



## **Meeting of the BBC Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee**

### **MINUTES**

16 January 2025

Boardroom 3028, Broadcasting House, London

### **ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

1. Minutes of the 19 November Meeting and Matters Arising
2. Thematic Review Updates
3. Senior Editorial Policy Adviser's Report
4. BBC Verify
5. Emerging Editorial Risks and Issues
6. Complaints Reporting
7. Papers for Approval/Noting
8. AOB

## ATTENDANCE

### *Members:*

- |                   |                                   |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Samir Shah      | Chair                             |
| • Nicholas Serota | Non-executive director            |
| • Tim Davie       | Director-General                  |
| • Robbie Gibb     | Non-executive director            |
| • Deborah Turness | CEO, BBC News and Current Affairs |

### *With*

Rhodri Talfan Davies	Director, Nations
Jonathan Munro	Global Director and Deputy CEO News and Current Affairs
Caroline Daniel	Editorial Advisor
Michael Prescott	Editorial Advisor
David Jordan	Director, Editorial Standards and Policy
Peter Johnston	Director, Complaints and Editorial Reviews
Phil Harrold	Company Secretary
Jo Clarke	Secretary to the Committee
Rizwana Rahmani	Executive Lead, Editorial Policy and Standards
David Grossman	Senior Editorial Policy Advisor
Helen White	Project Manager; Serota Implementation Project
Simon Coates	Senior Advisor, Thematic Reviews
Richard Burgess	Director, News (item 4)
Emma Theedom	Portfolio Head of Audiences, BBC News (item 4)
Lindsay McCoy	Editor, BBC Verify (item 4)

## APOLOGIES

None

## **EDITORIAL GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES**

### **1. Minutes from the 19 November Meeting and Matters Arising**

- 1.1 The minutes of the meeting on the 19 November were approved.

#### *Matters Arising*

- 1.2 The Matters Arising paper was noted. David Jordan provided an update on the revision of the Editorial Guidelines. Over 400 stakeholders had been directly notified of the public consultation and it had closed with 48 responses. Issues raised were predominantly on issues of the language around gender identity; the Israel/Gaza conflict and issues relating to the countryside.
- 1.3 Committee members noted an update on amendments to the Style Guide based on the recommendations from the senior editorial adviser's report.
- 1.4 In response to the action from the December Board meeting, the Committee requested that the Director-General and CEO News and Current Affairs develop a plan to address low trust issues among some sections of the audience. This would be submitted to the Board following consideration by EGSC.

### **2. Thematic Review Updates**

#### *Post Implementation Review of the Thematic Review of Migration*

- 2.1 The Committee discussed the six month post-implementation review of the thematic review of the BBC's coverage of migration. The assessment illustrated important and valuable strengths in BBC journalism that reflected the recommendations of Madeleine Sumption's Review. However, it also showed that for general reporting by non-specialists to be more widely useful to audiences and to avoid risks to impartiality, the commitment to the six points and the thinking behind them need to become ingrained and to be fostered in the journalistic culture.
- 2.2 The Committee discussed what more could be done to drive change, particularly in the Nations and Regions.
- 2.3 The Committee noted its thanks to Madeleine Sumption for all her valuable work.

### *Topics for Future Thematic Reviews*

- 2.4 The Committee discussed topics for future thematic reviews.
- 2.5 The Committee also requested that a proposal be drawn up for a “hybrid” review of the BBC’s business coverage which could be done quickly, but that also included external voices from the business community.

### *Review of Middle East Coverage*

- 2.6 The Committee discussed the timing, scope and methodology for a thematic review of coverage of the conflict in the Middle East.
- 2.7 Committee members agreed that the a previous review of coverage of the Middle East conducted by the BBC Governors would provide a useful model, as it included a panel of reviewers led by a Chair, which would allow for a range of voices.
- 2.8 A formal scope and methodology would come to the March meeting of the Committee. Timing of the review would depend on whether the agreed ceasefire would hold, and that would affect the sequencing of the thematic reviews proposed.

## **3 Senior Editorial Adviser’s Report**

- 3.1 The Committee considered the Senior Editorial Policy Advisor’s report.
- 3.2 The Committee discussed the Senior Editorial Adviser’s Report, which this time included a report looking at differences between the English language News website and the BBC Arabic website in reporting the Israel/Gaza war; and a report on coverage of the US election campaign.
- 3.3 It was requested that the Global Director, World Service return to a future meeting with a response to issues raised in the report and an update on the re-structuring of the language services.

## **4. BBC Verify**

- 4.1 The Committee welcomed Richard Burgess, Lindsay McCoy and Emma Theedom for a presentation on the work of BBC Verify including its aims and objectives, its place

within the News structure and resources, awareness among the audience, and the current challenges and lessons learned.

## **5 Emerging Editorial Risks and Issues**

- 5.1 The Committee discussed current and upcoming editorial risks; in addition to ongoing editorial risks the Committee discussed the changes to the UK political landscape.

## **6. Complaints Reporting**

### *Analysis of Editorial Complaints Stage 2*

- 6.1 The Committee considered the Stage 2 complaints report.
- 6.2 The Committee discussed Ofcom's Mystery Shopping exercise which had demonstrated significant improvements in the handling of complaints to the BBC. and noted the Stage 1 complaints reports.

### *Change to the Complaints Framework*

- 6.3 The Committee also approved a minor change to the complaints process at Stage 2.

## **7 Papers for Approval/Noting by Exception**

- 7.1 The Committee noted the stage 1 complaints reporting for September and October.
- 7.2 The Committee noted the Ofcom monthly complaints reports.

## **8. AOB**

- 8.1 It was requested that the next senior adviser's editorial report should include an assessment of local and regional content.