

THE EDITORS' CODE OF PRACTICE COMMITTEE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 2017

Neil Benson to chair Editors' Code of Practice Committee

Neil Benson has been elected to chair the Editors' Code of Practice Committee, which writes and revises the code of standards policed by the Independent Press Standards Organisation.

Mr Benson takes over from Paul Dacre, Editor-in-Chief of Associated Newspapers, who has chaired the committee for nine years.

The vast majority of Britain's newspaper, magazine and news website journalists work under the Editors' Code of Practice.

Mr Benson, who was elected by the industry members of the committee, is group executive editor of Trinity Mirror, and was editorial director of the company's regional titles for 16 years before moving to his new role earlier this year.

He said: "On behalf of the committee, I should like to express our sincere thanks to Paul Dacre, whose chairmanship has been so sure-footed during a particularly challenging period for our industry.

"I am honoured to be elected as his successor and I look forward to working with my fellow committee members as we consider the submissions to the recent Code Review."

Mr Dacre is leaving the committee after announcing his intention to stand down last December. During his term of office he successfully steered the Code through the Leveson Inquiry – from which it emerged without criticism – instigated the introduction of the first lay members on the committee 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.

Mr Dacre said: "The Editors' Code is the cornerstone of self-regulation of the press, and it has been an enormous honour to have chaired the Code Committee for the last nine turbulent years.

"As group executive editor of Trinity Mirror Neil Benson has vast experience of how the Code works and I am sure he will do a brilliant job steering the Code Committee through the challenges of the digital age. The Code could not have a better custodian, and I wish him every success."

In another change to the Code Committee, Gary Shipton, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Johnston Press and Editorial Director of its Sussex newspapers, has been appointed to serve, replacing Ian Murray, who left the Southern Daily Echo, Southampton, earlier this year and is now deputy executive director of the Society of Editors.

Mr Shipton said: "I know from first hand experience as a working editor just how diligent and forensic IPSO is in enforcing the Editors' Code of Practice.

Code Committee members: *National newspapers:* John Witherow, The Times; Chris Evans, Daily Telegraph; Hugh Whittow, Daily Express. *Regional newspapers:* Neil Benson, Trinity Mirror (Chair); Gary Shipton, Johnston Press; Mike Sassi, Nottingham Evening Post; Hannah Walker, South London Press. *Scottish Press:* Damian Bates, Press & Journal, Aberdeen. *Magazines:* Harriet Wilson, Conde Nast Publications. *Lay members (ex officio):* Sir Alan Moses, Chairman, IPSO; Matt Tee, CEO, IPSO. *Independent lay members:* Christine Elliott; David Jessel; Kate Stone.

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"In fast changing times, of course, it is vital that the Code is not preserved in aspic but kept under constant review by the Code Committee so that it continues to set the highest standards of journalistic integrity, while robustly defending the public interest and the public's right to know."

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