



Meeting of the BBC Board

MINUTES

26 January 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. Licence Fee Gender Disparity Report
7. Strategy Session
8. Budget Update
9. Quarterly Performance Report
10. Classical Music Update
11. AOB

ATTENDANCE

Present

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

Apologies: None

With

- Phil Harrold Company Secretary
- Jo Clarke Secretary to the Board
- Gautam Rangarajan Director, Strategy (items 5 onward)
- Rhodri Talfan Davies Director, Nations (items 5 and 8-10)
- Clare Sumner Director, Policy (items 5 and 6)
- Kerris Bright Chief Customer Officer (items 6, 8 and 9)
- Rachel Currie Director, HR (item 7)
- Storm Fagan Chief Product Officer (items 8 and 9)
- Tom Fussell CEO, BBC Studios (items 8-10)
- Alan Dickson Chief Financial Officer (items 8-10)
- David Jordan Director, Editorial Policy and Standards (item 10)

BOARD MINUTES 26 JANUARY 2023

1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

- 1.1 There were no apologies for this meeting.
- 1.2 There were no conflicts of interest declared. The Chairman briefed the Board on the issues that had been raised with regard to his appointment and his upcoming appearance at the DCMS Select Committee.

2 Chairman's Introduction

- 2.1 The Chairman introduced the business on the day's agenda, which dealt primarily with strategic issues, performance reporting and provided Directors with a further opportunity to input into the production of the 2023-24 Budget.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

- 3.1 The minutes from the 8 December Board meeting were approved.
- 3.2 The Board noted the Matters Arising paper. Directors discussed the response to the recently announced changes to local radio output.
- 3.3 The Board noted an update on upcoming legislation relating to the media industry.

4. Board Business and Reports

- 4.1 The Board noted reports on the most recent meetings of the Board Financial Approvals Committee; the Northern Ireland, Wales and England Committees; the Nominations Committee and the Fair Trading Committee which had been circulated in advance.
- 4.2 The Board discussed the reports. It was agreed that the finance case approved by the Board Financial Approvals Committee would be circulated to the full Board for information. An update on broadcast continuity arrangements in the English regions would be provided to the Chair of the England Committee.

Further Thematic Reviews: Update

- 4.3 The Chair of the Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee reported that the first Thematic Review on BBC Coverage of Taxation and Public Spending would be published on 31 January.
- 4.4 The Board noted an update on the development of terms of reference for the second thematic review on BBC Coverage of Migration.

Plan for the Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23

- 4.5 The Board approved plans for the reporting structure of the Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23.

5. Executive and Director-General's Report

- 5.1 The Director-General opened his session by briefing the Board on the performance of the Christmas schedule, which had been strong both for linear programming and digital, although broadcast figures across the industry continued to decline. BBC One was by far the most watched channel on Christmas Day, with seven of the top ten titles though linear numbers remain down overall. *Ghosts* was the biggest comedy of the year, while *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* topped 11 million viewers after 20 days. iPlayer views were up every day year on year and 17% overall, while BBC Sounds recorded 57.7 million plays and was up 9% on last year. In terms of New Year TV launches *Happy Valley* was performing extremely strongly.
- 5.2 The news of Ken Bruce's decision to leave the BBC had been met with sadness but the Radio 2 team were working on a replacement.
- 5.3 The Board noted an update on News and Current Affairs. The Board noted that BBC Persian had been designated as a terrorist organisation by the Iranian regime.
- 5.4 A session had been held with the senior leadership of the organisation this week, as well as an all staff call on the BBC's strategic objectives for the year, with the goal-setting process now underway in support of this.
- 5.5 The Director, Nations provided an update on the implementation of changes to the local radio network. Some of the planned changes had been revised slightly, in response to audience concerns.

- 5.6 The Chief Operating Officer provided a report on financial and operational issues. The Board noted an update on cyber security following a number of high profile cyber-related incidents in the past month, including at both the Guardian and Royal Mail. Proactive measures were being taken to protect BBC systems and data. The Persian service continued to experience online harassment and threats. Pan-BBC plans were put in place across BBC offices in India to mitigate any physical or online backlash to the broadcast of the documentary *India: The Modi Question*. Corporate Security were carrying out a full investigation into the presence of a mobile phone which had been taped to the set of *Match of the Day* ahead of the Wolves v Liverpool FA Cup match and interrupted the programme.
- 5.7 The Board discussed the demographic data for England and Wales which had recently been released from the Census for 2021. Data from Northern Ireland would be released separately, later in the year and the Census in Scotland had not taken place until 2022. Directors agreed that the data would be helpful in planning service provision.
- 5.8 The Board noted and discussed the full audience performance report for the festive period.
- 5.9 The Director-General and Executive Report was noted.

Future Strategy: Planning

- 5.10 The Board noted that a number of workshops would be held on strategic planning over February and March.

Outline Annual Plan

- 5.11 The Board approved the outline for the Annual Plan 2023-24. The Executive were asked to ensure that the document included the plans for service provision to all audience groups.

6. Licence Fee Gender Disparity Report

- 6.1 The Board considered a draft report on gender disparity in prosecutions for TV licence evasion, which sets out the background to the report, the findings, and a substantial action plan. The Board noted that the report was currently in draft form and would be further reviewed with Baroness Young, the independent advisor to the review. Baroness Young would also provide her independent observations as part of the final report.
- 6.2 The Board discussed the report and its findings. Directors discussed and agreed the action plan, including that the simple payment plan should be offered to all unlicensed households.

- 6.3 The Board noted and approved both the report and action plan for publication.
- 6.4 The Board approved the draft equality impact analysis, which would also be published alongside the report.
- 6.5 The Board approved the approach to publication as set out in the paper, including delegating final sign-off of the report for publication to the Director-General.

7 Working at the BBC: Culture Change

- 7.1 The Board discussed an update on the progress that had been made with plans to build an inclusive, accountable and high performing culture to support the delivery of the BBC's Value for All strategy. The update set out the work done over the last two years in improving performance management and staff development; in shared values and behaviours, and with internal communications and staff engagement. Directors noted the improvement in the scores of the related indexes in the staff survey.
- 7.2 The Board noted the proposed areas for the next phase of change and thanked Rachel Currie, departing Director HR, for all the work she had done to improve the BBC's organisational culture.

8 Strategy Session

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

9 Budget Update

- 9.1 The Board reviewed the latest draft of the Budget 2023-24 and the budget overviews for each division. Directors discussed the challenges of making assumptions around the level of inflation in the coming year, and the impact of the cost of living crisis on licence fee sales.
- 9.2 The Board noted that the budget for the commercial services was currently being considered by the Commercial Board and that it would come to the full Board in March.
- 9.3 The 2023-24 Budget and accompanying medium term plan would come to the March meeting of the Board for final approval.

10 Quarterly Performance Report

- 10.1 The Board considered the quarterly performance report, which covered the period October-December 2022.
- 10.2 The Board discussed the audience performance update. The FIFA World Cup had reached 38.8 million people on TV during the tournament, while there were 53.4 million UK unique browsers to the World Cup site and 104.7 million online viewing requests, far ahead of any tournament on record. This, plus content such as *SAS Rogue Heroes*, *Traitors* and a very strong festive season helped iPlayer to its best quarter ever, well ahead of the level needed to achieve the 22/23 target for all accounts.
- 10.3 The Board noted and discussed the industry and market overview.
- 10.4 The Board discussed the Finance and Operations performance report, which included reporting on critical projects and risk management.
- 10.5 The Board noted and discussed the Editorial Standards Report. Complaints volumes continued to trend lower.

11 Classical Music Update

- 11.1 The Board noted an update on plans for the BBC's classical music output.

12. AOB

- 12.1 There was no other business.