

Minutes of the Editors' Code of Practice Committee meeting at the offices of the News Media Association, 292 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, May 15, 2019.

Present:

Chair: Neil Benson

Ian Carter, The KM Group; Christine Elliott, independent lay member; Chris Evans, Daily Telegraph; David Jessel, independent lay member; Gary Jones, Daily Express; Donald Martin, Newsquest Scotland; Sir Alan Moses, Chairman, IPSO; Mike Sassi, Nottingham Post; Gary Shipton, JPIMedia; Matt Tee, CEO, IPSO; Harriet Wilson, Condé Nast Publications; Ted Young, Metro.

Attending: Jonathan Grun, Secretary; Bob Tyrer, Sunday Times

Apologies: Apologies were received from Martin Ivens, Sunday Times; Kate Stone, independent lay member

Chair's opening remarks

Neil Benson welcomed Gary Jones to the committee as a new member and also Bob Tyrer, who was observing the meeting.

He noted that there had been recent moves to introduce "kitemarking" of media organisations based on a number of factors and he observed that the most reassuring "kitemark" for the public was regulation of a publication by IPSO under the Editors' Code of Practice.

Revision of Clause 11 and new edition of Editors' Codebook

The committee noted that the revised Clause 11 (Victims of sexual assault) would come into effect during the summer. The revision had been made to clarify that the clause covered newsgathering activities as well as publication.

A newly revised version of the Editors' Codebook would also be published and would include summaries of recent IPSO adjudications, examples of best practice taken from IPSO guidance notes and helpful links to organisations.

Discrimination review

The committee noted that publication of the Home Affairs Committee report on hate crime and its violent consequences was still awaited, more than a year after the chair of the committee and other editors had given evidence. The report would be a factor to be considered in the previously announced review of Clause 12 (Discrimination) but the passage of time made it likely that this would form part of the wide ranging triennial public consultation and review of the Code, to be announced later in the year. This would also ensure that the review was transparent and would give every interested party the opportunity to make submissions that would be considered, published and responded to by the committee.

The committee noted that IPSO was expected to publish a guide to reporting Islam later this year.

Suggestions for Code revisions

:: The committee considered but did not agree to a suggestion that Clause 4 (Intrusion into grief and shock) should have a public interest defence available to it.

:: The committee considered but did not accept a suggestion that the Code should prohibit social media reports of initial court appearances as reporting the judicial process was an important function for the press. The committee noted that care should be exercised when allowing comments on such

content and agreed that best practice guidance should be included in a future edition of the Editors' Codebook.

:: The committee considered a suggestion that the Code should address the circumstances in which stories can be deleted from publications. The committee concluded that no change was desirable as editors must be free to choose which stories to publish, and that must also include the freedom not to publish or to delete stories. The committee noted that deleting a story did not mean that IPSO could not investigate a complaint against it.

:: The committee considered a suggestion that the word "Asian" should not be used in stories about sexual exploitation by grooming gangs as this would unfairly reflect on Asian communities not involved in the crimes.

The committee noted that editors were aware of the requirements of the Code regarding accuracy and must be free to exercise their judgment without further prescriptive measures being introduced into the Code.

:: In response to a question the Committee agreed that Clause 15 (Payments to witnesses) would apply where relevant in cases outside the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom.

Kerslake report

The committee noted that it had contributed suggestions to an IPSO guidance note on reporting major incidents produced in response to the Kerslake report on the Manchester Arena bomb.

Online Harms White Paper

The committee agreed to respond to the Online Harms White Paper, detailing government proposals to remove illegal and harmful content online.

The committee noted that the objective of the white paper had attracted support but concerns had been expressed about the potential for impact on freedom of expression and quality journalism.

The committee welcomed a commitment by the Culture Secretary that the regulatory framework would not affect journalistic and editorial content and that the Government absolutely upholds the core principle of freedom of expression recognising the invaluable role a free press plays in our culture and democratic life.

Code Committee information initiative

The committee considered proposals to raise awareness of the contribution that the Editors' Code of Practice makes to press regulation. It agreed to explore opportunities to present to a wider audience the importance of the Code in the context of press regulation by IPSO.