



Meeting of the BBC Board

MINUTES

15 October 2020
Held Via Video Conference

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest
2. Minutes and Matters Arising
3. Executive Reports
4. 2022 Licence Fee Process
5. Crown Dependencies – Age related TV Licence Policy
6. Impartiality and Social Media
7. Sports Rights Finance Case
8. Covid-19 – Lessons Learned
9. Project Reporting
10. Committee Reports
11. AOB

ATTENDANCE

Present

- David Clementi Chairman
- Tim Davie Director-General
- Shirley Garrod Non-executive director
- Tanni Grey-Thompson Non-executive director
- Ian Hargreaves Non-executive director
- Tom Ilube Non-executive director
- Ken MacQuarrie Director, Nations and Regions
- Charlotte Moore Chief Content Officer
- Steve Morrison Non-executive director
- Nicholas Serota Non-executive director
- Elan Closs Stephens Non-executive director
- Ashley Steel Non-executive director
- Fran Unsworth Director, News and Current Affairs

Apologies: There were no apologies

With

- Phil Harrold Company Secretary
- Jo Clarke Secretary to the Board
- Glyn Isherwood Chief Operating Officer
- Bob Shennan Group Managing Director (items 1-3 and 8)
- Gautam Rangarajan Group Director of Strategy and Performance
- David Jordan Director, Editorial Policy and Standards (items 1-3 and 6)
- Kerris Bright Chief Customer Officer (item 3b)
- Peter O’Kane Chief Technology and Product Officer (item 3b)
- Clare Sumner Director, Policy (items 4 and 5)
- Rhodri Talfan Davies Director, Wales (item 8)
- Balram Veliath Director, Quality, Risk and Assurance (item 8)

1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

1.1 There were no apologies for this meeting.

2. Minutes and matters arising

2.1 The minutes from the 17 September meeting were approved.

2.2 The Board noted the Matters Arising paper and updates on the actions from the last meeting.

3. Executive Reports

3.1 The Director-General introduced the new executive report to the Board, which provided a revised reporting framework that measured performance against audience value, operational and financial metrics. The Board considered that the new framework was an effective means of measuring delivery of the key organisational objectives and focussing discussion. Directors noted that a new Senior Executive Group had been established to support the Executive in delivering against the BBC's strategic and audience priorities.

3.2 The Director, Content provided an update on recent content highlights. These included the launch of the new series of *Top Gear* on BBC One and the return of *EastEnders* using socially distanced production techniques. The new documentary *Enslaved* about the history of the Atlantic slave trade, presented by Samuel L Jackson, Afua Hirsch and Simcha Jacobovici had launched on BBC Two. The new R1 Dance stream had launched on Sounds, along with a number of new podcasts including offers from Joe Wicks and Stacey Dooley.

3.3 The Director, News and Current Affairs provided an update on performance. The ongoing pandemic was continuing to draw audiences to BBC News with the network bulletins at Six O' Clock and regional bulletins at 6.30 performing particularly strongly. The Prime Minister's special broadcast on 22 September had attracted around 12 million viewers. News had launched a Covid postcode tracker which enabled people to check the restrictions in their local areas. BBC News had won a number of awards for its use of statistics from the Statistical Society, and Hugh Pym had won the Charles Wheeler Award for Outstanding Contribution to Journalism for his coverage of the pandemic.

3.4 The Chief Financial Officer provided an update on income and expenditure. Licence fee income was currently ahead of Budget. It was hoped that the Government would extend

its insurance scheme for the television production industry, which would be critical to maintain programme production over the coming months.

- 3.5 The BBC's Managing Director provided an update on operations and headcount across the BBC Group. The Board noted progress with the re-structuring programme.
- 3.6 The Board noted the Editorial Standards Report. A high number of complaints had been received during the month, largely driven by proposed changes to the coverage of the Scottish First Minister's Coronavirus briefings.

Over 75s implementation update

- 3.7 The Board noted an update on implementation of the over 75s licence fee programme. The project was performing ahead of expectations with more than 50% of customers already having transitioned to the scheme.

Audio and Video Portfolio

- 3.8 The Director, Content, briefed the Board on the work being undertaken to review the audio and video portfolio and its audience performance across all output divisions. The review would come to the Board for discussion in November.

4. Licence Fee 2022

- 4.1 The Board noted a further update on the timetable and process for the 2022 Licence Fee settlement process.

5 Crown Dependencies – Age Related TV Concession Policy

- 5.1 In September 2019 the BBC consulted on the Board's initial thinking regarding the new over 75s TV licence policy in the Crown Dependencies (the Bailiwicks of Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man), which was that it would be fair to set and fund a concession broadly equivalent to the new scheme in the UK – namely concessions focussed on the poorest older people, relying on the islands' existing benefits/ means-testing systems to establish eligibility. The consultation also set out that the Board proposed to use three criteria relied upon in taking its UK decision – fairness, financial impact and feasibility – and included a draft Equality Impact Assessment for each territory.
- 5.2 Having completed the consultation among the public and stakeholders in the islands, at this meeting the Board discussed the consultation responses and its Public Sector Equality Duty in order to decide what (if any) concessionary TV licences should be offered to older people in each of the territories.

- 5.3 After due consideration of consultation responses, the criteria of fairness, financial impact and feasibility, the impact assessments for each territory and its Public Sector Equality Duty the Board decided that, from 1 January 2021 the BBC would fund the following concessions:
- In Guernsey and Alderney the BBC will pay for free TV licences for those residents who are over 75 and qualify for Income Support.
 - In Sark the BBC will pay for free TV licences for those residents who are over 75 and are in receipt of financial assistance from the Procureur of Sark.
 - In Jersey, the BBC will pay for free TV licences for those residents who are over 75 and are assessed as eligible for a free TV licence under the means-tested TV licence benefit scheme introduced by the Jersey Government in 2006.
 - In the Isle of Man, the BBC will pay for free TV licences for those residents who are over 75 and qualify for Income Support.
- 5.4 The Board approved a Decision document for publication which set out the reasons for its decision in full.

6 Impartiality and Social Media

- 6.1 The Board noted that, following the Director-General's speech to staff in September which emphasised a renewed commitment to impartiality and new rules on social media use, a major internal communications initiative was proposed for the week beginning 26 October which would set out what the BBC was proposing to do in both areas. It was planned that new editorial guidance would be published along with new rules relating to outside interests, and an announcement would be made regarding new and additional training for staff. The Board was asked to consider the guidance documents, which had been discussed by the Editorial Guidance and Standards Committee ("EGSC") at its most recent meeting.
- 6.2 The Board welcomed the Director-General's renewed commitment to impartiality. Directors discussed the guidance on social media use and impartiality and made a number of drafting suggestions. The Board noted that the final documents would be approved at the next meeting of the Executive Committee and considered further by EGSC ahead of publication.

7 Sports Rights: Finance Case

[paras 7.2-7.4 redacted for commercial confidentiality]

- 7.1 The Board considered a request for an amended negotiation mandate to acquire sports rights.

7.5 The Board requested an update on the progress of negotiations.

8. Covid-19 – Lessons Learned

8.1 In June 2020, the Director-General and BBC Executive Committee commissioned a short project to capture and assess the key organisational lessons from the first phase of the Covid-19 period. The project was asked to develop a strategic plan that built on the improvements in the BBC's organisational culture experienced while leading the organisation through Covid-19 and learned from our experience of managing with less resource and reconfigured services to create a simpler, smaller BBC.

8.2 The Board discussed the outcomes of the project which had focussed on four key areas: leadership and group decision-making; the future of work – particularly in light of increased home-working; technology and production workflows and the opportunity to drive faster progress on sustainability. Directors agreed that the project provided a sound basis for organisational transformation and suggested it should also be used to assess the increased opportunity for moving services outside London.

9 Project Reporting

Critical Projects Portfolio Forecasts and Impact of Covid-19

9.1 The Board considered a paper which provided an update on critical projects in response to the Board and Audit Committee request to review the impact of Covid-19 on their progress and ongoing viability.

9.2 The Board noted the update and agreed the recommendations regarding project status and mitigations as set out in the paper.

E20 Public Accounts Committee Submission

9.3 The Board approved the documents for submission to the Committee.

10. Committee Reports

10.1 The Chair of the Commercial Holdings Board reported on its most recent meeting. The Board had considered the First Look Budget and received an update on plans for BritBox overseas.

- 10.2 The Chair of the Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee reported on its latest meeting. In addition to its work scrutinising the guidance on social media use and impartiality the Committee had considered new guidance on the use of racist language.
- 10.3 The Chair of the England Committee reported on its most recent meeting. The Committee had received an update on phase two of the England strategy and held an audience engagement session with audience members over the age of 75 using video conferencing technology.
- 10.4 The Chairman reported on the most recent meeting of Nominations Committee, which had discussed the recruitment of a new Chairman and Nations Members by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. A paper on the re-appointment of Nicholas Serota had been submitted to the Board for approval.

Re-appointment of a Non-executive Director

- 10.5 The Board approved the re-appointment of Nicholas Serota for a period of three years from the completion of his current term from 3 April 2021 until 2 April 2024.

11 AOB

- 11.1 The Board expressed its congratulations to Anne Bulford, a former executive member during her role as Deputy Director-General of the BBC, who had been awarded a CBE.