

Ofcom Board minutes 16 July 2025

Publication minutes of the three-hundred and twenty-sixth meeting of the Ofcom Board held on 16 July 2025 at Riverside House, London SE1 9HA and via Microsoft Teams

Present

Michael Grade	Chair (Items 1-19)
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 1-19)
Will Harding	Non-Executive Member
Clive Jones	Non-Executive Member
Ben Verwaayen	Non-Executive Member (Items 1-6) (via Teams)

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 5-6)
Richard Hornby	Finance Director (Items 5-6)
Jessica Hill	People, Culture and Workplace Director (Item 5) (via Teams)
Lawrence Knight	Head of Workplace Strategy (Item 5) (via Teams)
Oliver Griffiths	Group Director Online Safety (Items 6-7)
Michelle Brostoff	Project Director (Item 6)
Richard Wronka	Online Safety Supervision Director (Item 6)
Ed Leighton	Interim Strategy and Research Group Director (Item 7)
Tobe Nwaogu	Strategy Director (Item 7)
David Willis	Group Director Spectrum (Item 8)
Ben Harries	Policy Director (Item 9)
Nihal Newman	Network Security & Resilience Policy Director (Item 20)
Jonathan Sharkey	Senior Technical Advisor (Item 20)
Paul Philips	Legal Director (Item 20)
Gerry McQuaid	Telecoms and Internet Security (Item 20)

In attendance

Kate Davies

Public Policy Director (Item 20) (via Teams)

	Action
Item 1: Welcome and declaration of members' interests 1. No new declarations of interest were noted.	
Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2025 – 325(25) and matters arising. 2. The minutes of the Ofcom Board meeting held on 18 June 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, including a meeting with the Chair of TalkTalk. He said he had concluded Ofcom's work to recruit a new Chair for Channel 4 and the recommendation had been sent to the Secretary of State at DCMS for consideration. 5. The Board NOTED the verbal report.	
Item 4: Chief Executive's report – Board 63(25) 6. Melanie Dawes presented paper 63(25) on her activities. She said the launch of Map Your Mobile had been well received and the decision on the postal Universal Service Obligation had also been received positively in the main. There continued to be a lot of activity across Ofcom's sectors, including with movements in the fixed telecoms market. Further consultations on implementing Media Act provisions would be published shortly and publications on spectrum satellite services and the spectrum annual licence fee review were also due. Headline results from the annual colleague survey were strong. 7. Melanie Dawes updated the Board on work in Online Safety, including that all of the 10 largest porn providers had indicated they would comply with the requirements around the introduction of age assurance and that Illegal Harms risk assessments had been received from the major platforms. 8. Ofcom was considering the extent of the use of VPNs and the implications of this on the scope of the Online Safety Act. 9. The Board discussed the BBC's report on its handling of a Gaza documentary and its response to the livestreaming of the Bob Vylan performance during its Glastonbury coverage. The need for the BBC to improve its response to such issues was noted. Ofcom had opened an investigation into the Gaza documentary and was reviewing its options in relation to the Glastonbury coverage. It would be important for Ofcom to ensure its own processes and procedures operated quickly and correctly in reaching its conclusions.	

10. The Board noted that Melanie Dawes would be meeting members of the US House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary, led by Jim Jordon. This would be an opportunity to set out Ofcom's role in regulating social media platforms based in the US. 11. The Board discussed the Q1 trading results of TalkTalk and noted the risks around the financial sustainability of the company. The importance of managing vulnerable customers correctly in the event of a change of ownership was noted. 12. CityFibre had raised investment and was in a position to begin acquisitions. 13. The Board discussed independent production companies based in Scotland and noted that some stakeholders had expressed their concerns that Ofcom's commissioning guidance led to disadvantageous commercial outcomes during commissioning from streaming platforms. This would be picked up offline. 14. The Board NOTED the report.	
Item 5: Premises update – Board 64(25) 15. Melissa Tatton presented paper 64(25) on proposals to extend Ofcom's London lease and to increase the size of the Manchester office. She said the proposals were in line with the Board's agreed strategy of retaining a London headquarters and growing the out-of-London presence. 16. The proposal for London was to agree a reversionary lease to begin at the conclusion of the current lease in 2030 to last until 2040. As previously agreed by the Board, an extensive review of the market had been carried out alongside negotiations with the Riverside House landlord. The paper set out that the Riverside House option offered best value for money, allowed flexibility to both expand and contract and provided certainty in the long term. 17. Richard Hornby said the Riverside House option was the most financially advantageous for Ofcom in both nominal and discounted terms and was also the best for preserving cash to invest in transformation over the next few years. Delaying a decision until closer to the end of the current lease in the hope of achieving a better outcome would be a significant risk. Ofcom's external property advisers had confirmed the merits of the Riverside House option. 18. Angela Dean said that Risk and Audit Committee members had reviewed the options and supported the Riverside House proposal. 19. The Board discussed the paper and noted the advice of the external advisor. 20. The Board APPROVED the agreement of a contract for a lease to remain at Riverside House, Ofcom's current London location, from 2030 to 2040, and APPROVED delegated authority to the Chief Operating Officer to conclude and sign the final contract. 21. Melissa Tatton said Ofcom's Manchester office had been successfully growing and was a key location for meeting the 30% out-of-London target. It was likely this target would be achieved by the end of the year, meaning the current	

Manchester premises were approaching capacity. The proposal was to acquire adjacent space within the same building to grow the footprint by 40%. 22. The Board APPROVED an increase Ofcom's office size in Manchester by 40% and that lease negotiations be delegated to the Chief Operating Officer in line with the normal approach to securing leases.	
Item 6: Online Safety fees and penalties update – Board 65(25) 23. Michelle Brostoff presented paper 65(25) on the Online Safety fees and penalties regime. She said Ofcom's guidance on Qualifying Worldwide Revenue (QWR) in respect of fees and penalty caps would be published shortly, followed by a consultation on notification guidance in September and proposed Online Safety Fees Statement of Charging Principles in November. 24. The regime was expected to lead to the five largest regulated companies paying around 90% of the total fees and around 40 to 60 providers being in scope and liable for fees. Tariffs were likely to be around 0.02% to 0.03% of revenues. 25. The Board discussed the paper and noted that the fees regime would cover only ongoing costs, with responsibility for decisions on recouping set-up costs sitting with Government. 26. The Board noted that the largest providers would be responsible for similar proportions of fees whether a worldwide or UK revenue approach was applied. 27. It was noted that Ofcom was monitoring the positions of other international regulators on fees and that the team would be meeting their Irish counterparts shortly. For communications purposes it may be helpful to know the overall value of the sector to put the cost of fees into context and this would be investigated. 28. The Board discussed the implications for Ofcom if providers did not comply with the fees regime. There had been constructive discussions with the Government on contingency options to mitigate the cashflow risk, but it would be helpful to consider this further with Risk and Audit Committee and Board oversight. 29. The Board NOTED paper. 30. Oliver Griffiths updated the Board on recent developments in online safety, including the introduction of highly effective age assurance for porn providers and engagement around illegal harms risk assessments.	Oliver Griffiths Richard Hornby
Item 7: Media Literacy Strategy update – Board 66(25) 31. Ed Leighton presented paper 66(25) on the implementation of the three-year Media Literacy Strategy and the approach being taken to the Media Literacy Statement of Recommendations, due to be published in September. 32. The Board discussed the paper and noted the proposals to make parental controls more prominent and easier to use. Ofcom would encourage	

organisations to publish their actions in this area and it may be helpful for Ofcom to compare these responses and develop best practice principles. 33. The Board noted that the Statement of Recommendations contained a significant number of recommendations and reporting on them would absorb considerable resource. The Online Safety Act required Ofcom to report on the impact of its media literacy work and the first report on this would be due in 2026. The report would be informed by ongoing trackers for adults and children of different levels of media literacy. 34. The Board discussed the possible conclusions of the House of Lords Committee on media literacy and noted that Government funding for media literacy had largely been diverted to digital inclusion. 35. It was agreed that an update on progress would be provided to a future Board meeting. 36. The Board NOTED the paper.	Corp Sec/ Ed Leighton
Item 8: Spectrum update – Board 67(25) 37. David Willis presented paper 67(25) on recent work in the Spectrum Group. He said he had recently reorganised the team at the Spectrum Management Centre in Baldock to remove the need for overnight on-site shifts and moved to an on-call arrangement for overnight issues. This, and other efficiencies, had led to a halving of the number of colleagues required and quality of life improvements, as well as cost savings. The transition had not required any compulsory redundancies. 38. The Board discussed the paper and noted that it was likely China would be hosting the next World Radiocommunication Conference and this may have some impact on how the conference operated. 39. The Board discussed growth areas for the Spectrum Group. David Willis noted it would be helpful to increase resources in the operational side of the Space team and that resource was also going into the Satellite team to be able to deal with issues more efficiently. 40. The Board discussed the future of the Upper 6 GHz band and noted that there had been some pushback in the consultation responses to Ofcom’s proposed band sharing solution. The team was now considering the responses. 41. There was close working between the Spectrum and Networks and Communications Groups to ensure joined up approaches to connectivity for consumers whether via fixed lines, mobile or satellite. 42. The Board discussed the importance of Spectrum infrastructure and the supply chain and noted that UK industries were supplying products to providers such as SpaceX. The UK space trade association was strong and had built constructive relationships between the industry and Government. 43. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 9: Telecoms Access Review – Board 68(25)	

44. Ben Harries presented paper 68(25) on stakeholder responses to Ofcom's consultation on the Telecoms Access Review. He said that there was support from respondents for Ofcom's overarching aim of regulatory stability but views differed in several key areas on how this was proposed to be achieved. 45. The Board discussed the paper and noted the responses of stakeholders to the consultation, including the different views of BT and the altnets, with BT requesting the removal of some of the restrictions on their commercial flexibility and altnets wanting the retention of these restrictions as they believed they had not yet established themselves as competitors. The Board noted that Ofcom's strategy was premised on altnets winning market share from incumbents, including Openreach. 46. The Board discussed factors important to the sustainability of network competition, including the different business models operating in the market, the likelihood and need for consolidation, and the role of take up and ISPs in driving this. 47. The Board noted that consolidation could change the fixed telecoms market significantly over the next five years, and the Board discussed the financial position and strategic plans of the current key players. It was noted that it could take up to 12 months for an altnet to integrate an acquisition and it was important that integration was successful for customers. 48. The Board noted that data on the quality of service provided by altnets was variable, with Ofcom having more visibility over the larger providers. Some larger altnets had contractually committed to offer a better quality of service than Openreach. Another important dimension of quality was network resilience and some altnets had not been as resilient as expected during recent poor weather. The Board noted ongoing work to ensure the PIA remedy was effective in supporting recovery from network disruption. 49. The Board noted there were no obligations on landlords to install full fibre for tenants and that new build estates may not offer a choice of providers. 50. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 10: Corporate Governance Framework – Annex 4: Delegations – Board 69(25) 51. The Board APPROVED amendments to Annex 4 of the Corporate Governance Framework.	
Item 11: Advisory Committee for England – appointment of Chair – Board 70(25) 52. The Board APPROVED the appointment of Richard Bellamy as the Chair of the Advisory Committee for England from 1 August 2025 until 31 May 2028, the end of his current term.	
Item 12: Modern Slavery Statement 2025 – Board 71(25) 53. The Board APPROVED the Modern Slavery Statement 2025.	
Item 13: Board Strategy Day draft agenda – Board 72(25) 54. The Board NOTED the draft Board Strategy Day agenda.	

Items 14-17: Standing items 55. The Board NOTED the following information items: • Monthly performance report – paper 73(25) • Non-executive member updates – paper 74(25) • Board work programme – paper 75(25) and publication schedule – paper 76(25) • Minutes of the Communications Consumer Panel / ACOD of 15 May 2025 and the Risk and Audit Committee of 9 June 2025.	
Item 18: Any other business 56. There was no other business.	
Item 19: Cyber Security & Resilience Bill and data centre update – Board 77(25) 57. Michael Grade recused himself from this item and Tamara Ingram chaired the meeting in his absence. 58. Nihal Newman presented paper 77(25) on the Cyber Security and Resilience Bill. She said that the Bill would update the Network and Information Systems regulations, covering both the Digital Infrastructure Sector, which Ofcom currently regulated, and a new Data Infrastructure Sector, covering data centres, which Ofcom would also regulate. Other sectors covered by the regulations continued to be regulated by other entities. 59. Nihal Newman said the Bill was expected to enter Parliament in September, with Royal Assent due in summer and secondary legislation to follow. The Bill would enhance Ofcom’s responsibilities on digital infrastructure and expand Ofcom’s remit to cover data centres, including new duties on supply chain security. 60. Data centres were key to the Government’s security and growth plans. The Bill would allow for Ofcom and the Government to act as joint regulators with the Government maintaining responsibility for scope and Ofcom responsible for monitoring and enforcement. This model had been adopted in other sectors but would be new for Ofcom and it would be important that responsibilities were properly clarified in Parliament and published in industry guidance. It was important that this model did not set a precedent in relation to other areas of Ofcom’s regulation. Ofcom’s independence from Government on our areas of responsibility would need to be clear. 61. Ofcom would have a contributing role in defining security standards relating to data centres and had experience of similar sectoral contributions in its work on the Telecoms Security Act. Ofcom would be working for the first time with the National Protective Security Authority, with whom Ofcom currently had limited established relationships. In addition, the team had recently visited one of London’s largest data centres, as part of understanding the sector and building relationships with key stakeholders. 62. It was agreed that an update on the Bill would be provided to a future Board meeting.	Corp Sec/ Nihal Newman

63. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 20: Date of the next meeting 64. The next scheduled Board meeting would be held on 24 September 2025. 65. The meeting concluded at 12.55 pm.	

Approved: _____
Chair