

Ofcom Board minutes 24 September 2025

Publication minutes of the three-hundred and twenty-sixth meeting of the Ofcom Board held on 24 September 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
Will Harding	Non-Executive Member
Clive Jones	Non-Executive Member
Ben Verwaayen	Non-Executive Member (via Teams) (Items 1-8)

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 6-8)
Jo Curtis	Transformation Programme Director (Item 6)
Kate Davies	Group Director Strategy and Research (Item 7)
Richard Hornby	Finance Director (Items 7-8)
Iqbal Marikkar	Corporate Strategy Director (Item 7)
Jessica Hill	People, Culture and Workplace Director (Item 8) (via Teams)
Lawrence Knight	Head of Workplace Strategy (Item 8)
Oliver Griffiths	Group Director Online Safety (Item 9)
Mark Bunting	Online Safety Strategy Delivery Director (Item 9)
Cristina Nicolotti Squires	Group Director Broadcasting and Media (Item 11)
Siobhan Walsh	Policy Development Director (Item 11)
Vikki Cook	Content Media Policy Director (Item 11)
Simeon Thornton	Economics Director (Item 11)

	Action
Item 1: Welcome and declaration of members' interests 1. The Board noted a new declaration of interest from Richard Allan.	
Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2025 – 326(25) and matters arising. 2. The minutes of the Ofcom Board meeting held on 16 July 2025 were APPROVED as a correct record. 3. A summary of progress against action points was NOTED.	
Item 3: Chair's report 4. The Chair updated the Board on his recent activities. He said the announcement of the new Chair of Channel 4 had been generally well received and the process for the appointment of a successor for Bob Downes was proceeding. 5. Tamara Ingram had agreed to act as Chair of the People Committee and the Board APPROVED her appointment. Ben Verwaayen would be standing down from the People Committee and the Board thanked him for his work on the Committee over many years. The process for the appointment of his successor on the Board would be led by the Chair's successor. 6. The Board NOTED the report.	
Item 4: Chief Executive's report – Board 78(25) 7. Melanie Dawes presented paper 78(25) on her activities. She said the summer had been busy, with the new online safety age assurance rules coming into effect at the end of July and users encountering changes due to the Online Safety Act for the first time. 8. Ofcom had been notified of a lawsuit filed against it in the US alleging that Ofcom's enforcement activity was violating the civil rights of Americans, in particular in relation to freedom of speech. Ofcom had instructed a US firm to act for it. The Board noted the risks and costs associated with the lawsuit and supported the strategy as outlined. 9. Melanie Dawes said the Public Sector Media Review had been well received by both industry and Government. 10. The Ofcom consultation on amending Rule 5.3 of the Broadcasting Code, in relation to the position on politicians presenting news, had concluded. Having reviewed the responses, the team was preparing a decision to maintain the existing rules without amendment, and instead issue new guidance on the operation of Rule 5.1 as it applied to the reading of news by politicians in non-news programmes. 11. Natalie Black updated the Board on discussions related to network security and noted the importance of Ofcom's role in this in the UK. Ofcom's ability to	

bring together teams from Networks and Communications and Online Safety to tackle online fraud was noted. 12. The Board noted that Ofcom’s role in the telecoms sector was evolving and its approach to telecoms regulation would also need to adapt in response. There was an opportunity to consider this as part of the Three-Year Business Plan refresh. 13. Melanie Dawes updated the Board on her visit to an Amazon fulfilment centre and discussions with Royal Mail on implementing its new delivery model. Ofcom’s focus was on quality of service and the need for Royal Mail to meet the standards in the new Universal Service Obligation. 14. The Board NOTED the report.	
Item 5: Risk and Audit Committee update – Board 79(25) 15. Angela Dean updated the Board on the meeting of the Risk and Audit Committee of 17 September 2025. The Committee had reviewed an internal audit report on insider threat which had received a rating of limited assurance. The report had been requested by Ofcom to identify improvements and the recommendations were being implemented. 16. The Committee had discussed a deep dive on cyber security and had noted the actions being taken to address this risk. It had also received an internal audit report on readiness for the launch of the online safety fees regime which had received a substantial assurance rating. 17. A report on data and information management had shown progress with the implementation of previous recommendations. Advice from Deloitte suggested that organisations that had successful data management of their Sharepoint systems invested more human resource in this area and drove culture change from the top. 18. The Board discussed the update and noted the risks around the introduction of online safety fees. 19. Angela Dean said the Committee had discussed the Strategic Risk Register. PMB had recommended the reduction of the Current risk rating for the Sound Financial Management risk to reflect the improved financial position following the spending cap decision and assurance from Ofcom’s new Finance Director. The Committee had agreed with this and also recommended increasing the Target risk rating to align with this as having a target that was more financially conservative than the current position may not be achievable without undesirable trade-offs in other areas. The Committee also recommended changing ownership of the risks on Managing Our Regulatory Environment and Effectively Responding to Changes in Technology, Markets and Consumer Behaviour to Kate Davies, the new Group Director Strategy and Research. 20. The Board APPROVED the changes to the Current and Target risk ratings of the Sound Financial Management strategic risk and to change the risk owner of two strategic risks to Kate Davies.	
Item 6: One Ofcom – Transformation programme – Board 80(25)	

21. Jo Curtis presented paper 80(25) on the One Ofcom transformation programme. She said she had worked with the senior management team to develop the six themes of agile policy making, agile project management, portfolio management, data management, ICT and tech, and AI and set out the work strands flowing from each theme. She said the programme would be iterative, involving testing through small-scale pilots, rather than following a traditional waterfall approach. 22. The Board discussed the paper and noted the importance of gaining buy-in from colleagues and stressing the urgency of change. The need for an accurate baseline from which to measure progress, and clear descriptions of what success would look like, were also noted. 23. The programme was shifting away from the period of continuous improvement over the previous few years, when the primary organisational bandwidth had been focused on building the Online Safety team. Delivering the programme would require a change of culture for some colleagues and the leadership would need to be clear about pace and decision making. Group Directors were supportive of the programme and there was appetite among leaders for ambitious delivery. The Transformation team were working with the Director of People, Culture and Workplace on behavioural change issues. 24. The programme would target the use of AI to address specific problems, with tools rolled out to colleagues with particular use cases. AI would also be used to help with data retrieval in Sharepoint. 25. The Board NOTED paper.	
Item 7: Three-Year Business Plan update – Board 81(25) 26. Kate Davies presented paper 81(25) on the Three-Year Business Plan. She said the paper set out options for years 2 and 3 of the plan, taking account of the financial settlement. Work from the Board Strategy Day in October would also flow into the business planning process. 27. The Board discussed the delivery risks associated with the plan and noted that the quarterly reforecasting process enabled Ofcom to remain within budget. A small unallocated budget also mitigated delivery risk. It was noted that Spectrum may need to have a different approach to efficiencies in years 2 and 3 as it was the only regulatory area not to have benefited from new duties. 28. It was noted that the outputs of the Transformation programme, such as improved portfolio and project management and increased use of AI, should mean that by the end of the business plan period Ofcom had more flexibility and was able to be more productive in its business planning. 29. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 8: Estates strategy: focus on Warrington – Board 82(25) 30. Melissa Tatton presented paper 82(25) on a proposal to enter into a lease for new premises in Warrington at the conclusion of the current lease. The principal financial difference between the current and new premises was building upgrade costs, which were higher in the current building, and these	

had been derived in line with professional external advice. In addition to being more cost effective, the new premises would provide a more attractive work environment for colleagues. 31. The Board noted that the previously approved decision to extend the existing premises in Manchester was not currently able to proceed as planned due to a change of position by the landlord. 32. The Board APPROVED the retention of a Warrington presence beyond the end of the current lease in April 2026 and to agree a new 10-year lease to relocate to a site in the same business park from February 2026, with lease negotiations delegated to the Chief Operating Officer.	
Item 9: Online safety – driving change in 2025/26 – Board 83(25) 33. Oliver Griffiths presented paper 83(25) on Ofcom’s online safety programme. He said the introduction of highly effective age assurance requirements on 25 July had focused attention on aspects of the online safety regime such as freedom of expression and data protection. 34. The paper set out progress to date with the introduction of the regime. It was noted that a judicial review of the government’s categorisation regulations had delayed that element of the programme. The Board discussed the legal challenge and the implications for Ofcom. 35. It was noted that age verification was working well and did not appear to be materially interrupting the user online experience. The next step would be to assess its efficacy and the use of VPNs, especially by children, with data on VPN usage expected in the new year. 36. Ofcom’s online safety toolkit aimed to help providers seeking to navigate the system and to minimise the work involved in compliance. Some smaller providers had overestimated the actual level of regulation applying to them and it was hoped this would settle down in the coming months. 37. The Board discussed Ofcom’s relationships with agencies such as the National Crime Agency and the tight protocols in place for colleagues who needed to handle illegal material. It was noted that colleagues in various Groups worked with sensitive and sometimes distressing material and discussions on the internal infrastructure that was needed for this were ongoing. 38. The Board discussed Ofcom’s approach to enforcement over the next six months and noted the importance of being able to continue to demonstrate tangible change for users. 39. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 10: Online Information Advisory Committee update 40. Richard Allan updated the Board on the work of the Online Information Advisory Committee (OIAC). He said the advice note on fraud was progressing well and would be presented to the Board in November. The planned work on disinformation used with the intent to harm or humiliate women and girls was likely to be ongoing with the team rather than a formal advice note. The next	

area of work would be on misinformation and disinformation in relation to public order. 41. The Board APPROVED the update on the OIAC workplan.	
Item 11: Public Service Media Review – Board 84(25) 42. Cristina Nicolotti Squires presented paper 84(25) on Ofcom’s Public Service Media Review and said it had been widely welcomed by stakeholders. The next phase of Ofcom’s work would be the publication in November of a call for evidence on advertising regulation, licensing and the operation of content standards regulation across broadcast and on-demand services. 43. The Board discussed the issue of prominence for public service content on YouTube in the light of the shift away from traditional linear viewing. It was noted that Channel 4’s YouTube channel was adding to its audience rather than cannibalising linear and on-demand viewers and it would be helpful for it to have prominence where people were consuming it. It would also be helpful to understand more about the commercial terms YouTube offered large broadcasters. The Board noted that YouTube content creators were keen to be considered as part of the UK broadcasting industry. 44. The Board noted the importance of Government providing a clear decision on soon the future of DTT. The Government was also working on the BBC Charter review, with a green paper expected by the end of the year. 45. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 12: Content Board appointments – Board 85(25) 46. The Board APPROVED the appointment of Yolisa Phahle as the Member for England from 1 November 2025 until 31 December 2027, the end of her current term, and APPROVED the reappointment of Maria McCann as the Member for Northern Ireland from 21 November 2025 for a second three-year term.	
Item 13: Advisory Committee for Wales appointments – Board 86(25) 47. The Board APPROVED the appointment of Amanda Rees as the Chair of the Advisory Committee for Wales from 1 June 2026 for a three-year term.	
Items 14-17: Standing items 48. The Board NOTED the following information items: • Non-executive member updates – paper 87(25) • Quarterly performance report – paper 88(25) • Board work programme – paper 89(25) and publication schedule – paper 90(25) • Minutes of the Advisory Committee for England of 5 June 2025, Advisory Committee for Wales of 10 June 2025, Advisory Committee for Scotland of 12 June 2025, Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland of 12 June 2025, Online Information Advisory Committee of 13 June 2025, Communications Consumer Panel/ACOD of 19 June 2025, Content	

Board of 1 July 2025 and Online Information Advisory Committee of 11 July 2025.	
Item 18: Any other business 49. There was no other business.	
Item 19: Items in the Board reading room 50. The Board NOTED the Regulatory Delivery Risk Register.	
Item 20: Date of the next meeting 51. The next scheduled Board meeting would be held on 15 October 2025. 52. The meeting concluded at 12.55 pm.	

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Chair