achieved since nuisance calls would not be eliminated entirely, and which would be discussed further with Ofcom.
- 4.3 On complaint handling and ADR, Members wished to discuss a number of issues directly with the ADR schemes and Ofcom. Issues discussed in relation to mobile switching included the porting window and transfer of customer files. It was **NOTED** that Ofcom's project on transparency of consumer information was at the scoping stage and being expanded to cover the customer journey, i.e. how consumers engaged with the market and made choices between tariffs. The Chair requested an Ofcom update on mobile coverage before the Summer.
- 4.4 At an earlier meeting a phishing scam had been raised by the Panel and which Ofcom had subsequently referred to Action Fraud. Members felt that more robust action was required to deal with scams of this kind and **AGREED** to invite Action Fraud to meet the Panel.

5. SME experience of communications services

- 5.1 Members had been provided with a paper and an Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to discuss the findings of Ofcom's SME experience of communications services research report. The research had identified mobile coverage in remote areas as a major concern.
- 5.2 Members **NOTED** that Ofcom would be undertaking qualitative research on mobile coverage in the next six months and in the context of 4G obligations due to be met by the end of the year. The research brief had been sent to prospective agencies and would be copied to the Panel for information. The Panel raised the importance of coverage for consumers with disabilities and was advised that the mobile research brief included consideration of the views of disabled users where possible.
- 5.3 Members raised other issues/queries related to the SME research, including impact of internet outages; mobile network quality; data on the experience and views of disabled people; ease or otherwise of contacting service providers; and reliance on ADSL. Ofcom would report back.

6. General conditions update

6.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to provide members with an update on the progress of the review of General Conditions and some initial feedback on the significant number of consultation responses that had been received and which were still under consideration. During discussion Members welcomed the proposal to make CLI a free service, a provision that the Panel had championed for some time. Panel Members also supported record-keeping measures that had been proposed and urged Ofcom to require CPs to allow consumers to raise complaints by email and not just by Webchat in their interpretation of the term “by electronic means”.

7. Broadband speeds mystery shopping

7.1 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to brief the Panel on a recent broadband speed mystery shopping exercise, presenting a summary of key findings, details of research methodology and some selected results data. Ofcom had undertaken similar but telephone sales based research in the past. The new research had included webchat and store channels. The research had been designed to provide an evidence base as part of Ofcom’s work on revision of the broadband speeds industry voluntary code of practice (CoP). The research and consultation on the CoP were due for publication in the Summer. Internal Ofcom discussions on proposed changes to the CoP would take place in early May and Ofcom colleagues would return to the next Panel meeting to discuss the proposed direction of travel.

8. Post update

8.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting. Since the last Post update provided to the Panel, Ofcom had completed its review of Royal Mail and had published a statement generally maintaining the existing regulatory approach. A review of Royal Mail’s QoS obligations was now in progress, with a consultation due to be published following purdah/the General Election. Issues under consideration included whether local and national targets were aligned correctly and Ofcom had met with Royal Mail to discuss this and related issues. Royal Mail was due to provide Ofcom with its more detailed thinking and it was **AGREED** that this would be shared with the Panel shortly.

9. Unfair policies and practices

9.1 Members had been provided with a paper listing unfair policies and practices affecting consumers and compiled by the Panel. The paper considered the policies or practices in question; the scale of the issue; what “good” would look like; whether the Panel could make a difference; and actions that could be taken by the Panel. The list was lengthy and included parcels surcharging; out of bundle call prices; and the accuracy and transparency of advertising of broadband speeds. There was a careful

and detailed discussion and it was **AGREED** that the paper would be revised in the light of discussion and recirculated to Members to allow further consideration of the list and from which it would be necessary for the Panel to identify priority issues.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 The Panel's Annual Report was in the process of being drafted and Members were requested to forward their highlights for the year by email. The intention was to refresh the format of the Annual Report and make use of first person experiences that had emerged from Panel research projects.

10.2 There was brief discussion of how best to capture feedback on the experiences of those attending Panel meetings and on Panel/ACOD effectiveness. Further consideration would be given to these topics.

.....ChairDate