

Minutes of the 92nd meeting of
The Advisory Committee for Wales
Hybrid meeting on 27 February 2024

Present

Robert Andrews	Chair
Angharad Evans	Member
Aled Eirug	Member

In attendance

Jonathan Rose	Director, Ofcom Northern Ireland (acting Director Wales)
Elinor Williams	Regulatory Affairs Principal, Wales, Ofcom
Meleri Evans	Regulatory Affairs Manager, Wales, Ofcom
Rhys Llewelyn	Senior Welsh Language Advisor, Ofcom Wales
Liz Nash	Administrator, Ofcom Wales
Rachel Burr	Communications Consumer Panel Member for Wales

Other Ofcom colleagues

Apologies

Ruth McElroy	Content Board Member for Wales
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Agenda items	Action
<p>1. Introduction</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed attendees to the 92nd meeting of the Advisory Committee for Wales. Apologies were received from Ruth McElroy.</p>	
<p>2. Declaration of Members’ Interests – verbal</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes were APPROVED.</p>	
<p>4. Chairman’s Report – verbal</p> <p>The Chair thanked the outgoing Director Wales for her support over the last five years and welcomed Jonathan Rose, Ofcom’s Director Northern Ireland who will be acting Director Wales until a replacement is appointed (interviews concluded). JR explained the responsibilities are being shared by Directors NI and Scotland who will provide support to the Wales team for as long as is required.</p> <p>The Chair advised three new ACW members had been appointed and their appointments were currently being formalised with start dates to be confirmed. It was suggested an</p>	

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<p>induction/training day should be arranged in the near future and also be open to current Committee members. Ofcom Wales staff to liaise with members and London colleagues.</p> <p>Members were advised the new Board Member for Wales has been appointed and an announcement will be made at the beginning of March with the new member attending his first Board meeting in March.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Rachell Burr, newly appointed Communications Consumer Panel Member for Wales who joined the Panel in January.</p>	Ofcom Wales
<p>5. Update: Ofcom Board Member for Wales</p> <p>Director Northern Ireland gave an update on the Board’s activities in the absence of the Board Member for Wales. The Board met on 7 February and topics discussed included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Future of TV distribution 2) World Radio Conference 3) Postal issues 4) Online Safety – initial responses to the Online Harms Bill– it was noted some progress has been evident in industry 5) Approval of ACW appointments <p>There was a discussion on online safety and the importance of legislative obligations in Wales. The Committee felt strongly it would be beneficial to have a fuller discussion on all areas of online safety, AI, and media literacy in relations to Wales. EW confirmed Ofcom is hosting an event on 7th March with colleagues from Ofcom’s Online Safety Policy and Technical Policy Development teams to brief WG officials. Members are welcome to join. Ofcom Wales will also arrange an additional date for the Committee to discuss.</p>	ACW/ Ofcom Wales
<p>6. Update - Communications Consumer Panel Member for Wales</p> <p>The Communications Consumer Panel Member for Wales had previously submitted a paper and drew attention to the following key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy areas of focus for the panel in 24-25 will be shared soon; • Panel recommends organising a national consumer awareness campaign the highlight the risk to public safety and life following switchover from PSTN to VoIP; • RB highlighted the Panel’s concern over general affordability of comms services and the impact on consumers especially as social tariffs are still relatively low; • Concerns around inverted roaming affecting consumers and working with CPs to alert consumers; • The Panel’s concern about the effects of 2G/3G switch off and its potential harm to consumers. They are also concerned about the level of awareness of Local Government of how this will impact consumers. Members agreed a wider public awareness campaign should be considered possibly funded by CPs; • Discussions continue around changes to postal services and the impact on consumers; • Current areas of research are around social tariffs, health, VoIP; telecoms needs of micro business. The Panel Chair, Rick Hill, continues to hold meetings with civil servants and government officials. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wales Hub was postponed in February – next date 27 March. <p>RB agreed to let members know the dates when the research documents are due to be published.</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ACW echoed CCP’s concern about VoIP roll-out communications. ○ ACW welcomed use of Welsh language in CCP research. 	RB
<p>7. Update: Content Board Member for Wales</p> <p>The Content Board Member for Wales had previously circulated an update report which was taken as read. Unfortunately, she was unable to attend the meeting but, in her absence, Members discussed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted the RMcE had also highlighted in her report the need to have further discussion on legal obligations and online safety regulations. She raised concern that work around online safety has grown considerably but it is not clear where the public policy debates in Wales are keeping pace with this development. She suggests ACW may want to engage more with stakeholders and consider how to advise Ofcom in Wales on leveraging its expertise to help inform this area of Welsh public policy. • Members again discussed what form a stakeholder event should take and what type of audience/presenters should be invited. • Ofcom staff advised of planned consultations in May on protection of children and a Media Literature roadshow in June. It was agreed these could be good opportunities for increasing awareness. • Members discussed her item relating to GB News content and ongoing complaints regarding impartiality. This is a live issue and JR will arrange for Ofcom policy team to provide an update to Members. 	JR
<p>8. Update: Public Policy</p> <p>An update paper had been circulated to members previously. Kate Biggs joined the meeting and highlighted a number of Parliamentary developments including updates on key topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel changes in Government departments working with Ofcom. • Update on broadcast issues relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Media Bill - second reading in the House of Lords early March - the Radio Bill - The sale of the Telegraph - Telecoms matters including managing transition of PTSN switch off and 3G. - Online Safety – next illegal harms consultation is scheduled for May on the Protection of Children - Upcoming regulatory reviews – Ofcom continues to engage with Government. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members again expressed their view to KB that there was a need to increase awareness around Online Harms and had suggested organising a stakeholder event possibly partnering with other Bodies. In relations to a question regarding GB News, KB advised Ofcom is giving evidence to the House of Lords news enquiry following several complaints. PSBs will also be appearing. A member raised concern at the apparent slow pace that complaints appear to be being dealt with. KB stressed Ofcom needs to be a reasonable and proportionate regulator. 	
<p>9. Report: Wales Recent Developments</p> <p>An update report had previously been circulated by the Ofcom Wales team and Meleri Evans drew attention to key topics which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recent Plan of Work event in Cardiff attended by over 30 stakeholders. Update on meeting with Hannah Blythyn MS re postal service where she raised concerns regarding delayed delivery of appointment letters from Health Boards to consumers. Update on decision to allow Radio Cymru Dau to extend its hours. <p>Members were interested in the item reporting recent vandalism on Oggi's telecoms equipment and EW updated them on the latest situation but stressed it was not a matter for Ofcom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was a discussion on Ofcom's current relationship with the Welsh Language Commissioner. EW and RL updated members on ongoing compliance issues and stressed there was an ongoing internal piece of work planned to highlight awareness of the Welsh Language Standards within Ofcom. They reported Ofcom had met with WLC officials to discuss a variation of certain Standards and how best they can work together to avoid future breaches. They await a response. <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACW recommended Ofcom be ready to make public statements about infrastructure, if necessary. 	
<p>10. Network Resilience</p> <p>The team gave a presentation on their current work. Nihal Newman has replaced Huw Saunders as Director, Network Security & Resilience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team highlighted that the deadline for call for evidence for the current consultation was 1st March. The Chairman advised the Committee would still like to provide input but requested an extension to the deadline. Members discussed the areas of concern regarding PSTN switch off, power loss to infrastructure and the fact that concern is not just around health emergencies but also general day to day care for vulnerable consumers. JR agreed to approach the team for an 	<p>JR/ ACW</p>

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<p>extension. The Chairman agreed to gather feedback from Members and provide written evidence on behalf of the ACW.</p> <p>Key point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ACW said mobile resilience is critical in light of VoIP switch-off. 	
<p>11. The Leadership Race – the First Minister of Wales</p> <p>The Chair welcome Cathy Owens from Deryn to the meeting who gave a thorough briefing on the current status of the leadership race between two contenders. CO agreed to circulate her slides following the meeting.</p> <p>It is expected the new First Minister will be announced on 16th March with cabinet members being announced on 21st. There was a discussion on who may be involved in Ofcom’s areas of work and speculation on the forthcoming UK General Election.</p>	CO
<p>12. Media Literacy</p> <p>Samina Ali and Fay Lant joined the meeting in person and gave a thorough update on the team’s current areas of work.</p> <p>They highlighted a pilot scheme presently being organised in Wales – ‘Get RCT Online’ – this is currently taking place in Rhondda Cynon Taff with bilingual workshops aimed at the over 60s age range being organised over the next 6 weeks via webinar. Once these have been completed the team agreed to share the results with the ACW. These will then be embedded into the publication of Ofcom’s three-year plan.</p>	SA/FL
<p>13. Post USO – members’ discussion</p> <p>Due to the planned demonstrations outside the Senedd by farmers on the 28th February it was agreed that Ofcom Wales’s Post event should be rescheduled. EW to advise an alternative date.</p>	EW
<p>14. Information items (noted)</p>	
<p>Date of next meeting:</p> <p>12th June 2024, Ofcom Wales office.</p>	