

Ofcom Board minutes 11 March 2026

Publication minutes of the three-hundred and thirty second meeting of the Ofcom Board held on 11 March 2026 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, Infrastructure & Connectivity
Melanie Dawes	Executive Member and Chief Executive
Angela Dean	Non-Executive Member
Oliver Griffiths	Executive Member and Group Director, Online Safety
Will Harding	Non-Executive Member
Clive Jones	Non-Executive Member
Ben Verwaayen	Non-Executive Member (Items 1- 9) (via Teams)
George Walker	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
Cristina Nicolotti Squires	Group Director, Broadcasting and Media (Item 7)
Siobhan Walsh	Director of Policy Development (Item 7)
Nuala Cosgrove	Legal Director (Item 7)
Lucy Aldington	Principal, Standards & Audience Protection (Item 7)
Melissa Tatton	Group Director Corporate (Item 8)
Kate Davies	Group Director Strategy and Research (Item 8)
Richard Hornby	Finance Director (Item 8)
Iqbal Marikkar	Corporate Strategy Director (Item 8)
Atif Moghal	Head of Strategic Finance and Funding (Item 8)
Fergal Farragher	I&C Policy Director (Item 9)
Simon Leathley	Legal Director (Item 9)
Hugh Mullan	Economics Director (Item 9)
Mark Bunting	Online Safety Strategy Delivery Director (Item 10)

In attendance

Jessica Smith

Online Safety Policy Principal (Item 10)

	Action
Item 1: Welcome and declaration of members' interests 1. No new declarations of interest were raised.	
Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2026 – 331(25) and matters arising 2. The minutes of the Ofcom Board meeting held on 4 February 2026 were APPROVED as a correct record, with the exception of Item 9, which would be brought to the next meeting. 3. A summary of progress against action points was NOTED . Richard Allan said he had met the team responsible for safeguarding policies in relation to colleagues working in online safety and had confirmed to them that the Board took this issue extremely seriously.	
Item 3: Chair's report 4. The Chair updated the Board on his activities, including his recent meeting with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. 5. The Board NOTED the report.	
Item 4: Chief Executive's report – Board 16(26) 6. Melanie Dawes presented paper 16(26) on her activities. She said she had attended the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi with the Group Director for Infrastructure & Connectivity, and had had useful conversations about the telecoms market in India. The discussions around AI had highlighted the issues around AI sovereignty and it was agreed that Emmanuel Macron's speech on this would be circulated to Board members. 7. Natalie Black updated the Board on her attendance at the recent Munich Security Conference. Discussions at the World Mobile Congress had also touched on the importance of retaining control of telecoms security at a national level as far as possible. 8. The Board discussed developments in the fixed telecoms market and Ofcom's forthcoming statement on the Telecoms Access Review. 9. The Board noted that a new lease for Riverside House had now been agreed. The Digital, Data and AI functions had been grouped together under a new director. A consultation on a new hybrid working policy had recently closed. 10. The online safety environment had developed over the previous month. The Government was consulting on further measures to protect children and Ofcom had engaged extensively with Parliamentarians on the proposals. Separately, the Board noted that Ofcom may need to continue to explain to stakeholders the likely timescales for regulatory enforcement action.	NB

11. The Board NOTED the report.	
Item 5: Risk and Audit Committee update (4 March meeting) and annual review of risk management function and Strategic Risk Register – Board 22(26) 12. Angela Dean updated the Board on the meeting of the Risk and Audit Committee of 4 March 2026. She said the Committee had approved the annual internal audit plan including audits of the transformation programme, online safety delivery, corporate governance arrangements, spectrum monitoring, tariff setting, and AI governance. 13. The committee had reviewed two internal audit reports. The audit of risk management was rated substantial assurance and showed Ofcom’s strong approach to risk. The audit of procurement processes had also been rated substantial assurance. The committee had also reviewed a readiness report on personal security which had received an amber rating and work on implementing the recommendations was well in hand. 14. The external audit was proceeding on an earlier timetable than previously. The NAO had identified an issue relating to Ofcom’s ability to independently set senior pay and this would be clarified in due course. 15. The Committee had reviewed the Group-level risk registers and had discussed whether the overall ratings were correct. This would be reviewed by the executive. 16. The Committee had received a briefing on an issue relating to Royal Mail fees and the measures put in place as a result. 17. The Board NOTED the update. 18. Angela Dean presented paper 22(26) on the annual review of Ofcom’s risk management function and Strategic Risk Register. She said the Committee had requested that Ofcom’s position on cyber insurance be reviewed later in the year and had noted that the integration of various corporate security risks had been significant and successful. 19. The Board NOTED the annual review of the risk management function. 20. The Board APPROVED the Strategic Risk Register.	
Item 6: People Committee update (10 March meeting) 21. Tamara Ingram updated the Board on the meeting of the People Committee of 10 March. She said the Committee had discussed the draft Hybrid Working Policy and had noted the importance of colleagues attending the office. The Committee had approved the annual pay review and discussed options for supporting lower paid colleagues in the event of significant inflation. The Committee had noted the reduction in colleague turnover and would discuss this at a future meeting. 22. The Board NOTED the update.	
Item 7: Broadcasting and Media Group programme update – Board 17(26); BBC Charter Review – Board 19(26); PS MR follow-on work – Board 20(26); Media Act Part 4: Tier 1 Standards Code Consultation – Board 21(26)	

23. Cristina Nicolotti Squires presented papers 17(26) on the Broadcasting and Media Group programme, 19(26) on the BBC Charter Review, 20(26) on PSMR follow-on work and 21(26) on the Media Act Part 4 Tier 1 Standards Code Consultation. She said the papers were connected through the sustainability of public service media and had been informed by Ofcom's Transmission Critical report published in summer 2025. 24. The Board discussed the papers. The team explained that there had been a broadly positive response to Transmission Critical and discussions with DCMS about the recommendations Ofcom made were underway. At the same time, Ofcom was providing input to DCMS as it worked through responses to the BBC Charter Green Paper. 25. The Board discussed potential BBC funding models and the public service broadcasting environment. It was noted that the funding model was a matter for Government. 26. It was noted that the BBC was a source of internationally trusted news and the BBC should further investigate potential markets, including the US. The Board discussed the BBC's role in providing trusted local and regional news and its relationship with other local and regional news sources. 27. The Board discussed the future of digital terrestrial television and noted the importance of providing a clear date for switch off so that industry could plan with certainty. 28. The Board noted that the Media Act gave platforms such as Netflix due impartiality obligations for the first time, with Ofcom having enforcement powers in this area. 29. The Board NOTED papers 17(26) on the Broadcasting and Media Group programme, 19(26) on the BBC Charter Review, 20(26) on PSMR follow-on work and 21(26) on the Media Act Part 4 Tier 1 Standards Code Consultation.	
Item 8: 2026/27 Plan of Work and budget – Board 23(26) 30. Kate Davies and Melissa Tatton presented paper 23(26) on the 2026/27 Plan of Work and budget. Stakeholders had engaged well with the consultation on the Plan of Work. Responses had largely focused on policy areas that were already in the plan and as such no significant changes were being proposed. 31. The Board discussed the proposed 2026/27 budget to support the Plan of Work. The budget of £233.2m would be a £6.4m increase on the previous year and would include a programme of efficiencies. The introduction of online safety fees meant the majority of Ofcom's income in future years would be from fees rather than WTA receipts. 32. The Board discussed the budget and noted the risks around income, expenditure and efficiencies. The Board noted the mitigations available in the event of unexpectedly high inflation. There may need to be some flexibility on the Plan of Work to accommodate unplanned activity during the year.	

33. The financial risk relating to low rates of colleague turnover was discussed. The likelihood was increasing but the impact remained low as visibility of this risk had improved, through greater integration of salary and finance information. 34. The Board discussed the proposed fees and tariffs. It was noted that fees had been set slightly earlier this year and would be monitored during the course of the year. 35. The Board discussed the impact of the small proposed increase in fees on the radio sector. The increase was due in part to the work on connected speakers, which was supported by the industry. 36. Overall fees had been kept below the rate of inflation and Ofcom had a strong record of cost control for fee payers. It would be important to be clear what additional work was being carried out in cases where individual fees were increasing. 37. The Board APPROVED the 2026/27 Ofcom Plan of Work, subject to final sign-off by Melanie Dawes (the foreword) and Kate Davies; APPROVED the proposed 2026/27 Budget of £233.2m; and NOTED the update to stakeholder tariffs.	
Item 9: Update on Post issues – Board 24(26) 38. Natalie Black presented paper 24(26) on Ofcom’s Post work. She said Royal Mail’s financial position was weakening and that the Risk and Audit Committee had been briefed on contingency plans. 39. The Board discussed the financial sustainability of the USO and how it might be addressed by Royal Mail. The key change needed was for the company to implement changes to the USO that Ofcom had facilitated in 2025. It was important that Ofcom had taken action to enable the USO to be provided in a more financially sustainable way, and the amended USO had been a significant step towards this. The Board noted that it was for Royal Mail to implement the changes that Ofcom had enabled, and Ofcom was monitoring the position carefully. The Board noted that Royal Mail’s quality of service was significantly below the level required and it was likely that investment by the owner and delivery of the new USO would be necessary to secure financial stability and improvements to quality of service. 40. The Board discussed international comparisons and noted that many international postal companies received some public subsidy or were publicly owned and that all were undergoing similar USO reforms. International prices were generally higher than in the UK. 41. The forthcoming Select Committee meeting hearing with the Royal Mail owner and representatives from the Communication Workers Union would be important and Ofcom’s position and the role it played as regulator would need to be stated clearly. 42. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 10: Online safety update: securing commitments from the largest services to	

protect child users – Board 25(26) 43. Mark Bunting and Jess Smith presented paper 25(26) on Ofcom’s work to secure additional child safety commitments from the largest online services. They explained that this initiative represented a more transparent and directive supervisory strategy by Ofcom, putting greater pressure on services to adopt the safety by design culture envisaged in the Online Safety Act and to account to the public for their actions. 44. Ofcom would shortly write to Snap, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Roblox to set out four core expectations around grooming, algorithms, testing on children and applying their own minimum age requirements. Ofcom would be making these expectations public, would strongly recommend firms publish their responses and would publish its own summary of them. This work would build on previous activity to ensure services were complying with their duties under the Online Safety Act. 45. The Board NOTED the paper and welcomed the initiative.	
Item 11: Annual health and safety report and strategy – Board 26(26) 46. The Board APPROVED the Health & Safety Annual Report and the Health and Safety Strategy.	
Item 12: Online Information Advisory Committee – advice note 3 topic – Board 27(26) 47. The Board APPROVED the topic of elections for the third advice note produced by the Online Information Advisory Committee.	
Items 13-16: Standing items 48. The Board NOTED the following information items: • Non-executive member updates – Board 28(26) • Monthly performance update – Board 29(26) • Board work programme – Board 30(26) and publication schedule – Board 31(26) • Minutes of the Advisory Committee for Scotland of 2 December 2025, Communications Consumer Panel of 15 January 2026 and Online Information Advisory Committee of 23 January 2026. 49. Clive Jones said that the Election Committee had been reestablished in preparation for the forthcoming local elections.	
Item 19: Any other business 50. The Chair said he would be meeting the Channel 4 Chair for a routine update shortly. 51. Karen Baxter said she was aware that the UK Fraud Strategy had recently been published and it was important for Ofcom to engage with the Financial Conduct Authority and other partners in relation to fraud prevention.	
Item 20: Date of the next meeting	

52. The next scheduled Board meeting would be held on 22 April 2026.	
53. The meeting concluded at 12.45 pm.	

Approved: _____
Chair