

Minutes of the 86th meeting of the Advisory Committee for Scotland held virtually over Microsoft Teams on 8 December 2021

Present

Elizabeth Partyka	Chair
Laura Anderson	Member
Gerry Crawley	Member
Ashe Hussain	Member

In attendance

Maggie Cunningham	Content Board Member for Scotland
Bob Downes	Ofcom Board Member for Scotland
Mairéad Reid	Observer
Glenn Preston	Ofcom Scotland Director
Stefan Webster	Ofcom Scotland
Mark Smith	Ofcom Scotland
Lauren Galloway	Ofcom Scotland
Alexandra Stephenson	Ofcom Scotland
Debbie Hughes	Ofcom Scotland
Other Ofcom colleagues	
Colleagues from STV (Sections 24)	

Welcome, introductions, conflicts and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Mairéad Reid as an observer to the Committee.
2. Apologies were NOTED from Stephen Speirs, Jess McBeath and Amanda Britain.
3. There were no conflicts of interest to note.
4. The Chair thanked the Ofcom Scotland team for completing the recruitment of a young observer to the Committee. The Chair also noted the committee would be joined by a further observer at the February meeting via Ofcom's 'Next Generation NED' Scheme.

Minutes of the 85th meeting held on 14 September 2021

5. In the discussion of actions which arose from the September 2021 meeting, it was NOTED that:
 - The Ofcom Scotland Director and an Ofcom colleague had reached out to the newly appointed Programme Director at Consumer Scotland in the hope of a meeting in the New Year and inviting them to a future Committee session in 2022, most likely in June;
 - the Committee had responded to Ofcom's Pricing Trends Review and
 - an Induction and Training schedule will be collated in the New Year for the members and will include the two new Observers to the Committee.

6. The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2021 were then APPROVED for signature by the Chair as an accurate record.

Members' updates

7. A member referred to the recent communication that was shared with the Committee from Royal Mail to Wholesale Postal users re the challenges that they face and which had confirmed a 10% price increase to Royal Mail services in January.

8. A member commented that the Committee hadn't responded to as many Consultations in 2021 and asked if the Committee were doing enough. A short discussion followed, and it was NOTED that primary function of the committee was to provide advice to the Ofcom executive (through engagement at and between meetings) and there would be a number of Ofcom Consultations for the Committee to respond to in 2022.

9. The Chair informed the Committee that all of the Advisory Committee Chairs met recently with Ofcom's Interim Chair and Chief Executive to discuss the remit of the Committees. A few key points to NOTE:

- It was agreed that all Advisory Committees could continue to respond to external consultations with each being considered on a case by case basis, particularly where there were political sensitivities that could result in perceptions that damaged Ofcom's impartiality and independence;
- It was agreed to give the Advisory Committees more feedback on submitted consultation Responses;
- It was agreed to give more insight into the forward, strategic thinking of Ofcom's Board to ensure that the work of the Advisory Committees complemented those priorities;
- Members were informed that the priorities of all the Committees were similar and focused on;
 - Affordability, reliability and the universality of telecoms services,
 - Royal Mail's quality of service, particularly over the Christmas period;
 - The Public Service Media review and online safety; and
 - Diversity across all areas.

10. The Chair informed the members that she had meetings with BBC Scotland to discuss their Annual Plan and implementation of their Across the UK strategy. This had covered the plans for the BBC's Scotland committee and commitments to make it more visible.

11. The Chair highlighted a few points on online safety that had been shared by one of the members unable to attend the meeting. These were:

- Carnegie UK had presented a [revised draft](#) of the Online Safety Bill, in an attempt to simplify it;
- The TikTok craze to [harass teachers online](#) took hold in Scotland;
- The NSPCC was pushing for a tougher stance on child sexual abuse imagery in the Online Safety Bill. A [Herald article](#) had noted that more than 3000 of these images have been recorded by Police Scotland in the last 5 years.
- The Scottish Government was planning a marketing campaign to coincide with Safer Internet Day and Education Scotland had also developed some materials/approach for schools, with Stop It Now!;
- There were more resources produced with the aim of making digital services safer through design i.e. embedding impact assessment at inception, so services weren't inherently harmful.

The latest resource from 5Rights and IEEE is the [standard for age appropriate digital services framework](#).

Director's Report / Public Policy update

12. The Ofcom Scotland Director presented their written report and highlighted a few key points. A short discussion followed with a few key points to NOTE:

- On Video Sharing Platforms, an Ofcom colleague advised that they would arrange to have the Enforcement Team come to the next meeting to talk about what the enforcement approach would be. It was also advised that there was a good relationship forming with Police Scotland with the focus then turning to Ofcom's relationship with the gaming industry.
- There was concern raised about the focus on embedding media literacy into the school curriculum when engagement with parents was also essential. It was suggested that Ofcom's Making Sense of Media Team do a session with the members in the first half of 2022 to share emerging thinking in this area.
- It was agreed that the Committee would respond to Ofcom's Review of Postal Regulation once it had been published.
- A member asked if it was possible to have further background information on Consumer Scotland. It was agreed that this would be sent.
- A member highlighted that some Consumers are still disadvantaged with having no gas/electricity following Storm Arwen as well as no digital connectivity.
- The Scotland Board member and an Ofcom Scotland colleague had met Scotland's Children's Commissioner where concern had been raised about whether young people's views were adequately being taken into account in the design of online safety policies. The Chair suggested an informal meeting next year with our Observer and colleagues from Young Scot to seek the views of how young people are using online platforms and services.
- It was also highlighted that evidence shows that vulnerable young people are more vulnerable in the digital world.

13. Moving on to the Public Policy update, an Ofcom colleague gave a brief summary of their report.

14. The Chair asking about climate change and what that means for Stakeholders in Scotland and for UK wide Stakeholders. A short discussion followed, and it was agreed that the Climate Team would be asked to come and present to the Committee in the Spring.

Mobile Spectrum Demand

15. Ofcom colleagues provided an update on Ofcom's work on future mobile spectrum demand due out for consultation in early 2022. The conclusions would inform Ofcom's future spectrum planning and international engagement, including looking ahead to the World Radiocommunication Conferences in 2023 and 2027.

16. Members highlighted the importance of taking into consideration the needs of consumers and businesses in rural communities. Committee members noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had meant that people have continued to rely on broadband and mobile services for work, education, healthcare and entertainment throughout the year.

17. Members also noted the importance of ensuring that due consideration is given to the connectivity individuals may need when they travel and engage in leisure activities, as well as the needs of businesses.

18. Ofcom's Scotland Director noted that distinct Scottish industries, such as whisky and sea farming, could benefit from the use of new wireless technologies and Ofcom has a role to play in promoting this. The Ofcom Scotland team would host a joint event with the Scotland 5G Centre in the new year on the theme of wireless innovation.

Connected Nations Scotland Report 2021

19. Ofcom colleagues provided an update on the Connected Nations: Scotland 2021 report ahead of its publication later in December. They noted that data would be made available at Holyrood and Westminster constituency level, in addition to local authority. They outlined the stakeholder engagement plan for the report, noting they would promote the report among MSPs, local authorities and the Scottish Government.

Network News & Devolution – a content analysis

20. An Ofcom colleague introduced the presentation regarding coverage of devolved issues on network news broadcast across the UK. The committee received an update from researchers working on the project from Cardiff/Swansea University.

21. Members considered the importance of signposting in order to avoid misinformation and confusion among viewers of national news programming across the devolved nations – particularly regarding regional covid-19 restrictions - and noted 'internal checking' strategies that have led to people across the UK interpreting the same news programming in different ways.

22. Members also pointed to the need for audience research and underpinned the disparity of experience among audiences of different demographics given varied consumption habits and the clarity of news that differs across platforms – e.g. online vs. broadcast.

23. A member raised concerns regarding the representation of devolved parliaments, with news often focussing on leaders of the Governments across the UK rather than broader parliamentarians.

STV Presentation

24. Members NOTED the update provided on STV's performance through 2021 and its projections for 2022 across its broadcast, digital and production businesses.

Content Board update

25. Members had been provided with a 'For Information' written paper and the Committee NOTED its content.

Consumer Panel/ACOD update

26. Members had been provided with a 'For Information' written paper and the Committee NOTED its content. GC agreed to attend the next Consumer Hub meeting on 4 February, 2022 in place of LA as the focus was on postal services.

Ofcom Contact Centre Information

27. Members had been provided with a 'For Information' paper with Scotland's data and the Committee NOTED its content.

ACS Annual Report 2021

28. Members had been provided with a 'For information' written paper and the Committee NOTED its content. It was NOTED that the Chair will add a forward look paragraph into the report and also suggested that the final 2021 Report is sent to the Interim Chair and Chief Executive for information.

Any Other Business

29. None

Date of the Next Meeting

30. The next scheduled Committee meeting will be held on 15 February 2022.

Approved: _____

Chair

[remove for published minutes]

Date: _____