

Press Complaints Commission Online Working Group
Minute of a meeting held on 14 December 2010

Present: Anthony Longden, Ian MacGregor, Ian Walden.

Apologies: Simon Sapper.

In attendance: Guy Black, Stephen Abell, Catherine Speller.

The Online Working Group discussed the following two issues:

1. Twitter and Social Networking

The office had prepared a draft paper setting out suggestions for the Group to consider recommending about newspaper and magazines' use of Twitter and other social networking sites. This was discussed by members of the Group, who were joined for this item by Guy Black, Chairman of PressBof.

A number of changes to the paper were suggested, including: altering the scope of the paper to focus solely (at this stage) on Twitter rather than social-networking sites such as Facebook; and making more clear that any content that may in the future fall under the PCC's remit would necessarily need to relate to content that is editorially controlled.

It was agreed that a revised version of the paper would be brought for discussion at the Group's next meeting. In the meantime, Guy Black will discuss the matter with the industry trade bodies and will pass on comments to the PCC in due course. The office will undertake some preliminary research over the next month or so into how (and to what extent) newspapers and magazines are making use of Facebook as part of their journalism (including as a newsgathering tool). The findings from this exercise will be shared with the Group in due course.

2. Online prominence of apologies and adjudications

A draft paper on this issue that had been prepared by the office was discussed by members of the Group. It was agreed that it was very important for both the industry and PCC staff to have guidance on this subject, and that this was a necessary step for the PCC to be taking. However, any guidance published by the PCC ought not to be too prescriptive.

A number of suggestions were made as to how the guidance might usefully be amended, including: the removal of a specific reference to the homepage in the points about the placement of apologies and adjudications; and expanding a point about the treatment of material found to be in breach of the Code.

The office will redraft the paper to take account of views expressed at the meeting. Once the revised paper has been agreed, it will be discussed by the full Commission at its meeting on 19 January 2011. Stig will also send a copy to the Secretary of the Editors' Code of Practice Committee for his comments.

General business and date of next meeting

Ian Walden noted that he would like the Group to discuss the matter of online moderation at the next meeting. The office will contact him in advance about this.

The date of the group's next meeting will be arranged shortly via email (most likely for sometime in March).