

**PUBLICATION MINUTES OF THE THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTEENTH MEETING OF
THE OFCOM BOARD HELD ON 17 JULY 2024
AT RIVERSIDE HOUSE, LONDON SE1 9HA AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Present

Michael Grade	Chair
Karen Baxter	Non-Executive Member
Melanie Dawes	Executive Member and Chief Executive
Angela Dean	Non-Executive Member
Bob Downes	Non-Executive Member
Lindsey Fussell	Executive Member and Group Director, Networks & Communications
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	Head of Governance (via Teams)
Sharon Malley	Governance Manager
Melissa Tatton	Group Director, Corporate (Items 5-6 and 8-10)
Kate Davies	Public Policy Director (Item 5)
Yih-Choung Teh	Group Director Strategy and Research (Item 6)
Iqbal Marikkar	Corporate Strategy Director (Item 6)
Atif Moghal	Head of Strategic Finance and Funding (Items 6 and 9)
Jessie Peramal	Finance Director (Items 6 and 9)
David Clarkson	Policy Director (Item 7)
James Mackley	Economics Director (Item 7)
Ian Strawhorne	Enforcement Director (Item 7)
Gary Clemo	Data Director (Item 8)
Lawrence Knight	Head of Workplace Strategy (Item 9) (via Teams)
Jessica Hill	People and Culture Director (Item 9) (via Teams)
Simon Redfern	Communications Director (Item 10)
Tony Finnegan	Head of Social Media and Creative (Item 10)

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Item 1: Declaration of members' interests	
1. No new interests were declared.	
Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2024 (315(24)) and matters arising	
2. Subject to a minor amendment, the minutes of the Ofcom Board meeting held on 19 June 2024 were APPROVED for signature by the Chair as an accurate record.	
3. A summary of progress against action points was NOTED .	

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Item 3: Chair's report 4. The Chair updated the Board on his activities, including a meeting with fellow peers in the House of Lords on online safety. 5. The Board NOTED the report.	
Item 4: Chief Executive's report – Board paper 69(24) 6. Melanie Dawes presented paper 69(24) on her activities. She said she was due to meet the new DSIT Secretary of State, Peter Kyle, for the first time on the day after the Board meeting and that meetings with other Ministers would follow in due course. The election had impacted Ofcom's publishing timetable with many of its reports being delayed during the campaign after Parliament was dissolved. These would now be published with the backlog largely cleared by the end of July. 7. Melanie Dawes said she had met Alex Mahon, the CEO of Channel 4, and had set out Ofcom's position on Channel 4's handling of regional production quotas. She had agreed to put Alex Mahon in touch with Ofcom's nations directors to hear their views firsthand. 8. The finalisation of Ofcom's Annual Report and Accounts was continuing, and it was hoped that it would be laid before Parliament before the summer recess, although this was dependent on the capacity of the National Audit Office. 9. Melanie Dawes said she and Michael Grade had met peers who were arguing for more substantive interventions on children's safety under the Online Safety Act (OSA). Ofcom's view was that the draft codes would protect children, including younger children, significantly more than today, and that the introduction of the OSA was itself a major step towards greater online safety. Ofcom was working through the implementation of the OSA and identifying areas where it could act creatively to go further and also areas where the law could benefit from strengthening. 10. Melanie Dawes said the topline results of the colleague survey had been received and she had been very encouraged by the strong engagement scores and the recognition of a cultural shift on agility. 11. Gill Whitehead would be leaving her role as Group Director Online Safety at Ofcom. She would be stepping down from mid-September to take up a role as Visiting Policy Fellow at the Oxford Internet Institute. She would also chair the Global Online Safety Regulators Network until the end of the year, and so would continue to work closely with Ofcom in both capacities. Lindsey Fussell would become interim Online Safety Group Director for a period of six months, while a competition to appoint a permanent successor would be conducted. 12. Ofcom was close to finalising the recruitment for the position of Group Director Network and Communications, to take over from Lindsey Fussell in the Autumn. It was hoped that an announcement would be made shortly. 13. Melanie Dawes said she had met the Executive President of Global, Ashley Tabor-King, and had discussed Global's history and current plans.	

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14. Clive Jones updated the Board on broadcast standards during the election campaign. 15. There had been around 2,600 complaints to Ofcom during the campaign but there had been no need to formally convene the Election Committee. Two substantive issues that arose related to the scheduling of a Party Election Broadcast by Alba and allegations about the accuracy of a Channel 4 News report about the Reform UK campaign in Clacton and it was decided that neither warranted further investigation. It would be helpful to speak to newsrooms over the next few months to get feedback on their experience of fake news and Clive Jones would pick this up with Cristina Nicolotti Squires. Ofcom may also be able to contribute to the Government's review of candidate intimidation during the campaign. 16. The Board NOTED the paper.	Corp Sec
Item 5: Post-election update – Board paper 70(24)	
17. Kate Davies updated the Board on the new Government. She said one of the primary themes of the new Government was growth, with its plans across the piece dependent on improvements in the economy. There was strong focus on regions and nations, with MPs from Wales and Scotland being well represented in the Government and the Cabinet and some Ministers proposing to work part of the time in Manchester. 18. Kate Davies briefed the Board on the new Ministers at DSIT and DCMS and their initial approach to Ofcom's areas of responsibility and also on likely outcomes of the King's speech. 19. The Board noted that Ofcom would need to identify for the new Government how it contributed to the growth agenda, recognising Ofcom's facilitation role. The introductory letter to the DSIT Secretary of State had included information on Ofcom's work on promoting competition and investment in the telecoms market, the strong story on spectrum and the support for innovation. Ofcom could also contribute to the debate on the creative economy, including through its past work on Small Screen Big Debate and the forthcoming Public Service Media Review. It would be important to distinguish Ofcom's markets from those of other economic regulators. Projects such as supporting the move from legacy infrastructure to new tech backed up Ofcom's growth story. 20. The Board NOTED the update.	
Item 6: Three-Year Business Plan update – Board paper 71(24)	
21. Yih-Choung Teh presented paper 71(24) on the Three-Year Business Plan. He said the current Three-Year Plan had been helpful to clarify Ofcom's key objectives and priorities and that this new plan would include an integrated financial plan. The proposals were being subject to financial stress-testing at varying levels of budgetary constraint. 22. The Board discussed the proposed priorities and noted that it would be helpful to show where Ofcom had chosen to 'lean out' alongside the new priorities so that it was clearer how the new priorities would be resourced within the budgetary envelope. 23. Lindsey Fussell said by way of example that as part of her scenario planning she had identified various activities that could be reduced either in scope or frequency without	

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compromising mandatory duties. Other areas of flexibility were noted. The importance of ensuring that the plan emphasised Ofcom's support of growth throughout was also noted. 24. The Board would be updated on the Three-Year Plan proposals, including year-by-year costs, at its meeting in September, and would be asked to approve the plan at its meeting in November. 25. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 7: Update on Ofcom's post work 72(24) – Board paper 72(24) 26. David Clarkson presented paper 72(24) on Ofcom's post work. He updated the Board on Royal Mail's financial position and potential reforms to the Universal Service Obligation (USO). 27. It was noted that Royal Mail had a quality of service recovery plan, which Ofcom would monitor frequently throughout the year. It had highlighted this plan to its customers and made a commitment of continuous improvement. 28. The Board noted the proposed changes to the USO that Royal Mail had put forward in response to Ofcom's call for evidence. In order for Ofcom to change the USO it need to be satisfied that the proposed changes would meet reasonable user needs. In doing this Ofcom would conduct consumer research and meet the bulk post users. It was noted that Ofcom should continue to liaise with the main post users and where necessary, as in the case for the NHS, reach out to NHS in the nations. 29. Royal Mail had requested the new USO regulation be in place by April 2025, as it would need at least 18 months after this to fully implement the operational changes. Given the necessary work it was possible for Ofcom to consult on the changes in early 2025 and conclude by mid-2025. This would be slightly behind the Royal Mail's ideal timetable but it was noted that the consultation would provide an early indication of Ofcom's thinking such that Royal Mail should be able to start preparing for change, even if this was at risk until Ofcom reached final conclusions. 30. The Board discussed the risks around the successful operationalisation of the Royal Mail's proposed new USO. 31. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 8: Update on the data transformation delivery plan – Board paper 73(24) 32. Melissa Tatton presented paper 73(24) on the data transformation delivery plan and updated the Board on progress with the five data priorities. Gary Clemo said the ongoing review of the work and operation of the data team would focus on delivery for Ofcom and would be discussed by the Senior Management Team in September. 33. It was noted that the data team's current hub-and-spoke model put too much focus on the hub and not enough on the spokes, and this would be addressed under the review. The review would also distinguish between data and ICT and would clarify roles and responsibilities in these areas. 34. The Board discussed the move towards buying external data products, where possible, rather than developing systems internally. This has been driven by the increased	

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quality and availability of off-the-shelf products and also by a new focus of the data team on producing data products to complement their ongoing work on data analysis. 35. It was noted that the investments required in data had been budgeted in the normal way and would be subject to usual financial governance approvals process. 36. The Board NOTED the paper.	
Item 9: Estates strategy – Board paper 74(24) 37. Melissa Tatton presented paper 74(24) on Ofcom’s estates strategy. She said the lease on Riverside House did not expire until 2030 but the landlord had made an offer that was worth consideration. The Board discussed the proposal and Ofcom’s likely future property needs. The importance of maintaining optionality in any future agreement was noted. The Board discussed Ofcom’s workforce location strategy, the growth of its offices outside London and the need to maintain a central London headquarters. 38. The Board APPROVED the proposals set out in the paper and NOTED the timeline for negotiations and decision making, including returning to the Board for any contract approval.	
Item 10: Communications strategy 2024/25 – Board paper 75(24) 39. Simon Redfern presented paper 75(24) on the 2024/25 communications strategy. He said the strategy was a continuation of the approach adopted in previous years and set out to explain and defend Ofcom’s position to external audiences, without being defensive. The Board discussed the strategy and noted the proposals to improve awareness of Ofcom among harder to reach audiences and stakeholders. It was noted that although it was not possible to respond to every inaccurate comment about Ofcom and its work, it could be helpful to issue a rebuttal where the reach of the inaccurate comment was extensive and the rebuttal was clear and straightforward. 40. The Board noted that it would be helpful to see figures on awareness of Ofcom segmented by nation. The likely forthcoming challenges for the communications team and the need for continued stakeholder engagement were noted. 41. The Board NOTED the paper.	SR
Item 11: Corporate Governance Framework – Schedule of Delegations amendments for online safety – Board paper 76(24) 42. The Board APPROVED the amendments to Annex 4 of the Corporate Governance Framework to be effective from 1 August 2024.	
Item 12: Appointments to the CCP-ACOD – Board paper 77(24) 43. The Board APPROVED a recommendation to be made to DSIT for the appointments of the following candidates for a three-year term, to the corresponding roles, from the dates specified: From 1 October 2024, to cover roles that are already vacant: Huw Saunders as the CCP/ACOD’s Member for Scotland and David Warburton-Broadhurst as a general CCP-ACOD Member;	

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From 1 December 2024, in readiness for the end of current CCP-ACOD Members' terms on 30 November 2024: Robert Hammond as the CCP-ACOD's Member for England, Rhian Johns as a general CCP-ACOD Member and Grant Davis as a general CCP-ACOD Member. 44. The Board NOTED that the vacancy for a CCP-ACOD Member for Northern Ireland was to be re-advertised under a revised role specification.	
Item 13: Advisory Committee for Wales – Chair – Board paper 78(24) 45. The Board APPROVED the appointment of Aled Eirug as the Chair of the Advisory Committee for Wales for a term to conclude in May 2026 and the appointment of Geraint Strello for a second term of three years.	
Item 14: Planning for the Board Strategy Day – Board paper 79(24) 46. The Board NOTED the key objectives, design principles and high-level agenda for the October Board Strategy Day.	
Item 15: Regulator growth duty – Board paper 80(24) 47. The Board NOTED the description and implications of the new 'growth duty', which the previous Government placed on Ofcom, and which came into effect in May 2024.	
Item 16: Highlights from Ofcom's editorial standards work January to July 2024 – Board paper 81(24) 48. The Board NOTED the update.	
Items 17-20: Standing items 49. The Board NOTED the following information items: - Non-executive member updates – Board paper 82(24). - Monthly performance report – Board paper 83(24) - Board work programme – Board paper 84(24), and publications schedule – Board Paper 85(24) - Minutes of the Communications Consumer Panel of 15 May 2024 and Risk and Audit Committee of 10 June 2024.	
Item 19: Any other business 50. There was no other business.	
Item 18: Date of the next meeting 51. The next scheduled Board meeting would be held on Wednesday 25 September 2024.	

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52. The meeting concluded at 12.25 pm.	

Approved: _____
Chair