

THE PRESS STANDARDS BOARD OF FINANCE LIMITED

Strictly private and confidential
Minutes of meeting of Directors held
at Bloomsbury House, London, on
Thursday 22 June 2006 at 2.33pm

PRESENT:

Tim Bowdler (Chairman), Robin Burgess, Nicholas Coleridge, Paul Dacre, Leslie Hinton, Ian Locks, Clive Milner, David Newell, Steve Oram and James Raeburn.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Sir Christopher Meyer (PCC Chairman) and Tim Toulmin (PCC Director).

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the Directors' meeting held on 27 January 2006 (circulated) were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING:

2.01 Press Complaints Commission: The Chairman reported that a register of members' interests and rules on conflicts of interest were now in place and published on the website. The Secretary and he had also held a useful meeting with the PCC's Business Sub-Committee who had decided that Christopher Meyer would continue as the principal link with PressBoF.

Following comments by the Chairman stressing the importance of succession planning, the Secretary tabled a note setting out the specification and procedures relating to the appointment of the PCC Chairman.

The Secretary confirmed that he had advised the PCC Director that PressBoF would not lend its support to any formal proposal to reduce the membership of the PCC on the grounds that to disturb the present balance of editor representation would give rise to problems with the trade associations whose agreement to any change would be critical.

3. PRESS COMPLAINTS COMMISSION:

3.01 Membership: The Board noted the appointments of Derek Tucker, Editor, Press & Journal, Aberdeen (from 1 January 2006), Ian Nichol, former partner PWC, Birmingham (1 March) and Spencer Feeney, Editor, South Wales Evening Post (1 May).

3.02 Financial Statements: The Report and Financial Statements of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2005 (circulated) together with an analysis of the actual figures against budget (circulated) were noted. The addition of £46,083 to cover the dilapidation costs associated with the move out of Salisbury Square had resulted in an after-tax deficit of £24,853.

3.03 Property: The Board noted a report from the PCC Director (circulated) showing that the cost of the move from Salisbury Square to Halton House had come out at £234,400 approximately £3,000 over budget.

4. CODE COMMITTEE:

4.01 Minutes: The Board noted the minutes of the meeting of the Code Committee held on 27 April (circulated).

4.02 Editors' Code Website: The Board, subject to costings, approved the Committee's recommendation to carry a digital version of the Editors' Codebook on a website which could also deal with frequently asked questions about the Code. It was suggested that they could be incorporated on the PCC website.

4.03 Code Review: The Board approved the Committee's proposal to change the Code to include a new sub clause 5ii: **When reporting suicide, care should be taken to avoid excessive detail about the method used.*

*Public interest defence applies.

It was noted that the proposed change to include "headlines" in clause 1i had been withdrawn.

5. PCC AND AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIAL:

The Board considered the report of the meeting of industry representatives (circulated), convened by David Newell on 8 June, together with a letter from Christopher Meyer on the case for an

early decision on the PCC remit being extended to cover editorial audio-visual material on newspaper and magazine websites. His effective exclusion of user-generated content – blogs and chatrooms – and third party websites was considered to be helpful in terms of defining the extent of any change to the PCC's online jurisdiction.

Following a full discussion, the Board:

- 1) agreed in principle that the industry's interests would be best served by extending the PCC remit to include editorial audio-visual material;
- 2) agreed to appoint a sub-committee comprising David Newell, Les Hinton, Christopher Meyer and Ian Beales to consider practical aspects and to recommend how the extended remit should be defined so as to provide clarity and understanding for the industry. The Code Committee would then be invited to amend the Code, its proposal in turn to be subject to consultation via the trade associations. The aim would be to complete the task within two months.

6. **INFORMATION COMMISSIONER:** It was reported that Richard Thomas, Information Commissioner, had written to the PCC, trade associations and others calling on them to take a strong line to tackle any involvement in the illegal trade in personal information. His report to Parliament recommended a substantial increase in the penalties for offences under the Data Protection Act 1998 including the introduction of a prison sentence which he claimed would also act as a significant deterrent.

It was noted that the trade associations planned to hold an early meeting to discuss their response to the Information Commissioner.

7. **TREASURER'S REPORT:** The Board noted the Treasurer's Report to 21 June (tabled).
8. **PCC CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Sir Christopher Meyer reported on a number of matters including the move to Halton House which had provided greatly improved working conditions for staff; the publication of the PCC Annual Report showing a record number of complaints and also resolution of complaints; fears that the Human Rights Act would take privacy cases away from the PCC proving not to be the case; Open Days held in different parts of

the country continuing to be well received and likewise workshops and training courses for journalists and others. The appointment of a Communications Officer was proving beneficial and the work of the Charter Commissioner and the Charter Compliance Panel was assisting the PCC to maintain good quality control. An area of concern was the sometimes reckless physical behaviour of paparazzi in their endeavours to obtain photographs.

9. **NEXT MEETING:** Friday 20 October at 11.00am.