



# Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA  
Tel 020 7219 6120 website [www.parliament.uk/cms](http://www.parliament.uk/cms)

Monika Bickert  
Head, Global Policy Management  
Facebook  
c/o 10 Brock Street  
Regent Place  
London NW13F

By email

18 May 2020

Dear Ms Bickert,

## **Oral evidence: COVID-19 Infodemic**

I received a letter on 14 May from Richard Earley, Facebook's UK Public Policy Manager, following his oral evidence to the Committee on behalf of Facebook on 30 April.

Mr. Earley's letter does not contain adequate answers to the questions we posed on 30 April, and subsequently followed up in writing. In particular, clearer answers are needed concerning: design decisions for WhatsApp in limiting the spread of false narratives; Facebook's reliance of automated content moderation; and the scope and effectiveness of new 'correct the record' tools. We also raised some specific examples of harmful misinformation in writing that could have given the Committee greater insight into what content triggers Facebook action, but this was not addressed in detail in Mr Earley's responses.

In my letter to Facebook of 4 May, I expressed disappointment with the oral evidence given by Mr Earley on 30 April. The Committee was given pre-prepared answers instead of direct responses to our questions. In my letter, I left open the option of recalling Facebook – represented this time by a senior executive with direct knowledge of, and accountability for, company policy. I regret to say that I now have no option but to do this.

Accordingly, we request oral evidence from you, as a senior executive with sufficient knowledge and authority to give an accurate account of recent events concerning Facebook's response to the infodemic. You gave evidence to our predecessor Committee in February 2018 and again in November 2019 (with our International Grand Committee colleagues) in Dublin, and we are keen to continue that dialogue with you.

We would like this session to take place in w/c 1 June. Committee staff will be in touch to discuss a suitable timeslot, but I would ask that you respond by Wednesday 20 May confirming your willingness to participate.

Yours sincerely,

**Julian Knight MP**  
Chair, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee



# Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA  
Tel 020 7219 6120 website [www.parliament.uk/cms](http://www.parliament.uk/cms)

Ronan Harris  
Vice-President & Managing Director, UK & Ireland  
Google  
c/o 6 Pancras Square  
London N1C 4AG

By email

19 May 2020

Dear Mr Harris,

## **Oral evidence: COVID-19 Infodemic**

I received a letter last week from Alina Dimofte, UK Public Policy and Government Relations Manager, following her oral evidence to the Committee on behalf of Google on 30 April.

Further to Ms. Dimofte's evidence, the Committee still has outstanding questions regarding user reporting functionality, algorithms and recommendation systems and the placing of ads on websites peddling conspiracy theories, which have not been sufficiently answered in detail. We also remain concerned that YouTube has allowed creators to effectively monetise the spread of misinformation through Super Chat revenue (demonstrated by the London Real/David Icke case), which goes against other efforts to demonetise these videos.

In my letter to Google on 4 May, I expressed disappointment with the oral evidence given on 30 April. In my letter, I left open the option of recalling Google – represented this time by a senior executive with direct knowledge of, and accountability for, company policy. I regret to say that I now have no option but to do this.

Accordingly, we request oral evidence from you, as a senior executive with sufficient knowledge and authority to give an accurate account of recent events concerning Google's response to the infodemic. On 13 May, I asked a government minister whether social media companies have a problem with democratic scrutiny, which she could not deny to despite her relatively positive assessment of your efforts in tackling misinformation thus far. I hope therefore you take this opportunity to be accountable and transparent to your users in the UK and abroad.

We would like this session to take place in w/c 1 June. Committee staff will be in touch to discuss a suitable timeslot, but I would ask that you respond by Friday 22 May confirming your willingness to participate.

Yours sincerely,

**Julian Knight MP**  
Chair, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee



# Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA  
Tel 020 7219 6120 website [www.parliament.uk/cms](http://www.parliament.uk/cms)

Dara Nasr  
Managing Director, Twitter UK  
Twitter  
c/o 20 Air Street  
Soho, London  
W1B 5DL

By email

19 May 2020

Dear Mr Nasr,

## **Oral evidence: COVID-19 Infodemic**

I received a letter last week from Katy Minshall, UK Public Policy and Government Relations Manager, following her oral evidence to the Committee on behalf of Google on 30 April.

Further to Ms. Minshall's evidence, the Committee still has outstanding questions regarding user verification, reporting mechanisms and content moderation. I also remain concerned about the role of influencers and 'blue ticks' in spreading misinformation such as 5G conspiracy theories, including high profile celebrities and politicians.

In my letter to Twitter on 4 May, I expressed disappointment with the oral evidence given on 30 April. In my letter, I left open the option of recalling Twitter – represented this time by a senior executive with direct knowledge of, and accountability for, company policy. I regret to say that I now have no option but to do this.

Accordingly, we request oral evidence from you, as a senior executive with sufficient knowledge and authority to give an accurate account of recent events concerning Twitter's response to the infodemic. On 13 May, I asked a government minister whether social media companies have a problem with democratic scrutiny, which she could not deny to despite her relatively positive assessment of your efforts in tackling misinformation thus far. I hope therefore you take this opportunity to be accountable and transparent to your users in the UK and abroad.

We would like this session to take place in w/c 1 June. Committee staff will be in touch to discuss a suitable timeslot, but I would ask that you respond by Friday 22 May confirming your willingness to participate.

Yours sincerely,

**Julian Knight MP**  
Chair, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee