



## Meeting of the BBC Board

### MINUTES

16 July 2020

Held Via Video Conference

#### ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest
2. Minutes from the 5 and 18 June Meetings
3. Executive Reports
4. Content Budget 2020-21
5. Annual Report and Accounts: Narrative
6. International News
7. England Strategy Implementation Update
8. BBC Studios Long Range Plan
9. Committee Reports
10. AOB

## ATTENDANCE

### Present

- David Clementi Chairman
- Tony Hall Director-General
- Tim Davie Chief Executive Officer, BBC Studios
- Shirley Garrood 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 Group Managing Director (items 1-6)
- Gautam Rangarajan Director, Strategy (items 1-8)
- Charlotte Moore Director, Content (items 1-4)
- James Purnell Director, Radio & Education (items 1-3)
- David Jordan Director, Editorial Policy and Standards (items 1-3 and 9)
- Jamie Angus Director, World Service (item 6)
- Jessica Cecil Special Project Director (item 6)

**1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest**

1.1 There were no apologies.

**2. Minutes from the 5 and 18 June Board Meeting**

2.1 The minutes from the 5 and 18 June Board meetings 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 updated the Board on the response to the announcement of the 1 August date for implementation of the over 75s policy. An implementation group was meeting weekly to ensure the roll-out of the project was successfully delivered. Announcements regarding the changes to News and BBC England output had also been made and there had been a very positive response to publication of the plans to develop and support diverse talent across all the BBC's content areas.

3.2 The Board noted a business continuity update. A piece of work setting out operational learnings from the impact of the pandemic would come to the Board in the Autumn.

3.3 In editorial highlights the *Glastonbury Experience* was a great example of productive working across the BBC, which boosted underserved audiences and Sounds over that weekend. Teams across the BBC had been producing festivals and cultural events, such as Radio's *Rethink Festival* and a celebration of Pride month in a series of new LGBTQ+ works as part of Culture in Quarantine, as well as the re-designed Proms season. Sport had returned for the summer with the most viewed ever Premier League match when Southampton beat Manchester City, and test cricket was back on the BBC for the first time in 20 years with the start of the series against the West Indies.

3.4 The Chief Financial Officer provided an update on licence fee income, progress with meeting financial targets and the forecast outlook for the rest of the year. He also provided a status update on critical projects.

3.5 The Director, Content, provided an update on operations and performance. Drama had made a considerable impact with audiences in May and June; *The Salisbury Poisonings* on BBC One had had the biggest overnight episode launch in six years; *Killing Eve* had become the biggest drama of the year for 16-34s; *Sitting in Limbo* proved the most

successful drama of the year for black, Asian and minority ethnic audiences; and the critically acclaimed *I May Destroy You* entered the top ten requested programmes on iPlayer. The return of Premier League football had boosted viewing, reaching 18 million people over five days including a large 16-34 audience. It was likely that the coronavirus pandemic would result in more content losses to the programme schedules than originally thought and re-starting production would be costly. Ofcom had been notified that this would have an impact on the BBC's ability to meet its regulatory programme quotas for 2020-21.

- 3.6 The Director, Radio, provided an update on operations and performance. The latest audience research indicated that BBC Radio services had not been as negatively affected as some commercial operators by the changes to listening habits resulting from the lockdown. BBC Sounds had benefited from the return of the Premier League and had met its audience targets. The Bitesize Daily teams had continued to produce ten hours of live programmes plus 150 online lessons per week throughout the period and the service had proved very popular with children and their parents.
- 3.7 The Director, News and Current Affairs, provided an update on operations and performance. Coronavirus continued to be a central story, in particular as restrictions changed around the UK's Nations and Regions. Although the appetite for news had dropped from the height of the pandemic, audience numbers for bulletins and news online was still higher on a year on year basis.
- 3.8 The Director, Nations and Regions provided an update on operations and performance. Production teams across BBC Scotland collected 18 awards at the RTS Scotland Awards 2020, as well as two special awards for the BBC Scotland Channel and for Donalda MacKinnon, the outgoing Director of Scotland. Programming and co-commissions from the Nations were performing well on iPlayer.
- 3.9 The Chief Executive of BBC Studios provided an update on operations and performance. Productions were starting to resume. *Top Gear* and *Andy's Aquatic Adventures* had restarted in June, *EastEnders* and *Holby City* were expected to restart over the coming weeks, followed by *River City* in August. Despite the crisis, Studios had managed to deliver productions, win new commissions and content sales were on track. However risks still remained, particularly around the issue of insurance cover for productions and forecasting the decline in global advertising revenues.
- 3.10 The Board noted the Editorial Standards Report. Complaints numbers continued to track at a high level, largely driven by social media coverage and lobbying. The Editorial Standards and Complaints Committee would be considering options around managing the numbers within existing resource at its September meeting.

### *E20 Update*

- 3.11 The Board noted an update on the status of the E20 Programme in light of the challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

### *Freelancer PAYE*

- 3.12 The Board approved a plan to extend support to the group of 608 PAYE Freelancers in the Public Service who had been impacted by Covid-19 and had no access to any other BBC support.

## **4 Content Budget 2020**

- 4.1 The Board considered a paper which set out some of the impacts and issues affecting the content schedule and budgeted costs in the latter part of the year as a result of Covid-19, including delays and cancellations to planned programming and the increased costs of socially distanced productions. The paper made a finance case for increasing the content budget to alleviate the pressure on programme schedules for the autumn and winter season.
- 4.2 The Board discussed the proposals. Directors approved the additional content investment as set out in the paper, in order to enhance the autumn and winter audience offer in line with the content strategy agreed by the Board at its March meeting.

## **5 Annual Report and Accounts: Narrative**

- 5.1 The Board noted that the Annual Report and Accounts for 2019-20 would be signed at an additional Board meeting on 2 September, before a planned publication date of 15 September. The publication date had been moved back due to the impact of Covid-19 on finance teams producing the financial statements, which were due to be completed that month.
- 5.2 The Board considered the narrative section of the Annual Report and discussed the presentation of the year's performance. A number of drafting amendments were agreed for inclusion in the final version of the report.

## **6 International News**

### *International News Strategy*

- 6.1 The Board noted an update on the next stage of its international news strategy and approved the proposed next steps.

### *World Service 2020 and Annual Performance Review*

- 6.2 The Board discussed the report on the annual performance of the World Service and commented on the growth of audiences during the period, and the work being done to address the growth of disinformation around the world.
- 6.3 The Board approved the report on the annual performance of the World Service and the draft World 2020 Annual Statement, which would be submitted to the Foreign Secretary in due course.

## **7. England Implementation Update**

- 7.1 The Board noted BBC England's progress in delivering its savings and transformation plans as well as the associated implementation requirements. Plans to transform BBC England were last put to the Board in March, but these had evolved in response to the uncertainties and many impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, both in the immediate and longer term.
- 7.2 The Board noted and discussed the revised plans and the intention to return to the Board with a second phase of the plan focussing on local radio.

## **8 BBC Studios Long Range Plan**

- 8.1 The Board noted BBC Studios' Long Range Plan, which had been updated to take account of the impacts of Covid-19 and approved by the Commercial Holdings Board at its meeting in July.

## **9 Committee Reports**

- 9.1 The Chair of the Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee reported on its most recent meeting. Items for discussion had included the scope and approach of the Social Media Review, progress with the implementation of the Complaints Framework and updated guidance covering impartiality and racism.

9.2 The Chair of the Commercial Holdings Board reported on its most recent meeting. Items for discussion had included the approval of BBC Studios' revised long range plan and an update on the BBC Group's global strategy.

9.3 The Chair of the Remuneration Committee reported on its most recent meeting. Items for discussion had included this year's approach to incentive schemes in the commercial side of the business and the disclosure report for the Annual Report and Accounts.

9.4 The Chair of the Scotland Committee reported on its most recent meeting. Items for discussion had included an update on nations and network co-commissioning and the BBC Scotland audience report.

**10 AOB**

10.1 There was no other business.

Approved by the Board: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chairman)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)