

**PUBLICATION MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SIXTH MEETING OF
THE CONTENT BOARD HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2024
CONNECTED MEETING HELD AT RIVERSIDE HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Present

Maggie Carver	Chair
Dekan Apajee	Member for England
Simon Bucks	Member
Maggie Cunningham	Member for Scotland
Bob Downes	Member (via Teams)
Peter Horrocks	Member
Ali Marsden	Executive Member
Maria McCann	Member for Northern Ireland
Ruth McElroy	Member for Wales
Stephen Nuttall	Member
Kim Shillinglaw	Member

In attendance

Cristina Nicolotti Squires	Group Director, Broadcasting and Media Group
Siobhan Walsh	Content Policy Director
Adam Baxter	Director, Standards and Audience Protection
Andrew Park	Online Safety Strategy Principal (items 1 – 11, via Teams)
Anthony Szykaruk	Content Policy Director
David Edwards	Committee Secretary
Michael Grade	Ofcom Chairman (items 1 - 6)
Colleagues from BBC News (item 3)	
Colleagues from ITN (item 4, in person and via Teams)	
Colleagues from Sky News (item 5)	
Members of the Ofcom Board and some senior Ofcom colleagues observed items 1 – 6 via Teams	
Other Ofcom colleagues attending for specific items	

Item 1: Members’ interests

1. The Chair informed Members that Peter Horrocks, already a trustee, had taken on the role of Interim Chair of One World Media.

Item 2: Executive scene setting and relevant data on online news – CB 1(24)

2. BBC News, ITN and Sky News had been invited to discuss online news, each in a separate but consecutive session. As a preliminary to the sessions with news providers, Members were briefed by the Executive on how audiences consume news; the role of online intermediaries and how they affect news consumption; and the regulatory framework and ongoing developments at Ofcom.
3. Members **NOTED** paper CB 1(24) and additional briefing provided orally.

Item 3: BBC News

4. Colleagues from BBC News joined the meeting to discuss some of the challenges and opportunities presented by their plans for online news.

Item 4: ITN

5. Colleagues from ITN joined the meeting to discuss some of the challenges and opportunities for their online news plans.

Item 5: Sky News

6. Colleagues from Sky News joined the meeting to discuss some of the challenges and opportunities presented by their plans for online news.

Item 6: Roundup/review of PSB and Sky News online news discussions

7. The Content Board and attendees (but not the online news providers) reviewed their separate discussions with BBC News, ITN and Sky News and it was suggested that it could be useful to invite Google to give its perspective as an online platform.

Item 7: Minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023 and matters arising – Content Board minutes 185(23) and note of action points

8. The minutes of the Content Board meeting held on 21 November 2023 were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair as an accurate record.

9. A summary of progress against action points had been circulated.

Item 8: Chair’s update

10. The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting, including Cristina Nicolotti Squires in her new role as Ofcom’s Group Director for Broadcasting and Media. The Chair also reiterated her thanks to Siobhan Walsh for leading the Group on an interim basis since April 2023.

11. This would be Maggie Carver’s last meeting (Maggie’s appointment as Ofcom’s Deputy Chair and as Chair of the Content Board would conclude at the end of the month). A new Content Board Chair would be appointed shortly and, depending on timing, there was the possibility of an interim Chair. The recruitment process for an additional Content Board Member was in progress and interviews had been completed.

12. November 2023 Ofcom Board minutes had been circulated for information. The Board had met in December and the Chair flagged the topics discussed.

13. The Content Board **NOTED** the report from the Chair.

Item 9: Broadcasting and Media Group and Online Safety Group Executive Update – Paper CB 2(24)

14. Members had received an update paper on key policy and project areas in the Broadcasting and Media Group and the Online Safety Group. The paper was taken as read.

15. A number of points were highlighted/ discussed by Members:

- It was noted that Ofcom already had a well-established approach to enforcing relevant election rules in relation to linear TV and radio content, including a specialist team to assess complaints in relation to election-related programming. With the departure of Maggie Carver, the Ofcom Board would need to appoint a new Election Committee Chair. It was suggested that the regular Executive update paper include a section on elections.

- Whether online platforms were doing enough to maintain the integrity of elections, and the need to look at election-related issues across platforms where Ofcom has relevant powers and duties.
16. Members **NOTED** paper CB 2(24) and additional oral updates provided.

Item 10: Content Board work programme 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 – Paper CB 3(24)

17. The Content Board work programme was reviewed by Members prior to submission to, and approval by, the Ofcom Board at its meeting in February.
18. Points highlighted/ discussed by the Content Board included:
- Online news, following earlier discussion in the meeting it was requested that the work programme include a clearer articulation of Members' news concerns.
 - It was important that the work programme was a Content Board document and that it focus on priorities for Members.
 - Enhancing the enforcement of standards was not just an issue of improving efficiency.
19. Members **NOTED** paper CB 3(24).

Item 11: Update on Content Board's work – Paper CB 4(24)

20. Feedback from the Ofcom Board had been that that the regular six-monthly report, submitted to the Ofcom Board, should no longer be entirely about editorial standards and should focus on the work undertaken by Members across the Content Board's remit. The draft shared with Members was the Executive's iteration of this and a key test would be the reaction of the Ofcom Board at its February meeting.
21. Members **NOTED** paper CB 4(24).

Item 12: Regulating additional Electronic Programme Guides – Paper CB 5(24)

22. Members had received material providing the background to Ofcom's work to regulate additional EPGs, including details of the licensing regime and the changing broadcasting landscape; on DCMS' proposals to bring additional EPGs and services they carry into regulation, and some challenges with those proposals; on questions that the project highlights for the future of broadcasting regulation, and how it fits with other workstreams in Ofcom; and what the Executive would be focusing on in the next few months.
23. Points highlighted/ discussed by Members included:
- The supposition that EPGs should be regulated unless they were small services, whilst often it was the smaller services that could be problematic.
 - DCMS had published a consultation at the end of 2023, was working through responses and Ofcom still had an opportunity to influence outcomes.
 - The question of what the problem was that DCMS was seeking to resolve, in a context of greater personalisation, more user interfaces and voice search.
 - With a focus to maintain the PSBs, whether enough was being done to maintain prominence or there was a transfer of control to gatekeepers.
 - Whether investment was being inhibited.
24. Members **NOTED** paper CB 5(24) and additional oral briefing provided.

Item 13: Information Items

25. The Content Board **NOTED** the following information items:
- Minutes of the Ofcom Board (meeting held on 15 November 2023)

- Minutes of the Communications Consumer Panel (meetings held on 17 October and 16 November 2023)

Item 14: Any Other Business

26. This being Maggie Carver's last Ofcom meeting, Bob Downes took the opportunity to say farewell to Maggie, on behalf of the Content Board, and to thank her for her huge contribution to Ofcom, as Deputy Chair of Ofcom, as Interim Chair of Ofcom and as the Chair of the Content Board. In response, Maggie expressed her own thanks to various Executive colleagues and to the Members of the Content Board.

Item 15: Date of the Next Meeting

27. The next scheduled Content Board meeting would be held on 26 March 2024.