



Meeting of the BBC Board

MINUTES

21 May 2020

Held Via Video Conference

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest
2. Minutes from the 15 and 30 April Meetings
3. Executive Reports
4. Over 75s Policy Implementation
5. EHRC Investigation Update
6. BBC News Health Editor
7. Pension Scheme Update
8. Committee Reports
9. AOB

ATTENDANCE

Present

- David Clementi Chairman
- Tony Hall Director-General
- Tim Davie Chief Executive Officer, BBC Studios
- 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
- 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 Financial Officer
- Bob Shennan BBC Managing Director (items 1-7)
- Gautam Rangarajan Director, Strategy (items 1-5)
- Charlotte Moore Director, Content (items 1-4)
- James Purnell Director, Radio & Education (items 1-4)
- David Jordan Director, Editorial Policy and Standards (items 1-3)
- Clare Sumner Director, Policy (items 3-4)
- Kerris Bright Chief Customer Officer (items 1-4)
- Sarah Jones Group General Counsel (item 5)
- John Shield Director, Communications (item 5)
- Christopher Jeans QC Guest (item 5)
- Jason Pobjoy Guest (item 5)
- Hugh Pym Health Editor, BBC News (item 6)
- Stephen Wheatcroft Group Treasurer (item 7)
- James Hacker Senior Business Partner, Pension and Benefits (item 7)

1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

1.1 There were no apologies.

2. Minutes from the 15 and 30 April Board Meeting

2.1 The minutes from the 15 and 30 April Board meetings were approved.

2.2 The Board noted the Matters Arising.

3. Executive Reports

3.1 The Director-General briefed the Board on key editorial highlights over the month. Despite the constraints, teams in Studios and Content had taken an innovative approach to the production of the VE Day commemorations, which had proved that the BBC could still bring the nation together in the most difficult of circumstances. And in the absence of the show itself, this year's *Eurovision Song Contest* was reinvented with a BBC One special, hosted by Graham Norton, which enabled viewers to participate from home.

3.2 Audiences had continued to come to the BBC in large numbers, with new records across platforms and many of our services. Since lockdown was announced on 23 March, BBC iPlayer had received nearly 1 billion requests – 61 per cent higher than the same period last year. The 10 May saw iPlayer's biggest ever day with 24.1 m requests; largely driven by the Prime Minister's address. Audiences for *Normal People* had boosted the performance of BBC Three to its highest ever level.

3.3 Work was continuing on planning for emerging from lockdown. The majority of staff were working from home, and it was likely that only a limited number of them would be returning to BBC buildings until Government advice changed significantly. Discussions were taking place with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, along with other public service broadcasters about guidance for filming, which was vital to re-starting production. The Executive had begun a programme of work which would draw learnings from the new ways of working and culture change implemented during Covid-19 in order to simplify the BBC.

3.4 An agreement had been reached with Pact on the terms of trade for TV programmes made by independent television production companies, which would deliver the biggest part of the BBC's iPlayer changes by bringing in an automatic 12-month window for content the BBC commissions.

- 3.5 The Chief Financial Officer provided an update on licence fee income and progress with divisional savings plans. The outlook for the second half of the year would continue to be uncertain given continued social distancing and its impact on production, as well as the extent of the economic downturn more widely.
- 3.6 The Director, Content, provided an update on operations and performance. *The Great British Sewing Bee* and *The Repair Shop* were both doing well in the evening slots for BBC One. In addition to dramas *Normal People* and *Killing Eve*, *Glow Up* with Stacey Dooley was attracting large audiences to BBC Three. Two new dramas originally scheduled for BBC Two, *The Salisbury Poisonings*, and *The Luminaries*, would now air on BBC One.
- 3.7 The Director, Radio and Education, provided an update on operations and performance. Programming for children was performing well, with CBeebies driving large audiences to iPlayer and the BBC Bitesize daily offer attracting an average of four million viewers a week. The latest set of RAJAR figures had seen increases in audience for Lauren Laverne and Greg James, but overall radio consumption was down on the year across the industry.
- 3.8 The Director, News and Current Affairs, provided an update on operations and performance. The news bulletins at six and ten o'clock were still attracting very high audiences, as were global news services. The Global News podcast team launched *The Coronavirus Global Update* which had featured in the top podcasts in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, Germany, Brazil, India, Hong Kong, The Philippines and others. The language services had also produced special coverage for their audiences.
- 3.9 The Director, Nations and Regions, provided an update on operations and performance. The *Make a Difference* campaign, which put people in England in need of help in touch with those offering it, had gone from strength to strength and had now led to over half a million calls and contacts. On top of two bulletins every hour on all 39 local stations, there was now also a *Make a Difference* podcast. Return to work planning was taking place across the Nations and Regions.
- 3.10 The Chief Executive of BBC Studios provided an update on operations and performance, including an update on the financial year end results and financial contingency planning for the coming year. A number of options were being explored around how to return to drama production, but it was clear that it would not be possible to use live audiences for shows for a considerable period of time.
- 3.11 The Board noted the Editorial Standards Report. The Director, Editorial Policy and Standards, briefed the Board on *Panorama – Has the Government Failed the NHS?*, which had generated some complaints and a letter from the Secretary of State. A response had been published.
- 3.12 The Board noted an update on business continuity arrangements.

Finance, Operations and Commercial Quarterly Report

- 3.13 The Board noted the Finance, Operations and Commercial Quarterly Report which provided reporting on the final quarter of the 2019/20 financial year.

Cross Promotion

- 3.14 The Board approved the further trialling of commercial cross promotion of BBC content on BritBox and noted that there would be a related Ofcom review of BBC commercial cross promotion in due course.

4 Over 75s Policy Implementation Update

- 4.1 The Board noted the progress made on the Over 75s Programme to date and the proposed implementation plan for the August 1st 2020 policy commencement, which included the key milestone dates for delivery.
- 4.2 The Board approved the draft General Notice to extend customers' free licences until July 31st 2020.
- 4.3 In addition, the Board approved a previous determination to give legal effect to the Board's decision to extend over 75s free licences in the Crown Dependencies until December 31st 2020.
- 4.4 The Board would continue to keep the position under review and asked for a further progress update for the June Board.

5 EHRC Investigation Update

- 5.1 The Board received a briefing on the process relating to the EHRC investigation.

6 BBC News, Health Editor - Hugh Pym

- 6.1 The Board welcomed Hugh Pym, BBC News's Health Editor to the meeting. Directors thanked him and his team for their commitment in covering the coronavirus pandemic in the UK. The Board discussed the continuing public health crisis and was reassured to hear that Hugh and his team felt they had been properly safeguarded in carrying out their reporting.

7 Pension Scheme Update

- 7.1 The Board considered a paper which provided an update on the 2019 BBC Pension Scheme valuation and recommended an approach to the valuation settlement, which had been agreed by the Pension Board Trustees and Executive Committee.
- 7.2 The Board approved the 2019 Pension valuation settlement as detailed in the paper.
- 7.3 The Board delegated authority to Glyn Isherwood, the BBC's Chief Financial Officer, to sign off the legal documentation required to complete the valuation.

8 Committee Reports

- 8.1 The Chair of the Remuneration Committee reported on its most recent meeting. Items included for discussion were progress on completing the outstanding pay queries, the Remuneration Report for inclusion in this year's Annual Report and the gender pay gap analysis.
- 8.2 The Chair of the Commercial Holdings Board reported on its most recent meetings. Items for discussion had included financial mitigations against the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the commercial subsidiaries. An update on BritBox would come to the next meeting of the Board.
- 8.3 The Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee reported on its most recent meeting. Items for discussion had included an update on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on operations in Northern Ireland, audience performance and approval of the Committee Report for this year's Annual Report.
- 8.4 The Chair of the England Committee reported on its most recent meeting, which for the first time had not included an audience engagement session due to the current lockdown. Items for discussion had included an update on the operational impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the *Make a Difference Campaign*. The Committee had met the new Project Director for the implementation of the England strategy and received an update on progress.
- 8.5 The Chair of the Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee reported on its most recent meeting. The Committee had discussed the responses to the consultation on changes to the Complaints Framework and agreed to amend the proposed process around actions in consequence. The Committee had approved the final Complaints

Framework. The Committee had also provided additional scrutiny of the Local News Partnership Review ahead of its submission to the Board and agreed with its conclusion

that the Local News Partnership had been a success when measured against the original objectives set for it.

Local News Partnership Review

8.5 The Board noted the conclusions of the Local News Partnership Review and approved it for publication.

Appointment to a Nations Committee

8.6 The Board approved a change to the membership of the England Committee as proposed by the Nominations Committee. Adrian Mills, COO of BBC England, would replace Chris Burns, Head of Local Radio, as the staff member on the Committee going forward.

9 AOB

9.1 There was no other business.

Approved by the Board: _____ (Chairman)

_____ (Date)