

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE OFCOM  
CONTENT BOARD HELD VIRTUALLY VIA TEAMS ON TUESDAY 15 MARCH 2022**

**Members Present:**

Bob Downes	Interim Chairman
Jonathan Baker	Member
Rachel Coldicutt	Member
Maggie Cunningham	Member
Peter Horrocks	Member
Tobin Ireland	Member
David Jones	Member
Ali Marsden	Executive Member
Stephen Nuttall	Member
Monisha Shah	Member
Kim Shillinglaw	Member

**Apologies:**

Dekan Apajee	Member
Kevin Bakhurst	Executive Member
Ruth McElroy	Member

**In Attendance:**

Adam Baxter	Director, Standards and Audience Protection
David Edwards	Assistant Corporation Secretary
Ian Milburn	Operations Executive, Broadcast Licensing & Programme Operations

Other colleagues attending for specific items.

**Introduction & Welcome**

1. The Chairman welcomed all present to the one hundred and seventy-fifth meeting of the Content Board.
2. In February the Ofcom Board agreed to appoint Dr Ruth McElroy as the new Content Board member for Wales from 1 March. A prior commitment had prevented her attendance at the March Content Board meeting.
3. The Chairman reported that the Ofcom Board's approved candidate for the role of Content Board Member for Northern Ireland would not be taking up the appointment due to a conflict of interest that it had not been possible to resolve.
4. The process to fill the broadcasting member vacancy on the Ofcom Board remained ongoing (the expectation being that the appointee would also become Chair of the Content Board).
5. Interviews for the Ofcom Chairman had taken place earlier in March.
6. A Teams briefing for members about RT had occurred on 24 February.
7. The first of two sub-group meetings with the Review of BBC Regulation team had taken place.
8. The Chairman thanked a sub-group of members for their input to an Ofcom Board paper about the handling of broadcasting standards complaints which had subsequently been shared with the Content Board.

**Members' interests**

9. Jonathan Baker declared that he had been commissioned to do some consultancy for the Arab States Broadcasting Union on all aspects of their training programme.

**Minutes of the Content Board Meeting held 25 January 2022 – CB Minutes 174(22), Actions List and Matters Arising**

10. The minutes of the Content Board meeting held on 25 January 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record for signature by the Chair.
11. The action to schedule research items/deep dives as part of the Content Board agendas planning remained outstanding.
12. There were no other matters arising.

**Chairman's update**

13. The Chairman reported on recent discussions of the Ofcom Board and focussed on the main areas of work.
14. The Plan of Work and Budget for 2022/23 had been approved.

**Broadcasting & Online Content Group Policy updates – CB 6(22)**

15. Members had received a paper providing an update on key policy and project areas in the Broadcasting and Online Content Group.
16. Members were updated further on a wide range of topics, including:
  - Online Safety (OS); Ofcom's work programme continued, including: policy announcements trailed by the Government in response to the report of the Joint Committee; and ongoing engagement with the Government on its plans for amending the Bill before the Government's formal introduction of the Bill into Parliament. A publication focusing on platforms was being considered. Members discussed issues including: potential feasibility issues arising from changes to the Bill; Ofcom's comms strategy in relation to the public; and likely public expectations of OS regulation. A written summary of the OS Bill would be produced within 24 hours of the Bill's introduction. It was agreed to arrange a session for members to brief them on the Bill and allow in-depth discussion. Members requested a schedule for future Content Board OS subgroup meetings, and noted the importance to time the sessions to permit the subgroup to meet to provide advice/input to the executive in anticipation of OS programme/regime decisions taken by the Ofcom Board.
  - BBC work areas; members noted matters related to BBC Sounds. It was agreed that once the BBC's substantive proposals for the further extension of content on iPlayer were received, members would be informed. A bespoke session regarding Future Regulation of the BBC had been arranged with a sub-set of Content Board members to take place in March – proposals would be brought to the next meeting of the Content Board. Issues discussed by members included Ofcom's review of BBC Studios and the BBC's online catalogue.
  - PSB and general media related work areas; engagement was ongoing with Government, ahead of a White Paper and potential Media Bill, relating to the Government's future plans for Channel 4 and VOD Regulation. A substantive discussion of the Government's plans and Ofcom's report to the SoS on the sustainability of Channel 3 and 5 licences was planned for the May meeting of the Content Board.
  - Standards and Audience Protection; various areas of work were highlighted, including current standards investigations; and recent coverage of concerns relating to the past treatment of programme participants. Members were updated on the Ofcom Board's discussion of a paper that had recently been submitted to it on the handling of

broadcasting standards complaints, and explored possible long-term options for future broadcasting and on demand standards regulation models, given the current trends in this area. The paper had subsequently been shared with the Content Board. A next-stage meeting had been scheduled to allow further consideration of this work by the sub-group of Content Board members who had provided input into the paper, and all members were invited to contribute to this work as it evolved. Members discussed issues including: the work necessary to explore audience expectations around this area, particularly in relation to offensive content; public expectations of the regulation of broadcast standards compared to online safety; and the regulation of harmful content across different platforms.

**Online Nation 2022 topics– CB 7(22)**

17. The Content Board was requested to review various aspects of the plan for the Online Nation report for the year.
18. Members praised the plan and discussed issues including: citing in the report positive outcomes achieved through internet use, particularly for children and in education; comparisons of experiences across the UK Nations; and the evolution of the Content Board's role in broadcasting and online regulation. An event was planned for two weeks after the report's publication in June. Members provided ideas on external invitees and panel guests.

**Information items**

19. The following items were noted:
  - Ofcom Board Minutes (15 December 2021 and 9 February 2022); and
  - Communications Consumer Panel Minutes (December 2021 and 20 January 2022).

**Any Other Business**

20. Meetings were expected to return to being face-to-face or hybrid and with the potential to hold a future meeting in Manchester.

**Date of the Next Meeting**

21. The next meeting of the Content Board was scheduled to take place on 3 May 2022.