

Minutes of the 87<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel  
on 25 April 2012 at 9.30

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

**Present**

Consumer Panel

Colin Browne (in the chair)  
Fiona Ballantyne  
Kim Brook (ex-officio member)  
Roger Darlington  
Chris Holland (co-opted member)

In attendance

David Edwards  
Fiona Lennox  
Other Ofcom colleagues (items 3 to 8)

Apologies

Bob Warner (Chair)

**1. Declarations of interest**

1.1 In view of items on the agenda: Roger Darlington reminded members of his Chairmanship of DCMS' Digital Consumer Expert Group and his membership of the Online Centres Foundation board. Colin Browne reminded members of his role as a non-executive director of the Voice of the Listener and Viewer.

**2. Minutes of the meeting on 21 March 2012, matters arising and progress on actions**

- 2.1 Members **APPROVED** the draft minutes for signature by the Chairman.
- 2.2 A note on BDUK activities to stimulate demand for broadband remained outstanding. Discussion of Everything Everywhere's request to use some of its existing spectrum for 4G services would form part of the DTT and 800 MHz coexistence agenda item. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom was in contact with DCMS about the future of the Panel.
- 2.3 Members **NOTED** the information in the latest Panel Implementation Plan, providing a summary and strategic overview of Panel activities.
- 2.4 The meeting would be followed by a joint Panel/Consumer Forum on Communications/Consumer Focus switching event with speakers from Ofcom, BT and TalkTalk and with stakeholders in attendance. The event had been arranged to tie-in with Ofcom's *Consumer switching* consultation.

**3. UHF strategy update; Everything Everywhere licence variation; DTT and 800 MHz coexistence; and Short Range Devices**

- 3.1 Members had received various papers and slidepacks and a number of Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion. Members' initial views were that:
- the identification of consumers affected by interference and questions of

- the provision and ease of installation of TV filters were key issues;
- the number of people potentially affected by new services in the 800 MHz band with digital terrestrial television (DTT) appeared to be greater than at first thought;
  - the Panel was interested in how appointments would be made to the Supervisory Board that would monitor and audit the performance of MITCo, the body to be set up to manage the delivery of DTT interference mitigation and to provide support to DTT consumers;
  - raising consumers' awareness of interference issues would be necessary and a useful mechanism could be a set of Q&As on the Ofcom, DUK and other relevant consumer websites.

3.2 An Ofcom colleague outlined Ofcom's thinking and proposals in relation to its UHF strategy and the release of 700 MHz spectrum for mobile broadband, covering issues that included international coordination, harmonisation of frequency bands, utility of wideband aerials and provision of DTT receiver filters. The Panel **AGREED** to respond to Ofcom's consultation *Securing long term benefits from scarce spectrum resources - A strategy for UHF bands IV and V*.

3.3 An Ofcom colleague explained the proposed variation of Everything Everywhere's 1800 MHz licences to allow for use of LTE and WiMAX technologies. Ofcom had issued a notice of proposed licence variation with responses due by 8 May.

3.4 There was discussion with Ofcom colleagues of Ofcom's *Second consultation on coexistence of new services in the 800 MHz band with digital terrestrial television*. A Panel response had been drafted; account would be taken of any final comments from members and the response would be submitted shortly.

3.5 Members **NOTED** the contents of a briefing note on Short Range Devices (SRDs) and the theoretical risks of interference from 4G services. Ofcom had set up a test facility to allow SRD manufacturers to assess the performance of their products in the presence of 4G signals. Ofcom's current view was that the risk of material adverse interference was low.

#### 4. Media literacy

4.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and delivered a slide presentation on recent findings from Ofcom's media literacy audit, covering topics related to non-users, narrow users and internet privacy and security. Issues discussed included fear of technology related to set-up and use; literacy, the internet remaining an overwhelmingly text-based medium; and use of tablets and their potential to make using the internet easier. Members would be provided with the url for Ofcom's *Adults Media Use and Attitudes Report*.

#### 5. Citizens and the internet

5.1 Members had been provided with a paper and were joined by Ofcom colleagues for discussion of Ofcom's internet citizens project. The project's aims included development of ways to incorporate the online citizen interest effectively in Ofcom's work and included interviews with colleagues in Ofcom about a range of projects and processes to understand where and how the citizen interest was incorporated within Ofcom.

5.2 By the end of the Summer the Ofcom team expected to be in a position

to talk to external stakeholders, planned to raise awareness in Ofcom in the interval and would welcome the opportunity to discuss issues further with Panel members. In turn, the Panel wished to remain closely engaged with the project and Fiona Lennox would maintain contact with the Ofcom team.

**6. Digital participation**

6.1 Members were joined by an Ofcom colleague and discussed a draft of the Panel's Digital Participation research report, together with a number of draft recommendations. Drafting comments and suggestions were made and Members were asked to provide Fiona Lennox with their top five report recommendations. A final draft of the research report would be signed-off at the next Panel meeting. Sian Evans would draft the Panel's news release.

**7. Bill shock research**

7.1 Ofcom colleagues updated Members on Ofcom's work on unexpectedly high bills following publication of the March 2012 statement *Review of Unexpectedly High Bills - Findings and Next Steps*. Since publication, Ofcom had commissioned further market research on the experiences of mobile contract customers which would be an online survey, with results due in July. It was **NOTED** that the Panel wished to have sight of the findings. In addition, Ofcom would be meeting mobile operators for discussion of bill shock.

**8. Any Other Business**

- 8.1 Chris Holland had attended a recent meeting of ACOD and there was discussion of agenda items of shared interest.
- 8.2 The Panel had planned to hold a stakeholder event to discuss the Green Paper arising from the Communications Review on the day of its next meeting. Since the date of the publication of the Green Paper remained unclear, the stakeholder event would be postponed.
- 8.3 The Panel noted that a cross-party group of MPs and Peers led by Claire Perry MP had published its *Report of the Independent Parliamentary Inquiry into Online Child Protection*.
- 8.4 There was no other business.