



## Meeting of the BBC Board

### MINUTES

17 October 2023  
Broadcasting House, London

#### ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest
2. Minutes and Matters Arising
3. Board Business and Reports
4. Executive and Director-General's Report
5. Revenue and Budget
6. Future Strategy
7. Finance Approvals
8. AOB

## ATTENDANCE

### Present

- Elan Closs Stephens Chair
- Tim Davie Director-General
- Shumeet Banerji Non-executive director
- Damon Buffini Non-executive director
- Robbie Gibb Non-executive director
- Muriel Gray Non-executive director
- Chris Jones Non-executive director
- Charlotte Moore Chief Content Officer
- Nicholas Serota Non-executive director
- Michael Smyth Non-executive director
- Marinella Soldi Non-executive director
- Leigh Tavaziva Group Chief Operating Officer
- Deborah Turness CEO, News and Current Affairs

### Apologies:

There were no apologies

### With

- Phil Harrold Company Secretary
- Jo Clarke Secretary to the Board
- Gautam Rangarajan Director, Strategy and Performance (item 4-7)
- Rhodri Talfan Davies Director, Nations (items 4 and 8)
- Alan Dickson Chief Finance Officer (items 5 and 7)
- David Jordan Director, Editorial Policy and Standards (item 4)
- Storm Fagan Chief Product Officer (item 4)
- Dan McGolpin Director, iPlayer and Channels (item 4)
- Bethan Pearce Head of Finance (item 5)
- Jonathan Wall Commissioning Director, BBC Sounds (item 6)
- Lorna Clarke Commissioning Director, BBC Music (item 6)
- Phil Kemp Strategy Director, Content (item 6)
- Aniruddh Dimri Head of Product, Audio (item 6)
- Alan Bainbridge Director, BBC Workplace (item 7)
- Peter O’Kane Chief Technology Officer (item 7)
- Clare Sumner Director, Policy (item 8)

## BOARD MINUTES 17 OCTOBER 2023

### **1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest**

- 1.1 There were no apologies for the meeting.
- 1.2 No conflicts of interest were declared in addition to those already recorded.
- 1.3 The Board noted the declaration of significant recent meetings with politicians, senior officials and stakeholders submitted by the Chair.

### **2. Minutes and Matters Arising**

- 2.1 The Minutes from the 15 September Board meeting were approved.
- 2.2 The Board noted the Matters Arising paper. A further update on the new arrangements for the BBC's operations in India would be circulated when available.

### **3. Board Business and Reports**

#### *Committee Reports*

- 3.1 The Board noted written reports on the most recent meetings of the Commercial Board; the Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee; and the Audit and Risk and Fair Trading Committees.
- 3.2 The Board discussed the technology update in Television Licensing.

#### *Board Code of Conduct*

- 3.3 Following changes to the Code agreed at the July meeting the draft Code had also been considered by the Commercial Board. The Board noted that some further minor amendments had been proposed to ensure there was clarity in the Code about areas where Directors may be subject to different requirements.
- 3.4 The Board considered the updated draft, which incorporated all the suggested amendments.
- 3.5 The Board approved the new Board Code of Conduct.

### *Board Effectiveness Review: Action Plan*

- 3.6 The Board discussed the Board and Sub-committee Effectiveness Review with its author, Chris Saul, in a session ahead of its July meeting. An implementation plan for the agreed actions arising from those discussions was drawn up by Secretariat, and with input from the Chair. The plan was approved by the Nominations Committee at its September meeting.
- 3.7 The Board approved the implementation plan.

### *Nations Committees*

- 3.8 A number of recommendations arising from the Board Effectiveness Review by Chris Saul focussed on the Nations Committees. The Board considered a paper which proposed a number of changes to the governance of the Committees, including instituting a joint annual meeting and adding representatives from Content to the attendees.
- 3.9 The Board approved the proposed changes to the Nations Committees and associated terms of reference.

## **4. Executive and Director-General's Report**

- 4.1 The Director-General opened the session by commending news teams for their work in providing coverage of the conflict in the Middle East in challenging circumstances.
- 4.2 The current Saturday night line-up was performing strongly, as was *Celebrity Race Across the World*. *Planet Earth III* and the final season of *Ghosts* were due to launch shortly. Content and communications teams had worked hard and with care for the launch of *The Reckoning*.
- 4.3 The rollout of the social media review and new social media guidance was well handled and had a largely positive response.
- 4.4 Teams across England were now implementing changes to local service provision: twenty stations had so far made schedule changes with twenty-nine new shows now up and running. An ACAS meeting with the NUJ had been scheduled.
- 4.5 The Board noted an update from the Chief Operating Officer, which included financial performance across the public service and commercial sides of the BBC. The first draft of the National Audit Office review of the implementation of the BBC's Across the UK strategy had been received. Directors also noted an update on progress with the review of the non-editorial complaints process arising from allegations about a BBC presenter.

- 4.6 The Board noted an update on operational risk covering staff safety and security, international operational controls and technology projects.
- 4.7 The Executive and Director-General's Report was noted.

#### *Board Statement*

- 4.8 The Board had discussed issuing a statement regarding the BBC's approach to its news coverage of the conflict in the Middle East. The draft statement was approved for publication.

#### *Quarterly Performance Report*

- 4.9 The Board noted the Quarterly Performance Report. Directors discussed the audience performance metrics. Reach figures had been under pressure over the quarter but iPlayer and Sounds were performing to target. Further discussion of the audience performance metrics would take place at the December meeting when the half-yearly performance report was brought to the Board.
- 4.10 The Board discussed the Editorial Standards and Complaints Report for the quarter. Directors discussed the performance against target for complaints handling.

#### *iPlayer Update*

- 4.11 The Board considered the quarterly iPlayer update. There had been strong results in signed-in accounts and consumption was up over 37% on the year, which was ahead of target.
- 4.12 The Board discussed performance over the summer, the increased focus on key brands, the growth plan for the next twelve months and the market context.

### **5. Revenue and Budget**

#### *Licence Fee Update*

- 5.1 The Board noted an update on the 2024 Licence Fee uplift.

#### *First Look Budget*

- 5.2 The Board noted a paper providing an update on the Budget process and timeline for 2024-25. Directors discussed the changes to the Budget forecast since its original approval in March 2023.

## **6 Future Strategy**

- 6.1 The Board noted an update on future strategy projects and how they would be structured going forward.

### *Future Content Strategy: Audio*

- 6.2 The Board considered a number of proposals designed to enhance the output of national audio services.
- 6.3 The Board agreed that plans to launch three new distinctive BBC music streams on Sounds supported by DAB+ in the medium-term should be progressed, along with the expansion of the remit of Radio 5 Sports Extra. Directors requested a timeline for the application of the necessary public interest tests.
- 6.4 The Board agreed that further work should take place on the possibility and implications of hosting third-party content on BBC Sounds.

## **7. Finance Approvals**

### *Digbeth*

- 7.1 At its meeting in September the Board considered a paper detailing a proposal to vary the lease arrangements for the broadcast facility in Digbeth, Birmingham. The paper had been updated following the issue of a section 114 notice to Birmingham City Council. Directors requested additional information and further due diligence work to be undertaken and return to the October meeting.
- 7.2 The Board considered the additional information and due diligence on the proposal to extend the lease for the broadcast facility in Digbeth, Birmingham, from twenty to twenty-five years.
- 7.3 On the basis of the additional assurances provided, the Board approved the extension of the lease period.

### *Amazon Web Services*

- 7.4 The Board considered a paper recommending the extension of a contract with AWS cloud services which would need to continue beyond the current contract term of 30th November 2023.

7.5 The Board approved the proposal to extend the BBC's commitment contract with AWS for a three year term to run from 1st December 2023 to 30th November 2026

**8. AOB**

8.1 The Board thanked Clare Sumner, Director of Policy, for all her work on behalf of the BBC ahead of her departure in November.

8.2 The Board noted that the closure of *Doctors* would be announced tomorrow.

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

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