

Content Board minutes 196(25)

Publication Minutes of the one-hundred and ninety-sixth meeting of the Content Board held on 30 September 2025 at Riverside House, London SE1 9HA and via Microsoft Teams

Present

Clive Jones	Chair and Ofcom Board Member
Dekan Apajee	Non-Executive Member for England
Simon Bucks	Non-Executive Member
Bob Downes	Non-Executive Member and Ofcom Board Member
Will Harding	Non-Executive Member and Ofcom Board Member
Peter Horrocks	Non-Executive Member
Ali Marsden	Executive Member and Director, Standards and Audience Protection
Maria McCann	Non-Executive Member for Northern Ireland
Ruth McElroy	Non-Executive Member for Wales
Cristina Nicolotti Squires	Executive Member and Group Director, Broadcasting and Media
Yolisa Phahle	Non-Executive Member

Apologies

Kim Shillinglaw	Non-Executive Member
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In attendance

David Edwards	Governance Manager
Chinmay Parikh	FCA/ Next-Generation NED observer
Anthony Szykaruk	Content Policy Director

Item 1: Welcome and introduction

1. The Chair noted apologies from Kim Shillinglaw. This was the last Content Board meeting for Dekan Apajee (his appointment would conclude on 31 October 2025). With Dekan's departure and following Ofcom Board approval, Yolisa Phahle would take on the role of Content Board Member for England. In addition, the Ofcom Board had reappointed Maria McCann until November 2028. Kate Marsh would join the Content Board on 1 November 2025.
2. The meeting would be followed by a demonstration of IO Media's Alpha Omega AI tool for journalists.

Item 2: Declaration of members' interests

3. There were no interests to declare.

Item 3: Minutes of the meeting held 1 July 2025 and matters arising – Content Board minutes 195(25)

4. The minutes of the Content Board meeting held on 1 July 2025 were **APPROVED**. There were no outstanding actions.

Item 4: Chair's report

5. Members noted the recent UK government reshuffle, including a change of DSIT Secretary of State; that Geoff Cooper had been appointed as the new Chair of Channel 4 and would complete the search for a new Chief Executive for the broadcaster; that a process to recruit a new Scotland member for the Ofcom Board was in progress; and that the search for a new Ofcom Chair was expected to commence shortly.
6. Clive Jones highlighted some recent topics discussed by the Ofcom Board and focused on the main areas of work. June 2025 Ofcom Board minutes had been circulated for information. The September Ofcom Board meeting had included discussion of the online safety regime, progress to date and strategic priorities, and it was noted that the High Court had dismissed a judicial review of the Government's categorisation regulations made by the Secretary of State.
7. Content Board **NOTED** the report.

Item 5: Broadcast and Media Group Policy and related teams' update – Paper CB 15(25)

8. Members had received a paper providing an update on key policy and project areas in the BMG and related teams. The paper was taken as read. Some points were highlighted and discussed briefly (the meeting agenda already included a number of discrete update items).
9. It was noted that Cristina Nicolotti Squires had delivered a speech at the Royal Television Society Cambridge Convention in September on the future of public service broadcasting, expanding on Ofcom's recent Public Service Media Review (PSMR).
10. Issues raised in the review and noted by the Content Board included the importance of PSM partnerships and collaboration; YouTube, increasingly a platform where audiences were watching **content on their** TV; and the future of DTT.
11. Other issues, discussed by Members, included the potential for regionalised user interfaces to ensure prominence of services like S4C and STV; and the latter's very recent announcement to cut jobs and axe its north of Scotland television news programme.
12. Content Board **NOTED** the paper.

Item 6: Public Service Media Review – next steps – Paper CB 16(25)

13. Members noted that Ofcom’s PSMR had been widely welcomed by stakeholders. Further work would continue on a number of fronts, including PSM prominence online and a call for evidence as part of a review of broadcast regulation. The latter’s main focus would be to determine the right regulation and would allow stakeholders to identify any rules that, in their view, hinder innovation.
14. Issues raised in discussion included the scope of the review of broadcast regulation; challenges in legislating for PSM prominence on online platforms; the future for the broadcast licensing regime in an online world; potential for further PSB collaboration and the tension between commercial sustainability and the provision of local content.
15. The Content Board stressed the need for clear questions in the call for evidence and noted also that the Executive would proactively engage with stakeholders. Findings from both could be shared with Members in due course and they were requested to talk to their own contacts and feed-back to the Executive, as appropriate. Taking account of the work arising from the PSMR, the Chair suggested input from Members via workshop(s) rather than formal Content Board meetings. The Executive noted that as an option.
16. Members **NOTED** the update paper.

Item 7: BBC Programme of Work update – CB 17(25)

17. Members noted that Ofcom was required to conduct two Periodic Reviews reporting on the BBC’s performance during the current BBC Charter period. The plan was to publish the second of these reviews in a joint report with this year’s Annual Report on the BBC in November. The Executive summarised some of the key findings.
18. In discussion Members raised issues including the granularity of audience data, its importance in the context of changing demographics and whether there were observable trends. It was noted that satisfaction amongst DE audiences remained an issue, DE usage was lower than for other socio-economic groups and they were less likely to rate the BBC overall highly. Part of the challenge was for programme-makers to reach audiences from different demographic groups from across the UK.
19. Content Board **NOTED** the update paper.

Item 8: Media Act Part 2 - prominence and availability update – CB 18(25)

20. Members noted Ofcom’s progress implementing the online availability and prominence provisions in Part 2 of the Media Act 2024 and related key policy considerations. The latter related to CoP recommendations across the user interface (UI), regionalisation (STV and S4C were referred to earlier in the meeting) and guidance to set out commercial terms.
21. Members expressed views across issues including sharing of ad revenues; promotional space in the UI to recommend specific content, noting that global platforms might do global deals; regionalisation; commercial agreements; the

role of smart TV manufacturers; and future-proofing and principles-based solutions.

22. Content Board **NOTED** the update paper.

Item 9: Review of Rule 5.3 of the Broadcasting Code update – CB 19(25)

23. The recent consultation on a proposal to amend Rule 5.3 of the Broadcasting Code in relation to politicians presenting news had concluded. Having reviewed the responses, the Executive proposed to maintain the existing rule without amendment. Instead, additional guidance on the operation of Rule 5.1 would be issued, in relation to the presenting of news by politicians in non-news programmes, some changes would be made to the guidance on Rule 5.3, and further research on audience attitudes was being considered.

24. Members requested sight of the draft guidance being prepared to accompany Ofcom’s statement on the review of Rule 5.3. [Note: The Content Board provided feedback on the draft guidance in a meeting with the Executive held on 14 October.]

25. Content Board **NOTED** the update paper.

Items 10-11: Information items

26. Content Board **NOTED** the following information items:

- Minutes of the Ofcom Board of 18 June 2025.
- Minutes of the Communications Consumer Panel/ACOD of 19 June 2025 and 17 July 2025.

Item 12: Any other business

27. There was no other business. The Chair thanked Dekan Apajee warmly for his valuable contribution to the work of the Content Board and Ofcom over the past five years.

Item 13: Date of the next meeting

28. The next scheduled Content Board meeting would be held on 2 December 2025.