

MINUTES OF THE FIFTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE OFCOM ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND HELD AT RIVERSIDE HOUSE ON 1ST FEBRUARY 2017

Present

John Varney	Chairman
Barnie Choudhury	Member
Caroline Roberts-Cherry	Member
Emma Davison	Member

In Attendance

Rob Jex, Ofcom Secretariat
 Chris Holland, Communications Consumer Panel
 Steve Gettings, Corporation Secretary and Director – England
 Jonathan Pillinger-Cork, Compliance Manager
 Other Ofcom Colleagues

Apologies

Andrew Chitty	Member
Becky Hogge	Member
Graham Creelman	Member

1.	<p><u>Introduction and declarations of interest</u></p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Caroline Roberts-Cherry and Emma Davison to their first meeting.</p> <p>[Witheld from published minutes]</p>
2.	<p><u>Minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2016 and matters arising</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2016 were approved. There were no other matters arising that were not already on the meeting agenda.</p>
3.	<p><u>Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes</u></p> <p>Members had received a paper and an Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to take the Committee through slides highlighting the key findings from the children’s strand of Ofcom’s Media Literacy Research Programme, including the ways in which children aged between 3 and 15 use and understand media, and the ways in which parents manage their media use.</p> <p>The Committee was particularly interested in the headline finding that, for the first time, time spent by children online had exceeded time spent watching television and whether this was the result of their doing more than one media-related activity at a time. Ofcom agreed to send to the Committee more analysis of this from the children’s diary study that formed part of Ofcom’s 2016 Digital Day report.</p>

	<p>Ofcom invited Members to suggest how it might, in the 2017 survey questionnaire, best capture children’s awareness and understanding of clickbait/ fake news websites.</p> <p>The Committee observed that, while the research suggested that family television viewing was still an important part of children’s media experience, the recent loss from the BBC’s schedules of potential family focused content such as the Great British Bake Off, The Voice and Waterloo Road, suggested that such content might be more difficult to find in future. The Committee agreed to discuss this further with Andrew Chitty, particularly from an Ofcom Content Board perspective, at its next meeting.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><u>Regulatory Political update</u></p> <p>An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting and members had received a paper to brief the Committee on recent and current Government and legislative issues.</p> <p>Topics discussed included the progress of the Digital Economy Bill through Parliament, with particular reference to the early stages of the Committee stage in the House of Lords which began on 31st January.</p> <p>Members also noted that, in relation to Brexit, Sharon White had set out Ofcom’s priorities in the communications sector in a speech at the Institute for Government in December 2016. These priorities were being discussed with Government.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><u>BBC update</u></p> <p>Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to discuss Ofcom’s preparations for assuming responsibility for regulating the BBC from 3rd April 2017.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that the Committee would offer valuable insight to Ofcom during the consultation on the new BBC performance framework, particularly in relation to accountability in the Nations and Regions and on diversity. As the next meeting of the Committee was not until 6th April, Ofcom would consider how best to engage with Members on these issues between meetings.</p> <p>It was agreed that Caroline Roberts-Cherry would send to Ofcom, on behalf of the Committee, further thoughts and concerns about the currently implicit and assumed nature of independent producers’ (and their crews’) compliance with the BBC’s editorial standards code when working on BBC productions.</p> <p>The Committee reiterated that it would be helpful, in due course, to meet Kevin Bakhurst, Ofcom’s Director of Content and Media Policy, to hear how Ofcom was approaching BBC-</p>

	<p>related competition issues in practice, as well as how it was incorporating BBC regulation into its “business as usual” work.</p>
6.	<p><u>Communications Consumer Panel/ACOD update</u></p> <p>Members had been provided with a summary note on the recent activity of the Panel/ACOD. Chris Holland’s highlights included the Panel’s November research report Digital Footprints: a question of trust, which explored consumer perceptions of online security, and the Panel’s work with Action on Hearing Loss on an amendment to the Digital Economy Bill, which the Government had taken up, to enshrine a legal requirement for access services to be available for video-on-demand.</p> <p>The Committee noted recent political interest in tackling nuisance calls. Ofcom colleagues agreed.</p> <p>It was noted that Ofcom’s December 2016 statement of its general policy on the exercise of its enforcement powers in respect of persistent misuse of an electronic communications network or service would come into effect from 1st March 2017.</p>
7.	<p><u>Connected Nations</u></p> <p>Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to discuss a paper which summarised the findings and high-level messages from Ofcom’s 2016 Connected Nations Report, which had been published on 16th December 2016, as they related to England.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed, particularly, the more granular 2016 dataset which allowed Ofcom, for the first time, to report on the broadband services capable of being delivered to every property in the country.</p> <p>Issues discussed included the reasons underlying the “plateauing” of take up levels for broadband, upon which Chris Holland commended to the Committee the Communications Consumer Panel’s 2012 research report, Bridging the Gap: Sustaining Online Engagement, and broadband strategy in Kingston upon Hull.</p> <p>John Varney reported that he would be visiting Jersey in mid-March and would report back to the Committee’s April meeting on Jersey Telecom’s roll out of superfast broadband on the island.</p>
8.	<p><u>Any other business</u></p> <p><i>Garden Villages/ Towns</i></p> <p>Members observed that the Department for Communities and Local Government’s January 2017 announcement of the development of 17 new garden villages and towns across</p>

	<p>England contained no details of how it was intended that such settlements would be connected to communications networks. Ofcom colleagues agreed to clarify with Government what the plans were in this respect.</p> <p><i>Diversity</i> Barnie Choudhury had reiterated his concerns about diversity at the BBC in an e-mail to the Committee before the meeting. Members shared his disappointment at the lack of effective progress, despite repeated BBC initiatives to address the issues. It was acknowledged that Ofcom's assuming responsibility for regulating the BBC could provide a further opportunity to focus on the BBC's outcomes in this area.</p> <p>The Committee agreed it would be helpful to meet representatives from the Creative Diversity Network to hear how it was establishing baseline targets for monitoring progress in improving diversity in broadcasting as part of its "Diamond" initiative. It was also agreed that ITV and Sky should be invited to meet the Committee to discuss their plans for tackling diversity issues. It was noted that it was hoped that ITV would take up the invitation to do so at the Committee's April meeting.</p>
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Chairman.....

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