

*Minutes of the Editors' Code of Practice Committee meeting, held online on June 22, 2022*

**Present:**

Chair: Neil Benson

Ian Carter, The KM Group; Sarah de Gay, independent lay member; Charlotte Dewar, CEO, IPSO; Christine Elliott, independent lay member; Lord Faulks, Chair, IPSO; Anna Jeys, Reach Birmingham; Gary Jones, Daily Express; Donald Martin, Newsquest Scotland; Gary Shipton, JPIMedia; Kate Stone, independent lay member; Ted Young, Metro.

Apologies: Chris Evans, Daily Telegraph; Tina Sany-Davies, Bauer Media; Emma Tucker, Sunday Times.

Attending: Jonathan Grun, secretary

**Chair's introduction**

The chair reflected on recent work of the committee, including submissions on the Online Safety Bill and the Information Commissioners' Code of Practice.

**Update by IPSO**

Lord Faulks, chair of IPSO, updated the committee on the recent work of the regulator.

**Editors' Codebook**

The committee noted that a revised version of the Editors' Codebook has been published on the website, including recent adjudications and examples of guidance and best practice.

**Suggested amendments to the Code**

The committee considered a number of suggestions for Code amendments.

**:: Clause 12 to protect those who decline to have the vaccine**

Several members of the public called for Clause 12 (Discrimination) to cover people who choose not to have a Covid vaccination.

The committee concluded that amending the Code in the way suggested would limit debate on what has been an important issue during the pandemic.

**:: Anonymity for victims of crime to be extended**

Submissions called for anonymity to be extended to include victims of domestic and other forms of abuse.

The committee considered the important role that the press has in reporting judicial proceedings and how that supports open justice and therefore the rule of law. It concluded that it would be wrong for the Code to impose reporting restrictions that go beyond the requirements of the law.

**:: Requests for the Code to cover taste and decency**

Submissions to the committee suggested that the Code should cover taste and decency.

The committee noted that the Code did not cover issues of taste or decency because such matters are highly subjective and imposing blanket rules would inhibit freedom of expression. It noted that editors listen to their readers and if complaints are received, they will consider if they have made the right editorial decision.

**:: Portrayal of women in the press**

The committee received suggestions about the portrayal of women following stories about politician Angela Rayner.

The committee noted that individual women are protected by Clause 12 with regard to prejudicial and pejorative comments and by other clauses but beyond this the Code does not cover taste or offence. The committee concluded that broader prohibitions on the general portrayal of women would be highly subjective and likely to constitute an unjustifiably broad infringement of freedom of expression.

**:: Call for a commission to investigate historic allegations of Turkish genocide against Armenians**

A group of Turkish-Americans called for the Code committee to appoint a commission to rule if there was an Armenian genocide.

The committee concluded that this would be an inappropriate course of action. Many aspects of history are fiercely contested and are the subject of irreconcilable differences of opinion between opposing groups. The Code sets a framework of high standards for coverage of such issues and the committee concluded that declaring how such stories must be presented would prevent examination and debate.