



Note of the 313th Meeting of the Ofcom Board, held on 17 April 2024

Members were welcomed to the 313th meeting of the Ofcom Board. In addition to Board members, Martin Ballantyne (General Counsel), Veronica Branton (Corporation Secretary), Francesca Carter (Head of Governance) and Sharon Malley (Governance Manager) attended throughout.

Declaration of members' interests

1. No new interests were declared.

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2024 and matters arising

2. The minutes of the Ofcom Board meeting held on 13 March 2024 were approved for signature as an accurate record.
3. A summary of progress against action points was noted.

Chair's report

4. The Chair updated the Board on activities, including constructive meetings he and the Chief Executive had attended with the Secretary of State for DSIT and with the Chairs of the Nations Advisory Committees. He also updated the Board on progress with appointments to the Ofcom Board.
5. The Board noted the report.

Chief Executive's report

6. Melanie Dawes presented a paper updating the Board on her activities. She said Ofcom had recently published the outcomes of standards investigations into GB News in relation to breaches of due impartiality requirements and that Ofcom would be meeting GB News representatives to discuss future compliance. Next week Ofcom would be publishing its research into politicians as presenters, the findings of which were discussed. It was noted that there would be a session for Board and Content Board members on the research on the day after the Board meeting.
7. Melanie Dawes said Ofcom would be launching its Protection of Children consultation in three weeks' time. She said this was a high profile and continually evolving policy area where people held strong and sometimes opposing views. It would be important to continue to engage actively with stakeholders and to seek to manage expectations around

Ofcom's role and powers. The Board noted the various positions taken by stakeholders and platforms.

8. Melanie Dawes updated the Board on various staffing matters.
9. Melanie Dawes said the government had put forward proposals relating to regulation of online advertising and this was discussed by the Board.
10. The Board noted industry feedback on annual spectrum and licence fees and discussed Ofcom's approach. Ofcom's policy focused on ensuring spectrum was used efficiently and a substantial volume of work had been carried out to assess whether fees were the right model and the right level to achieve efficiency and encourage investment. Industry feedback formed part of this work and the issue would continue to be kept under review.
11. It was noted that a paper would be coming to a future Board on the current position at Royal Mail.
12. The Board noted the report.

Three-Year Business Plan 2025-28: process and update

13. The Board discussed a paper on the development of the next three-year business plan. It was noted that the current plan had been a good step forward for Ofcom and the new one would build on clear strategic choices with the addition of financial planning developed under a range of different funding scenarios. It was noted that the Board would have the opportunity to input into strategic choices at the July Board meeting and the October strategy day prior to approval in November.
14. The Board noted that the funding scenarios should include various budget positions and options around priorities, critical functions and how Ofcom delivered statutory obligations most efficiently. It was noted that geopolitical uncertainty was likely to grow over the period of the next three-year plan and it would need to be able to adapt to this
15. The Board noted the report.

Telecoms Access Review 2026

16. The Board discussed a paper on the Telecoms Access Review 2026, which would set regulation underpinning telecoms markets from 2026-31. It was noted that this was at an early stage and a paper with firmer proposals would be brought to the Board at a future date.
17. The Board noted the paper.

Consultation on Ofcom's Media Literacy Three-Year Strategy

18. The Board discussed a paper on the proposed approach to the consultation on Ofcom's three-year Media Literacy Strategy. It was noted that Ofcom's experience as the regulator

for broadcasting and online safety made it well-placed to take forward media literacy and act as a catalyst to bring relevant stakeholders together. The strategy was the product of extensive research and aimed to encourage platforms and others to consider their own contributions towards improving media literacy.

19. It was agreed that it would be helpful for the Board to receive update papers for noting on a six-monthly basis on Ofcom's activity to promote media literacy.
20. The Board noted the proposed strategy, the identified risks and mitigations and the plan for publication and approved delegated authority for Melanie Dawes and Yih-Choung Teh to sign-off the strategy consultation for publication.

Update and reflections from the new Group Director Broadcasting and Media

21. Cristina Nicolotti Squires updated the Board on her initial reflections since joining Ofcom as the Group Director for Broadcasting and Media. She said she had identified two strands of work within the group to take forward. The first was BAU activity such as the Public Service Media Review, the BBC programme and broadcasting standards, with the second being work to ensure the group was fit for the future, including streamlining processes, freeing up resource where possible and working closely with Online Safety where the groups intersected. Two substantive priorities were to ensure broadcast content continued to be sustained in a challenging business environment for broadcasters and to protect the impartiality of news.
22. She said research on politicians as presenters would be published shortly and outlined the findings. Alongside the research, Ofcom would be reminding broadcasters about the heightened impartiality rules that applied during general election periods, and the need to take particular care to ensure due impartiality if they were using politicians as presenters in those periods.
23. It was noted that a response from Channel 4 on their proposals for reducing national and regional quotas as part of the relicence discussion was due shortly and the Board would be kept updated. It was noted that it may be helpful to hold a session on this with the Board members representing nations later in the spring.
24. The Board noted the update.

Public service media programme

25. The Board discussed a paper on the Public Service Media Programme for 2024. It was noted that the programme was reviewed every five years and, with the current challenging economic landscape for public service broadcasters and the shift from linear to online viewing, the focus would be on promoting sustainability in the sector and supporting the provision of trusted and accurate news.
26. The Board noted the scope and timetable for the review of public service media.

Annual litigation review

27. The Board discussed the annual litigation review, including trends, ongoing cases and potential liabilities. The Board noted the review.

Election Committee Chair

28. The Board approved the appointment of Clive Jones as Chair of the Election Committee with immediate effect.

One Ofcom organisational priorities 2024/25

29. The Board discussed a paper on Ofcom's organisational priorities for 2024/25 and related objectives and key results. It was noted that each of the priorities would be coming to the Board separately over the next few months for more detailed discussion on descriptions and measurements of success.
30. The priorities for 2024/25 took the same format as last year, with strands on delivering the Plan of Work, transforming Ofcom through programmes on Data, Three Year Plan/Financial resilience, and Agility, as well as creating a fantastic place to work through the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and the Career and Performance Management programme, with the completion of the new Pay Framework an important element of this.
31. The Board discussed the priorities and noted the importance of clarifying how success would be evaluated and measured.
32. It was noted that it would be helpful to expand the key results for each objective to include more clearly the outcomes for each result where possible and this would be picked up when considering each of the individual objectives at future meetings.
33. The Board approved Ofcom's organisational priorities for 2024-25 and related objectives and key results and noted the plan for further updates on each of these priorities at PMB, RAC, and Board over the next few months.

Information items

34. The Board noted the following information items:
 - Non-executive member updates
 - Monthly performance report
 - Board work programme and publications schedule
 - Minutes of the Communications Consumer Panel of 15 February 2024 and the Risk and Audit Committee of 28 February 2024.

Any other business

35. There was no other business.

Date of the next meeting

36. The next Board meeting would be held on 25 May 2024.