

Minutes of the meeting of ACOD and the Communications Consumer Panel

on 25 March 2013 at 10.30

Riverside House, 2A Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA

Present

Consumer Panel

Jo Connell (Chairman)
Kim Brook
Jaya Chakrabarti
Chris Holland
Libby Kinney (by video conference)
Mairi Macleod
Craig Tillotson
Bob Twitchin

In attendance

David Edwards
Karen Keany
Fiona Lennox
Jonathan Pillinger-Cork
Simon Beresford Wylie, CEO, Digital Mobile Spectrum Limited (item 7)
Other Ofcom colleagues

1. Declarations of interest

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 27 February 2013 and matters arising

- 2.1 Minutes were APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.
- 2.2 Kim Brook noted that he would provide Members with brief notes of recent meetings he had attended: a Carnegie UK Trust stakeholder engagement seminar; a meeting with Consumer Focus Wales; and a Channel 3 and Channel 5 re-licensing consultation stakeholder event in Cardiff, hosted by Ofcom and its Advisory Committee for Wales.
- 2.3 An Ofcom colleague had provided written feedback for the Panel giving an overview of the extent of national roaming in Europe and hard copies were distributed to Members. Further feedback would be sought from Ofcom on recent media reports about a single telecoms market in Europe.
- 2.4 Fiona Lennox would meet Ofcom colleagues shortly to discuss the proposal of a workshop on consumer information/transparency.
- 2.5 Members NOTED that Ofcom was finalising its plans and the date for a workshop with interested stakeholders to discuss proposals and next steps that could arise following its recent *Measuring mobile voice and data quality of experience - Call for Input* publication. The Panel would take part in the event.

3. ACOD item: Disability analysis

3.1 Members had been provided with a paper on the proposed structure of a Disability Report to supplement Ofcom's research report *The Consumer*

Experience of 2012 (CER). The supplementary report would be based on data from Ofcom commissioned questions in the British Population Survey. Members NOTED that the report would include previously unreported findings and further sub-group analysis, providing further insight into disabled consumers' use of communications services. The data would be analysed by four types of disability (mobility, hearing, visual and multiple disabilities).

3.2 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion. Members welcomed the initiative and a number of comments were NOTED. Whilst appreciating that the scope of the report would be limited by the available data and the robustness of sample sizes, Members felt that future exercises of this kind would benefit from inclusion of data on learning disabilities, on speech impairments and on barriers to access to communications services. The draft of the report would be sent to the Panel. Publication was expected by the end of May.

4. ACOD item: TV access services

4.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting, having provided a paper to brief Members on a proposed Ofcom consultation on TV access services to be published in the Summer. The document would deal with a number of issues including the main dimensions of the quality of subtitles, and related measurement and assessment; be informed by user experience and research; set out the complex processes involved in the production and distribution of live subtitling and related quality problems; and detail proposed measures of quality that could identify areas for improvement.

4.2 There was discussion of a variety of issues including errors in subtitling and the persistence of complaints about its quality; delays in live transmission; consumer awareness of subtitling and awareness of audio description; and availability of access services in the context of increasing multiscreen and VOD consumption.

5. ACOD item: Relay services

5.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting for discussion. Members had been provided with a paper giving an update on the progress of the development of BT's Next Generation Text Relay (NGTR) platform, which was at the commissioning stage, and it was NOTED that all communications providers were required to provide access to NGTR by April 2014. Members were also updated on the voluntary initiative to deliver video relay provision. This included continued engagement with and between DCMS, communications providers, businesses, public sector and disability stakeholders. The Panel would continue to be updated on progress.

6. ACOD item: GC15

6.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting. The Panel had responded to Ofcom's recent *Improving access to electronic communications services for disabled people - Call for Inputs*, including coverage of potential changes to General Condition 15 (Special Measures for End-users with Disabilities). There was discussion of a number of issues raised in the Panel's response, including its desire for continued research on the requirements of disabled people when accessing communications services (as discussed earlier in the meeting); the

value of broadband to disabled consumers; and the Equality Act 2010. Members NOTED that, in the main, the responses to the *Call for Inputs* had not provided a great deal of research evidence. The Panel would keep in touch with the Ofcom team about any next steps.

7. DTT coexistence

7.1 Members were joined by Simon Beresford Wylie, CEO of Digital Mobile Spectrum Limited (DMSL), and he outlined current DMSL activities. DMSL, branded as *at800*, was funded by the UK mobile operators who would be launching 4G services at 800 MHz. These activities included a pilot in the West Midlands to assess the extent to which Freeview services might be disrupted when new 4G services were launched later in the year and efforts to build up DMSL's media and communications activity. Members NOTED that it was intended that DMSL would continue to operate up to a year beyond the fulfilment of 4G 98% UK-wide rollout obligations, although a Panel member voiced concern suggesting that the time frame ought to be longer. Members requested further information in relation to DMSL KPIs and discussed the branding of the programme. It was AGREED that Simon Beresford Wylie would update Members again at the next Panel meeting.

8. 700 MHz update

8.1 Colleagues from Ofcom joined the meeting and presented slides on the UHF strategy implementation, the dual objectives being the provision of more low frequency spectrum for mobile broadband whilst securing the benefits provided by Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT). The presentation covered issues including mobile growth forecasts; the global shift to 700 MHz for mobile; the need to maintain DTT without another switchover; current and post 2018 uses of UHF bands IV and V and the 700 MHz band; possible timelines; understanding and mitigating consumer impacts; the costs and benefits of spectrum release; and the future-proofing of consumer equipment. There was discussion of the role of 600 MHz. The Ofcom team were keen to receive any views the Panel might have outside the meeting.

9. WebFirst

9.1 Members were joined by an Ofcom colleague who had provided a slide pack to brief the Panel on Ofcom's new online telecoms complaints and advice portal for the consumers section of the Ofcom website. The portal was expected to be launched by the Summer. Feedback from Members included an apparent presumption by WebFirst that consumers were sure about the issue they were complaining about; that a reduction in calls to the Ofcom contact centre should be a byproduct rather than an aim of WebFirst; the suggestion that webchat be a feature of the online service; and concern that the wording of the portal should not mislead consumers to expect an individual response to the issues they raised, when this might not be the case.

10. Finalisation of workplan

10.1 A number of parties had provided views in response to the Panel's consultation on its draft workplan 2013/14. Members had also provided comments by email on the draft workplan. Fiona Lennox took Members

through a revised version of the Plan. The Plan would be copied to Members prior to publication. Members NOTED that respondents to the consultation would be contacted following publication. It was intended to publish the Plan before the end of March.

11. Comms strategy

11.1 Karen Keany explained the proposed communications strategy for the Panel. Members ENDORSED the approach being proposed and AGREED to review stakeholder lists for Panel media initiatives and provide feedback by email. Related to stakeholder lists, it was suggested that it could be helpful to segment lists, eg Nation, industry, political contacts etc. It was also suggested that consideration could be given to creating a Members' section on the new Panel website - this could be considered in any future 'phase two' development of the new site. Members responded positively to the suggestion of media training and this would be pursued later in the year.

12. Any other business

12.1 The Chairman reported on a recent catch-up meeting with Ofcom's Group Director, Content, Consumer and External Affairs. Members NOTED that the Chairman would attend the next meeting of Ofcom's Nations Committee in June.

.....ChairmanDate