

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 14 December 2017 at 10.30

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

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Jo Connell (Chair)

Amanda Britain (items 1 to 8)

Jaya Chakrabarti

Rhys Evans

Rick Hill

Chris Holland (by telephone, items 1 - 6)

Craig Tillotson

In attendance

Jenny Borritt

David Edwards

Adam Gayton

Millie Hyde-Smith (items 1 to 9)

Fiona Lennox

Colleagues from Futuresight (item 9)

Other Ofcom colleagues

1. Declarations of Members' interests

1.1 There were no declarations.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 16 November 2017 and matters arising

2.1 Subject to minor amendment, the minutes of the meeting of 16 November were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair.

2.2 There were no matters arising that were not covered by the meeting agenda.

3. Consumer update

3.1 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.

3.2 There was discussion of issues including nuisance calls, for which complaints had been trending downwards in 2017 but had 'spiked' in November and it was **NOTED** that a communications provider (CP) had taken corrective action against one of its resellers; complaints handling, Ofcom's focus was on the CPs with the highest complaint volumes and would continue to engage with them to assess progress against agreed action targets; mobile switching, a statement on reforms to make switching easier would be published the following week; broadband USO, with next steps awaited from the Government and expected shortly;

broadband speeds, Ofcom was continuing to engage with the Advertising Standards Authority on the advertising of speeds; ADR review, Ofcom had published a statement at the end of November and would work with the ADR schemes to improve their processes, including a new KPI reporting process and publication of data on case acceptances and Ofcom would advise the Panel on timing; and Ofcom's retail voice-only narrowband project, reporting would be included in future iterations of the monthly update paper.

4. Openreach separation

4.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and Members had been provided with a paper to update them on the progress of legal separation of Openreach from BT.

4.2 Issues discussed included how Openreach would secure investment funding; the future situation in Northern Ireland, where Openreach does not exist; the inclusion of consumer complaints data; and existing KPIs in Ofcom's monitoring of Openreach. Enquiries would be made to confirm the reporting line for Openreach's Chief Finance Officer.

5. Consumer migration to IP networks

5.1 Members had received a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to update them on research findings and other data Ofcom was gathering related to consumers' migration to Voice over Internet Protocols (VoIP) and the switch-off of the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN).

5.2 Issues raised by the Panel/ACOD in discussion included the importance of protecting consumers' voice services and making that the key focus of Ofcom's work (as opposed to an emphasis on the transition from PSTN to VoIP); the importance of resilient emergency services and protections against cyberattacks and it was **NOTED** that the latter were being addressed by Ofcom's programme of network services and resilience compliance; cyber-security risks associated with VoIP equipment on consumers' premises; Nations data and dimensions of the transition; IP networks were not the platform of choice for all consumers; actual numbers behind percentage figures (these would be provided to the Panel); Ofcom powers under the General Conditions; electricity outages; telecare in Scotland (the Panel was requested to provide details of any contacts in Scotland that could be invited to a communications working group); value in mapping consumer segments and overlaps, eg correlation (if there was data, it would be provided by Ofcom) between those with a variable mobile signal and failing to keep their phones charged or those in temporary accommodation.

6. Connected Nations

6.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to brief the Panel on the Ofcom Connected Nations 2017 report, due to be published the following day. The Panel welcomed the report, its purpose being to outline the main

developments in coverage and performance of fixed broadband and mobile networks, as well as network security and resilience.

6.2 Issues discussed included building materials, eg modern windows and heating insulation, and impact on mobile signals; and WiFi calling services. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom had put together a quick, easy-to-understand two-page consumer summary and interactive tools to help consumers to understand what the report findings might mean for them.

7. Call costs review update

7.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and Members had received a paper to update the Panel on Ofcom's call costs review, looking at issues such as bill shock, fraud/misuse and affordability. Directory Enquiry (DQ) services were a particular focus and Ofcom was undertaking a number of research exercises, including information requests to CPs and DQ service providers. Ofcom planned to consult in late Spring.

7.2 Discussion was limited to DQ services and non-geographic calls would be scheduled for discussion at a future meeting. Issues raised by Members included DQ market structure; high charges; profitability and the viability of DQ services; and the profile of users of DQ services. The Ofcom team would return to the Panel in February to discuss related research findings.

8. 700 MHz spectrum award

8.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and updated Members on Ofcom's 700 MHz spectrum award programme. Issues covered included current mobile coverage obligations and aspirations, opportunities provided by the planned 700 MHz award and possible Ofcom interventions, related to improved indoor coverage and wider area coverage.

9. Panel research project on effective complaints handling

9.1 Colleagues from Futuresight and an Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to present the early findings of the Panel's research project, comprising a series of in-depth qualitative interviews, and details of progress to date, emerging themes and next steps. The Panel would be updated further at its January meeting.

10. Unfair policies and practices

10.1 Members had been provided with a revised long list of unfair policies and practices and a separate top-5 list. The Panel had written to mobile network operators about the current practice of buying a mobile phone service including a handset. The responses that had been received were shared with members. The long list would be reviewed in light of Members' comments covering issues including in-contract price increases; proportional billing; out of bundle call prices; access charges; and contract flexibility for micro-businesses.

11. Any other business

11.1 It was **NOTED** that this was the final meeting for Rhys Evans. The Chairman and Members expressed their thanks to Rhys for his contribution to the work of the Panel as its Member for Wales.

.....Chair

.....Date