

**PUBLICATION MINUTES OF THE THREE HUNDRED AND EIGHTH MEETING OF
THE OFCOM BOARD HELD ON 18 OCTOBER 2023
AT GLAZIERS HALL, 9 MONTAGUE CLOSE, SE1 9DD AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Present

Michael Grade	Chair
Maggie Carver	Deputy 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
David Jones	Non-Executive Member
Ben Verwaayen	Non-Executive Member

In attendance

Martin Ballantyne	General Counsel
Veronica Branton	Corporation Secretary
Sharon Malley	Governance Manager
Melissa Tatton	Group Director Corporate (Item 6)
Aneen Blackmore	Finance Director (Item 6)

	Action
<p>Item 1: Declaration of members' interests</p> <p>1. David Jones updated the Board on a new interest.</p>	
<p>Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 and matters arising – Board minutes 307(23) and note of action points</p> <p>2. The minutes of the Ofcom Board meeting held on 20 September 2023 were APPROVED for signature by the Chair as an accurate record. It was noted that a Board member had requested whether reasons for switching telecom providers included quality of coverage in their area in addition to tariff and this would be picked up by Lindsey Fussell.</p> <p>3. A summary of progress against action points was NOTED.</p>	LF
<p>Item 3: Chair's report</p> <p>4. The Chair updated the Board on his activities. He said that recommendations for non-executive appointments to the Board of Channel 4 Corporation had been passed to the Government and Ofcom was awaiting approval. He said he was also in discussion with the Government over the use of a recruitment agency for vacancies on the Ofcom Board. He said a report was being prepared by a non-executive director on the Cabinet Office Board on the process of appointments to public bodies and he hoped the recommendations would lead to a quicker system with clearer accountabilities.</p>	

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<p>5. The Chair said he had had a constructive discussion with the Chair of the Board of the BBC covering a range of matters.</p>	
<p>Item 4: Chief Executive's report – Board paper 108(23)</p>	
<p>6. Melanie Dawes presented paper 108(23) on her activities and said Ofcom was currently facing a period of significantly high workloads. In online safety, the delays in royal assent for the Bill meant it would be a further five weeks before the first consultation documents were published on 6 November. Other activity included a heavy workload on broadcasting standards, telecoms mid-contract price rises, various work strands on the Royal Mail and preparations for the World Radio Conference. She would be giving evidence at two select committees in the following week and Yih-Choung Teh would be giving evidence at one the week after. Notwithstanding the volume of work, Ofcom was well prepared in these areas and confident about delivery.</p> <p>7. She said Ofcom had received a general complaint about the BBC's decision not to describe Hamas as terrorists in coverage of the Israel/Gaza conflict. She noted that other broadcasters were generally taking the same approach as the BBC and that the complaint had been directed to the BBC for response so there was no current Ofcom investigation open.</p> <p>8. Melanie Dawes updated the Board about the fact that a colleague had been suspended pending further investigation in relation to social media activity concerning the Israel/Gaza conflict. She said she could not comment on the investigation itself, and Ofcom would ensure any necessary lessons were learned. The Board noted the importance of both following the correct process for the colleague's investigation, including a duty of care to the colleague, and of strongly protecting Ofcom's impartiality.</p> <p>9. She updated the Board on current broadcasting standards investigations.</p> <p>10. The Board NOTED paper 108(23).</p>	
<p>Item 5: Report from the Chair of the Risk and Audit Committee</p>	
<p>11. Angela Dean updated the Board on the meeting of the Risk and Audit Committee held on 26 September 2023. She said the Committee had reviewed the findings of two internal audits, on market research and enforcement regulation requirements, and both had received ratings of moderate assurance. However, both had revealed issues around data retention and the executive were taking steps to respond to this. In addition, the market research audit had identified stages where value for money could be evaluated and this was also being taken forward.</p> <p>12. The Committee had supported the proposed new approach to the strategic risk register and would review it again at the December meeting before submitting it to the Board for approval. The Committee had received a comprehensive paper on the position on pensions with no issues of concern raised.</p> <p>13. The Board NOTED the update.</p>	
<p>Item 6: Cardiff office lease – Board paper 109(23)</p>	
<p>14. The Board considered paper 109(23) on a recommendation to extend the Cardiff office lease. The Board noted that maintaining a premises in Wales was a statutory</p>	

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<p>obligation and also important to stakeholders. The Board noted that there was potential for a small reduction in desk numbers by seeking to move office but this would not necessarily deliver meaningful cost savings over the period of the lease and would reduce flexibility, largely because of the cost of moving. The current office space was modest and a number of desks were sublet to the CMA. The broader Ofcom workplace strategy would be considered at a future Board meeting.</p> <p>15. The Board APPROVED the paper including extending the Cardiff office lease for a period of 10 years, with a break option after five years, and final negotiations delegated to the Chief Operating Officer.</p>	
<p>Item 7: Advisory Committee Wales – extended terms for two members – Board paper 110(23)</p> <p>16. The Board considered paper 110(23) on the extension of the terms for two members of the Advisory Committee for Wales.</p> <p>17. The Board APPROVED the three-year extension of Angharad Evans’ term and the 18-month extension to Aled Eirug’s term as members of the Advisory Committee for Wales.</p>	
<p>Items 8-11: Information items</p> <p>18. The Board NOTED the following information items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-executive member updates – Board paper 111(23). • Monthly performance report – Board paper 112(23) • Board work programme – Board paper 113(23), and publications schedule – Board Paper 114(23) • Minutes of the Communications Consumer Panel (20 July 2023) and Risk and Audit Committee (26 September 2023) 	
<p>Item 12: Items in the Board Reading Room</p> <p>19. The Board NOTED the Communications Consumer Panel quarterly update.</p>	
<p>Item 12: Any other business</p> <p>20. There was no other business.</p>	
<p>Item 21: Date of the next meeting</p> <p>21. The next scheduled Board meeting would be held on Wednesday 15 November 2023.</p> <p>22. The meeting concluded at 10.25 am.</p>	

Approved: _____
Chair