

20 Sep 06

(v) Complaints not adjudicated and formal approval of PCC Papers: 3761, 3762, 3763, 3764, 3765, 3766, 3767, 3768, 3769, 3770, 3771, 3772, 3773, 3774, 3775, 3776, 3777, 3778, 3779, 3780, 3782, 3783, 3784, 3785, 3789, 3790, 3791, 3793 (all of which had been circulated during the preceding month).

(vi) Charter Commissioner: Formal approval of PCC Papers: 3781 and 3786 (all circulated).

5. News of the World and phone messaging: Oral report

The Chairman set out the background to this matter. The Royal Editor of the News of the World had been arrested and charged with alleged phone tapping. As a result, the PCC had put out a statement. In it, the Commission reserved the right to contact the editor, at the end of legal proceedings, if any issues had arisen that related to the Code and its adherence by the newspaper. The Chairman indicated that the position remained as described in the statement.

The Director confirmed that several interested parties had contacted the Commission, including from the industry itself. The view had been expressed that the Code may well have been engaged on the issue, and that the PCC should therefore look into the matter further. He confirmed that no specific complaint was required for an investigation to be initiated.

The Commission would be updated, as necessary.

6. Discussion on Information Commissioner's report and DCA consultation on penalties for breaching Data Protection Act (PCC Paper No. 3792)

The Chairman introduced the paper which had been produced and circulated to the Commission – it was, he said, relatively self-explanatory. He emphasised that any Code change in light of the Information Commissioner's concerns would have to be initiated by the newspaper and magazine industry. If the industry decides it wishes to react in this way, Code changes or other guidance will be considered by the PCC. The Chairman believed the Information Commissioner was confused about the distinction between the Commission and the Code of Practice Committee.

The Chairman indicated that the Commission would only comment on proposals of the Information Commissioner if they were relevant to the PCC. It was not, for example, appropriate for the Commission to comment specifically on the proposal for increasing the penalties for breaches of the data protection act.