

Ofcom Board minutes 18 June 2025

Publication minutes of the three-hundred and twenty-fifth meeting of the Ofcom Board held on 18 June 2025 at Riverside House, London SE1 9HA and via Microsoft Teams

Present

Michael Grade	Chair
Tamara Ingram	Deputy Chair
Richard Allan	Non-Executive Member
Karen Baxter	Non-Executive Member
Natalie Black	Executive Member and Group Director, Networks & Communications
Melanie Dawes	Executive Member and Chief Executive
Angela Dean	Non-Executive Member
Bob Downes	Non-Executive Member (Items 1-9)
Will Harding	Non-Executive Member
Clive Jones	Non-Executive Member
Ben Verwaayen	Non-Executive Member

In attendance

Martin Ballantyne	General Counsel
Veronica Branton	Corporation Secretary
Francesca Carter	Deputy Corporation Secretary (via Teams)
Sharon Malley	Governance Manager
Melissa Tatton	Group Director Corporate (Items 5-7)
Ibrahim Saiyed	Head of Finance System, Technology and Reporting (Items 5-6)
Joe Smithies	Interim Communications Director (Items 5-6) (via Teams)
David Willis	Group Director Spectrum (Items 7-8)
Declan Costello	ICT Director (Item 7) (via Teams)
Brian Potterill	Policy Director (Item 8)
Cristina Data	Spectrum Policy and Analysis Director (Item 8)
Siobhan Pointer	Consumer Policy Principal (Item 8)
Fergal Farragher	Policy Director (Item 9)
Hugh Mullan	Economics Director (Item 9)
Simon Leathley	Legal Director (Item 9)
Oliver Griffiths	Group Director Online Safety (Items 10-11)

	Action
<p>Item 1: Welcome and declaration of members’ interests</p> <p>1. No new declarations of interest were noted.</p>	
<p>Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2025 – 324(25) and matters arising.</p> <p>2. The minutes of the Ofcom Board meeting held on 21 May 2025 were APPROVED as a correct record.</p> <p>3. A summary of progress against action points was NOTED.</p>	
<p>Item 3: Chair’s report</p> <p>4. The Chair updated the Board on his recent activities. He said he and colleagues had held a constructive meeting with Daniel Kretinsky, owner of the Royal Mail, during which the challenges facing the business were discussed. The Board noted the need for Ofcom to continue with a strategic approach to enforcement of Royal Mail’s quality of service targets with the overriding aim of benefitting postal users.</p> <p>5. The Chair updated the Board on progress with the appointment of the Channel 4 Chair and the appointment of an Ofcom Board member for Scotland.</p> <p>6. The Board NOTED the verbal report.</p>	
<p>Item 4: Chief Executive’s report – Board 49(25)</p> <p>7. Melanie Dawes presented paper 49(25) on her activities. She said Ofcom’s consultation on additional online safety measures would be published shortly and would be the final major online safety publication for some time, with activity currently focusing on the introduction of highly effective age assurance by services by the 25 July deadline. She updated the Board on initial indications of providers’ compliance with obligations to provide illegal harms and protection of children risk assessments. The Board noted that Ofcom would be judged on its ability to make a genuine difference on online safety and it would be important to be able to point to tangible improvements such as the number of platforms with highly effective age assurance.</p> <p>8. Melanie Dawes said she had held interesting meetings with CEOs of satellite operators including Viasat, Amazon and SpaceX. The Board noted the benefits of having options for providers of satellite services and that a fuller Spectrum update from David Willis was due at the next Board meeting.</p> <p>9. Natalie Black updated the Board on the financial position of TalkTalk. She said TalkTalk was liaising with Ofcom and that Ofcom’s primary concern was to ensure positive outcomes for customers.</p>	

<p>10. The Board discussed recent conversations and insights from London Tech Week and Founders Forum, including potential developments in AI including the use of agentic systems.</p> <p>11. The Board NOTED the report.</p>	
<p>Item 5: Risk and Audit Committee update, Annual Review of Risk Appetite Statement and Annual Review of Risk Management Framework – Board 50(25) and Board 51(25)</p> <p>12. Angela Dean updated the Board on the meetings of the Risk and Audit Committee held on 21 May 2025 and 9 June 2025. She said the May meeting had discussed two internal audit reports. The follow-up audit on data management had received a rating of limited assurance. There had been progress on deleting data in Salesforce but data in Sharepoint remained a concern and the ability to monitor the delivery of the agreed data framework was limited. The internal auditor had identified a Sharepoint expert to meet the executive and RAC to help guide Ofcom’s response. It was noted that Ofcom would be investing in specialist data management resource and that a data management plan would be provided to the Committee before summer.</p> <p>13. The Spectrum Management System internal audit had received a rating of moderate assurance. It was hoped that the new contract with LS Telcom, scheduled for discussion later on the agenda, would help in this area.</p> <p>14. The internal auditor had provided an overall opinion of moderate assurance, which was the same as last year and was in line with the results of the individual audits carried out during the year.</p> <p>15. The Committee had considered a deep dive on the Trusted Regulator strategic risk, which was currently Ofcom’s highest strategic risk and also the risk with the second highest risk appetite. The review emphasised the need to balance Ofcom’s independence with the need to develop relationships with stakeholders and noted that mitigations and controls spanned the entire organisation. This was a complicated risk but was being well managed at present.</p> <p>16. The Committee had reviewed the strategic risk register and had not recommended any changes on this occasion. The Committee had also reviewed the new regulatory risk registers for the first time.</p> <p>17. The June meeting had reviewed the annual report and accounts and this would be covered in the next item.</p> <p>18. The Board NOTED the update.</p> <p>19. Angela Dean said the Committee had made significant changes to the Risk Management Policy last year and that no further changes were proposed now. She said the Committee agreed two minor amendments to the Risk Appetite Framework to combine the security risks into one category and to update the description of the “delivery timescale risk to policy implementation” risk to clarify that Ofcom prioritised speed of delivery where possible.</p>	

<p>20. The Board noted that Ofcom accepted minimal risk in relation to the health and safety of colleagues, which was an aggregation of all risks in this area, including some which Ofcom would be averse to accepting and others where Ofcom would be cautious or open.</p> <p>21. The Board APPROVED the Risk Appetite Statement and the Risk Management Policy.</p>	
<p>Item 6: Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 – Board 52(25) and Board 53(25)</p>	
<p>22. Angela Dean presented paper 52(25) on the Risk and Audit Committee’s annual report to the Board. The Board NOTED the report.</p> <p>23. Angela Dean presented paper 53(25) on the 2024/25 Annual Report and Accounts. She recorded the Board’s thanks to the team for the smooth and efficient production of the accounts. They were in a similar format to the previous year’s with narrative focus on economic growth, consumers and independence. The external auditor had indicated they would be providing an unqualified audit opinion.</p> <p>24. The Board noted that although production of the report consumed significant resource, it formed the basis of Ofcom’s accountability to Parliament and set out on record Ofcom’s position on its performance. It was also an important document for talent considering a move to Ofcom.</p> <p>25. The Board APPROVED the 2024/25 Annual Report and Accounts and the 2024/25 Section 400 Licence Fees and Penalty Accounts.</p>	
<p>Item 7: Spectrum Licensing System – approval of contract award to LS Telcom – Board 54(25)</p>	
<p>26. David Willis presented paper 54(25) on a proposal to award an updated contract to LS Telcom for the provision of spectrum licensing.</p> <p>27. The Board APPROVED the paper, including the award of the contract, the maximum envelope of spend and the delegation of authority to the Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer and Group Director Spectrum for the finalisation of the contract.</p>	
<p>Item 8: Webchecker and update on mobile – Board 55(25)</p>	
<p>28. Natalie Black presented paper 55(25) on Ofcom’s emerging strategy for the promotion of investment in wireless connectivity and the launch of Ofcom’s relaunched and overhauled mobile webchecker. She said the webchecker – named Map Your Mobile – had been a cross-Ofcom project and aimed to provide consumers with more useful information about data quality in their area. It should improve competition by moving decisions about mobile providers towards quality rather than just price, with the information expected to be used by price comparison sites alongside pricing.</p> <p>29. The Board noted that the webchecker provided crowdsourced data on the likelihood of being able to achieve download speed of 5 Mbits per second, sufficient for streaming HD video. It also included information provided by</p>	

<p>networks on their coverage at a threshold to indicate where consumers were likely to get a connection for data-hungry services. The threshold was higher than for the previous webchecker and the comms around the implications of this would be transparent on the reason for the change.</p> <p>30. The Board reviewed the webchecker and noted the importance of ensuring the communications around the launch were clear and that expectations were managed. The language used on the site had been through rigorous user testing to ensure it was as clear and accurate as possible.</p> <p>31. The Board welcomed the webchecker and noted the contribution it would provide towards competition and improved quality. The restrictions on coverage caused by planning issues in relation to masts were noted.</p> <p>32. The Board NOTED the paper.</p>	
<p>Item 9: Future of the post USO: proposals for reform – Board 56(25)</p> <p>33. Natalie Black presented paper 56(25) on proposed changes to the Universal Service Obligation (“USO”) for post. She said there was general acceptance that reform was needed although some stakeholders disagreed with Ofcom’s approach. It was important to note that Royal Mail would be responsible for the delivery of the new operating model under a revised USO, which would be challenging, and that improvements beyond the USO would be needed to ensure a sustainable universal service in future.</p> <p>34. The Board noted that in summary, responses to the consultation on the USO reforms had not provided new evidence that would lead to a significant change of position. Changes from the consultation position were noted in two areas: a small amendment to the “tail of the mail” targets and the introduction of a small gap between the publication of Ofcom’s decision and going live.</p> <p>35. The Board noted that although the targets for delivery of first and second class mail would be reduced, they were still some way above the level currently being achieved. Further investment would be required by Royal Mail to bridge the gap.</p> <p>36. The Board noted the need for Ofcom to adopt a strategic approach to enforcement of the USO, with fines for poor performance needing to be set at levels that resulted in the best outcomes for consumers.</p> <p>37. There would be engagement with political and other stakeholders prior to publication of the decision.</p> <p>38. The Board NOTED the paper.</p>	
<p>Item 10: Reflections of the new Online Safety Group Director</p> <p>39. Oliver Griffiths gave the Board his initial reflections since joining Ofcom as Online Safety Group Director. He said he had inherited a team that was strong, talented and highly dedicated to the mission. They were tasked with</p>	

<p>operationalising a challenging policy programme that continued to evolve and there would be important strategic choices on direction.</p> <p>40. The Online Safety programme was working along a broad front and it would be necessary to prioritise to ensure delivery of key areas. The programme of strategic comms was moving from policy announcements and publications to reporting on the impact of the programme and being able to demonstrate progress. This was aimed at a wider audience and would need to make use of different channels. Data architecture should be improved to better assess the impact of the regime.</p> <p>41. The Board discussed the online safety programme and noted the forthcoming milestones. The key messages for stakeholders were discussed, including where there had been movement from major platforms and progress with Ofcom’s enforcement activity. Current areas of focus included the introduction of online safety fees, the researcher access proposals and an external legal challenge to DSIT over categorisation.</p> <p>42. The Board noted the different approaches to regulation adopted in the UK and the EU over age assurance and the different ways the platforms were responding to the regimes. It was important that the focus remained on improvements in online safety for consumers through demonstrable changes by platforms.</p> <p>43. The Board noted the significant volume of work that had already been achieved by the team and agreed it would be important to manage colleagues’ workload carefully. Oliver Griffiths said this would be helped by prioritising key delivery areas and adopting a flexible resourcing model, making better use of the breadth of skills and experience among staff and rotating colleagues to different areas more easily.</p> <p>44. The Board NOTED the update.</p>	
<p>Item 11: Online Information Advisory Committee report from first meeting and plan of work – Board 57(25)</p> <p>45. Richard Allan updated the Board on the first meeting of the Online Information Advisory Committee and presented the Committee’s draft plan of work. He said the Committee aimed to focus on where it could best add value while avoiding overlap with Ofcom’s existing work.</p> <p>46. He said the Committee had identified financial scams and the effect of mis and disinformation on women and girls as the first two areas of work, with four more to follow in 2026. It was noted that the FCA may be able to assist with the work on financial scams.</p> <p>47. The Board NOTED the report of the first meeting and APPROVED the plan of work.</p>	
<p>Item 12: Ofcom statutory governance – Board 58(25)</p> <p>48. The Board NOTED the paper on Ofcom’s statutory governance arrangements.</p>	

<p>Items 13-16: Standing items</p> <p>49. The Board NOTED the following information items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly performance report – paper 59(25) • Non-executive member updates – paper 60(25) • Board work programme – paper 61(25) and publication schedule – paper 62(25) • Minutes of the Communications Consumer Panel/AOCD of 10 April 2025, Content Board of 29 April 2025 and Risk and Audit Committee of 21 May 2025. 	
<p>Item 17: Items in the reading room</p> <p>50. The Board noted the Spectrum Licensing System appendices in the Board reading room.</p>	
<p>Item 18: Any other business</p> <p>51. There was no other business.</p>	
<p>Item 19: Date of the next meeting</p> <p>52. The next scheduled Board meeting would be held on 16 July 2025.</p> <p>53. The meeting concluded at 12.55 pm.</p>	

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Chair