



Meeting of the BBC Board

MINUTES

21 March 2023
BBC Broadcasting House, London

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest
2. Chairman's Introduction
3. Minutes and Matters Arising
4. Board Business and Reports
5. Executive and Director-General's Report
6. 2023-24 Planning
7. News Channel Update
8. Future Strategy
9. AOB

ATTENDANCE

Present

- Richard Sharp Chairman
- Tim Davie Director-General (items 1-9.1)
- Shumeet Banerji Non-executive director
- Damon Buffini Non-executive director
- Robbie Gibb Non-executive director
- Muriel Gray Non-executive director
- Ian Hargreaves Non-executive director
- Charlotte Moore Chief Content Officer (items 1-9.1)
- Nicholas Serota Non-executive director
- Elan Closs Stephens Non-executive director
- Leigh Tavaziva Group Chief Operating Officer
- Deborah Turness CEO, News and Current Affairs (items 1-9.1)

Apologies: Shirley Garrood

With

- Phil Harrold Company Secretary
- Jo Clarke Secretary to the Board
- Chris Saul Observer
- David Jordan Director, Editorial Standards and Policy (item 4)
- Gautam Rangarajan Director, Strategy (items 5 onward)
- Rachel Jupp Channel Editor, BBC Content (item 5a)
- Clare Sumner Director, Policy (item 5b)
- Rhodri Talfan Davies Director, Nations (items 5 and 6)
- Clare Sumner Director, Policy (items 5 and 6)
- Kerris Bright Chief Customer Officer (item 6)
- Tom Fussell CEO, BBC Studios (item 6)
- Alan Dickson Chief Financial Officer (item 6)
- Pipa Doubtfire Director, Revenue (item 6)
- Storm Fagan Chief Product Officer (item 8)
- Jo Sherlock Group Rights and Commercial Director (item 8)

BOARD MINUTES 21 MARCH 2023

1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Shirley Garrod.
- 1.2 There were no conflicts of interest declared.

2 Chairman's Introduction

- 2.1 The Chairman introduced the business on the day's agenda. The focus of the meeting would be on planning for 2023-24: including performance objectives and targets for the year; the approval of the Annual Plan for 2023-24; the approval for the Budget 2023-24 and the licence fee collection strategy for the coming year. A substantial afternoon session would focus on long-term strategic planning.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

- 3.1 The minutes from the 26 January Board meeting were approved.
- 3.2 The Board noted the Matters Arising paper. Two informal Board calls had been held on the 13 and 14 of March to discuss current issues and to receive an update on funding for the World Service.

4. Board Business and Reports

- 4.1 The Board noted reports on the most recent meetings of the Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee; the Commercial Board; the Remuneration Committee; and the England and Scotland Committees which had been circulated in advance.
- 4.2 The Board noted the reports. Directors discussed the extensive staff engagement undertaken by Sir Andrew Dilnot and Michael Blastland following publication of the thematic review of BBC coverage of public spending and taxation, which it was hoped could be replicated by the chairs of future thematic reviews. The Board also noted updates on internal audit plans and the BBC pension valuation.

Further Thematic Reviews: Update

- 4.3 The Chair of the Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee briefed the Board with progress in identifying co-chairs for the second thematic review on BBC coverage of migration. The Board agreed the Committee's preference for the second co-chair of the review.

Committee Membership

- 4.4 The Board considered a recommendation from Nominations Committee to amend the terms of reference for the Fair Trading Committee.
- 4.5 The Board noted that due to the departure of Ian Hargreaves, currently Chair of the Committee, when his term of appointment expired on 2 April, the Committee would be without its full membership and Chair for its April meeting. It was proposed that Muriel Gray, currently a member of the Committee, should become its Chair on a temporary basis and that Leigh Tavaziva, BBC COO should become an executive member. The situation would be reviewed on completion of this year's Board and Sub-committee annual evaluation review.
- 4.6 The Board approved the amended terms of reference for the Fair Trading Committee.

5. Executive and Director-General's Report

- 5.1 The Director-General opened his session by briefing the Board on the position with Gary Lineker and *Match of the Day*. The Board discussed process learnings from the handling of the incident and noted that an update on plans for a review of the social media guidance would follow later in the meeting.
- 5.2 The previous month had seen strong content performance with *Happy Valley* becoming the biggest drama of the year, *The Gold* and the launch of *Wild Isles*. There had been Oscar and Bafta wins for *The Boy*, *the Mole*, *the Fox and the Horse* and *Navalny*; whilst News teams received 11 RTS Journalism awards, with eight for Network teams and 3 for the Nations. The Board discussed the cancellation of *AutumnWatch* and noted the executive's objective of ensuring a mix of natural history programming was available to audiences. Planning for coverage of the Coronation was underway.
- 5.3 The Board noted a briefing on the investigation into the accident which injured *Top Gear* presenter Freddie Flintoff and the current status of the programme.
- 5.4 The Board noted a briefing on plans for the BBC Singers. A statement would be released later in the week.

- 5.5 The Director, Nations provided an update on the implementation of changes to the local radio network and the associated industrial action.
- 5.6 The Chief Operating Officer provided a report on financial and operational issues. The Board noted the Finance report which set out figures for the close of the financial year. The Board also noted an update on changes to the operational model which would enable efficiencies and provide increased standardisation in some areas. A number of contracts were due for renewal and would come to the next Board meeting for consideration.
- 5.7 The Chief Operating Officer provided a briefing on staff safety and security which featured updates on the situation in Ukraine; the harassment of BBC Persian staff and the ongoing tax investigations in India.
- 5.8 The Executive and Director-General's Report was noted.

Social Media Review

- 5.9 The Board considered a paper which provided a proposed terms of reference for the review of social media guidance following recent coverage of tweets by Gary Lineker, subject to agreement with the independent reviewer, once chosen. The review was being put in place in order to clarify the application of the guidance for freelancers working outside of News, Current Affairs and factual journalism. The Board noted that this was not a proposal to change the Editorial Guidelines, which were the responsibility of the Board, but was intended to consider the current social media guidance that supplemented them. The review would be led by the Executive but consultation with the Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee would be undertaken as part of the review process.
- 5.10 The Board discussed the draft terms of reference along with the timeline of the review. The Board agreed that it was important to ensure that the new guidance provided clarity and consistency for those working for the BBC and audiences alike, along with a transparent escalation process which dealt effectively with breaches of the guidance.

WS Funding

- 5.11 The Board formally approved an agreement with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to receive an additional £20m of Government funding over two years - £10m in 2023/24 and £10m in 2024/25. This was conditional on no closures of services, or announcements of any future closures in 2023/24 and 2024/25. The FCDO published this agreement as part of their Integrated Review Refresh in March.
- 5.12 The Board delegated agreement of a revised set of priorities, objectives and targets with the FCDO to the Chairman, Director-General and CEO News and Current Affairs.

6. 2023-2024 Planning

Audience Performance Objectives and Targets for 2023-24

- 6.1 The Board considered a paper setting out targets for the following financial year against a series of strategically important audience metrics and supporting divisional audience targets. As in every year, performance against the top-level targets would be reported monthly to the Executive Committee and to the Board on a quarterly basis and performance against divisional and top-level metrics would form the basis of half-yearly performance reviews.
- 6.2 The Board discussed the audience performance metrics and associated targets, and the performance objectives which they were designed to measure. The targets were approved subject to review of two top-level metrics at the half-yearly performance review.

BBC Annual Plan 2023-24

- 6.3 The Charter requires the BBC to publish an Annual Plan before the start of a new financial year, covering a range of areas detailed in the Charter and Agreement. The Board considered the draft ahead of its publication the following week.
- 6.4 The Board discussed the draft Annual Plan and made a number of suggested amendments to the text. It was agreed that the final document would be circulated to the Board for information ahead of publication.
- 6.5 The Board approved the BBC's Annual Plan for 2023-24 and delegated final sign-off to the Chairman and Director-General.

BBC Group Budget 2023-24

- 6.6 The Board was presented with the BBC Group, public service and commercial budgets for 2023-24 for approval. Directors noted that the budgets were set in the context of a medium-term forecast to 2025-26 and reflected input from Board discussion over previous months.
- 6.7 The Board approved the BBC Group Budget for 2023-24.

Licence Fee Collection Strategy 2023-24

- 6.8 The Board considered a paper setting out the Licence Fee Collection Strategy for 2023-24, in fulfilment of its duties to ensure that collection of the licence fee was efficient, appropriate and proportionate, as set out in the Charter.
- 6.9 The Board discussed the plans for licence fee collection in the coming year, including the assumptions underlying the income forecast and communications around TV Licensing.
- 6.10 The Board approved the Licence Fee Collection Strategy for 2023-24.

7 News Channels Update

- 7.1 The Board noted an update on the new BBC News single news channel operation for UK and international audiences, and the strategy underpinning it. The operation would have two different feeds supplying UK and global audiences covering moving stories and events across multiple platforms including iPlayer.
- 7.2 Directors discussed the update, including how the schedule of the new service would appear to UK audiences and the new Forensic Journalism Centre which would show audiences how stories were checked and verified.

8 Strategy Session

- 8.1 The Board took part in a session on the future strategy of the BBC.

9. AOB

- 9.1 There was no other business.
- 9.2 Non-executive members of the Board were briefed on the investigation into Tim Westwood when he was employed by the BBC.