

From: Stephen Abell
Sent: 21 April 2010 10:28
To: PCC
Subject: Update on the Code Committee meeting.doc

Dear Commissioners

I attach an update on last week's Code Committee meeting (attended by the Chairman and the Director of the PCC), which Peta will be discussing under AOB today. We have not previously given updates on Code Committee meetings, but feel this is a good idea. Clarity of the relationship between the PCC and the Code Committee is something we are working on (as will the Governance Review).

I apologise for the short notice. Next time, we will circulate the update with the papers for the meeting.

Do let me know if you would like to discuss.

Very best

Stig

Update on the Code Committee meeting

The Chairman would like to update Commissioners on the meeting of the Editors' Code Committee which she attended with the Director last week. This will be discussed at the meeting under AOB.

In future, this information will be circulated in advance of Commission meetings.

- the Committee expressed its support for the Governance Review, which will be looking to increase the clarity of the relationship between the PCC and the Code Committee. As a result, the Chairman and Director will be able to liaise between the two bodies with greater transparency;
- the Code Committee has agreed in principle to changing the Code so that prominence of corrections will have to be agreed by the PCC in advance. This is yet to be consulted on, and so we will report further on that down the line. The principle will be that the office will be actively engaged (on the complainant's behalf) in agreeing where the correction appears. This happens already in practice, but it would be a good answer to our critics to have it codified;
- it is possible that the Code might also change so that the prominence of adjudications would also have to be agreed by the PCC. We would like to discuss with Commissioners as to whether they would be prepared – in principle – to allow the Director to have devolved authority in this area to agree the location of adjudications? This happens in practice now. If so, this will be further considered by the Committee;
- the Code Committee is opposed to having lay members;
- the Codebook will be amended to include further information on the need for accuracy of headlines, and will collate PCC thinking on photographs;
- the Code Committee is examining the issue of prior notification in light of the ongoing Mosley case in Europe. This will not come to trial until next year, and the industry wishes to examine whether the Code should change in advance. The Codebook is also likely to be updated on this point.
- the Code Committee will liaise with the PCC on the issue of online moderation of reader comments. This is a subject that is likely to be considered by the Online Working Group (if agreed);
- the Code Committee is examining publishing minutes of its meetings and openly advertising the annual Code review. The Code Committee appreciates that greater transparency will benefit the system, so that the public can see the separation between the two bodies.

21/4/2010

4764, 4765. All papers had been circulated since the previous Commission meeting.

- (v) Charter Commissioner: Formal approval of PCC Paper No. 4760 (circulated) (subject to any comments raised with his office).

5. Working group on Online Issues

Following discussion of a paper that had been prepared by the Director, Commissioners endorsed the idea of establishing a working group to consider relevant online issues on an ongoing basis, so that the Commission as a whole would be better placed to shape its thinking in this area.

6. Discussion with Guy Black, Chairman of Pressbof

The Chairman welcomed Guy Black, Chairman of the Press Standards Board of Finance (Pressbof), to the meeting. He updated Commissioners on the role of Pressbof and answered a number of questions concerning funding and the industry's relationship with the PCC.

7. Chairman and Director's meetings

Commissioners received an update on appointments undertaken by the Chairman and Director.

8. Any other business

The Commission received an update on issues discussed at a recent meeting of the Editors' Code of Practice Committee.

The Chairman informed Commissioners that the Digital Economy Bill had been passed but that some potentially worrying sections had been amended or dropped.

Members of the Business Sub-Committee confirmed that they had examined the financial figures for 2009. The Commission would receive the audited accounts at a later meeting.