

THE EDITORS' CODE OF PRACTICE COMMITTEE

For immediate release, Thursday, December 1, 2016

Editors' Code Committee announces consultation

The Editors' Code of Practice, under which the vast majority of Britain's newspaper, magazine and news website journalists work, is to undertake a public consultation on how it can be further improved, it was announced today.

The Editors' Code of Practice Committee, which writes and revises the code of standards policed by the Independent Press Standards Organisation, is inviting suggestions from the public, editors, journalists and others working in the media, and anyone else with an interest in journalistic standards, on how the Code might be revised.

In a separate development Paul Dacre, Editor-in-Chief of Associated Newspapers, announced today that, following the recommendation of the External Review of IPSO by Sir Joe Pilling that Code Committee members should not serve more than two three-year terms, he will be standing down as Chair of the Committee.

Mr Dacre has been Chair for eight years, since 2008. He successfully instigated the introduction of the first lay members, steered the Code through the Leveson Inquiry – from which it emerged without criticism – and oversaw a significant Review of the Code.

Among the changes resulting from that Review was, for the first time, a specific requirement that editors should not publish headlines not supported by the text of the article beneath.

Buckingham Palace used this new provision to bring a successful complaint against The Sun for a headline that read "Queen Backs Brexit".

Other changes to the Code included strengthening the clauses on the reporting of suicide, discrimination, complaints resolution and the public interest.

Said Sir Alan Moses, Chair of IPSO: "The Editors' Code of Practice is the cornerstone of IPSO's contractual agreement with the press and is the document by which we determine whether standards have been breached by any of the two thousand publications we regulate.

"However, the Code cannot stand still and needs to evolve. A trusted, thriving and free press is vital to our national discourse and I encourage anyone with a view on

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how the press is regulated to respond to the consultation.”

Paul Dacre commented: “This new Review is the first conducted by the Code Committee since lay members joined it and it is an opportunity both to examine new issues that have arisen and to ensure the Code remains the universally recognised model for best journalistic practice.

“Regarding my own position, having seen the Code through eight turbulent years, I think it best that I now concentrate on the exciting but exacting challenges facing Associated’s print and digital journalism.

“I am, however, proud of the Code Committee’s achievements and the fact that it has emerged from Leveson stronger than before, even being used by IMPRESS – albeit without a licence!

“Not that this joke body is a laughing matter. I still have to pinch myself that we live in a country in which the Government’s press regulator is financed by Max Mosley and that papers who refuse to sign up to it will not only face *punitive* damages in libel courts but could be forced to pay a claimant’s costs *even* if the article concerned is entirely true and the paper wins its case.

“Which is why my contempt for those so-called liberals who insidiously conspire to manacle press freedom is only matched by my admiration for those in our industry who strive to preserve it.

“But, those manacles apart, it’s a bitter irony that while print media, which is declining, is more tightly policed than ever, rampant internet journalism is utterly unregulated – unless of course a website belongs to a newspaper group. Resolving this contradiction will be a considerable challenge for those who believe in a responsible, independently self-regulated, press.

Explaining that he is happy to stay on as Chair while the industry finds a successor, Mr Dacre concluded: “I’d like to thank my fellow Committee members for their tremendous contributions to the Code. Many travel great distances to attend our meetings. All are extremely conscientious. The industry should be proud of them.”

Sir Alan Moses said: “Paul Dacre has chaired the Code Committee for eight years and overseen the development of a Code that editors respect and which provides protection for the public. In my time on the Code Committee, Paul has chaired in a way that sought consensus and recognised different views around the table and has welcomed and supported IPSO’s membership of the committee.”

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Murdoch MacLennan, Chief Executive of the Telegraph Media Group and former Chairman of the Regulatory Funding Company which finances IPSO, said: "During a very difficult decade, Paul has chaired the Committee with great wisdom while ceaselessly fighting – both behind the scenes and in public – for the freedom of the press. The industry is hugely indebted to him."

David Newell, chief executive of industry body the News Media Association, said: "Under Paul's chairmanship the Code Committee has been strengthened greatly - expanding its membership to include lay members, launching regular public consultations such as this one, and cementing its relationship with IPSO. The whole industry owes him enormous thanks."

Suggestions for changes to the Code should be sent via the Editors' Code Committee website - editorscode.org.uk - by email to: codereview2017@gmail.com or by post to: Editors' Code of Practice Committee, c/o News Media Association, 292 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1AE. The closing date for submissions is Friday, March 3, 2017.

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