



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

### **MINUTES**

7 March 2024

Boardroom 3028, Broadcasting House, London

### **ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

1. Minutes of the 18 January Meeting and Matters Arising
2. Thematic Reviews
3. Revision of the Editorial Guidelines
4. Election Guidelines
5. Complaints Reporting
6. Emerging Editorial Risks and Issues
7. Senior Editorial Policy Adviser's Report
8. AOB

## **ATTENDANCE**

### *Members:*

- Nicholas Serota                      Non-executive director (Chair)
- Tim Davie                              Director-General
- Robbie Gibb                           Non-executive director
- Deborah Turness                      CEO, BBC News and Current Affairs

### *With*

Samir Shah	BBC Chair
David Grossman	Senior Editorial Policy Advisor
Caroline Daniel	Editorial Advisor
Michael Prescott	Editorial Advisor
David Jordan	Director, Editorial Standards and Policy
Peter Johnston	Director, Complaints and Editorial Reviews
Jo Clarke	Secretary to the Committee
Rizwana Rahmani	Executive Lead, Editorial Policy and Standards
Jonathan Munro	Deputy CEO News and Current Affairs
Madeleine Sumption	Chair, Thematic Review on Migration (item 2)
Helen White	Project Manager; Serota Implementation Project (item 2)
Simon Coates	Senior Advisor, Thematic Reviews (item 2)
Ric Bailey	Chief Advisor, Politics, Editorial Policy (item 4)

## **APOLOGIES**

Rhodri Talfan Davies

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

### **1. Minutes from the 18 January Meeting and Matters Arising**

- 1.1 The minutes of the meeting on the 18 January were approved.
- 1.2 The Committee welcomed Samir Shah, the new Chair of the BBC, as an observer to the meeting.

#### *Matters Arising*

- 1.3 The Matters Arising apper was noted.

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

#### *Thematic Review of Migration*

- 2.1 The Committee welcomed Madeleine Sumption, co-chair of the thematic review of migration who had completed the drafting of the review subsequent to her fellow author, Samir Shah's appointment as Chair of the BBC and his agreement to step down from the review.
- 2.2 The Committee considered the draft review and noted Madeleine's summary of the key findings. Committee members noted that while the review found no overall bias towards one point of view, it found risks to impartiality that pointed in multiple directions.
- 2.3 The Committee discussed the six point guide for staff, which would be used to help implement the findings of the review, and agreed that the executive would look at the drafting to give it a stronger practical application.
- 2.4 The Committee agreed that the report was a rich and insightful piece of work and approved its submission to the Board.
- 2.5 The Committee thanked Madeleine Sumption for her work on the review.

### *Third Thematic Review: Terms of Reference*

- 2.5 The Committee discussed the terms of reference for the third thematic review, which was originally going to cover portrayal and identity, and the proposed approach to narrowing that scope as requested by the Board at its January meeting.
- 2.6 The Committee agreed to focus the scope of the review on the representation of communities in the UK, particularly in non-News content.
- 2.7 The Committee agreed that the joint authors should be Chris Banatvala and Anne Morrison.
- 2.8 A paper recommending the revised approach would go forward to the March Board meeting for approval.

### **3. Revision of the Editorial Guidelines**

- 3.1 The Committee considered a paper which provided a summary of the main changes to the draft Editorial Guidelines and a full annotated text.
- 3.2 The Committee noted the changes and would feed back any thoughts on the draft to David Jordan and the Editorial Policy team.
- 3.3 The Committee noted that the timing of publication of the revised Editorial Guidelines would be dependent on the timing of a General Election.

### **4. Election Guidelines**

#### *General Election Guidelines*

- 4.1 The Committee approved the draft General Election Guidelines and delegated final sign-off to the Chair, should an election be called at short notice.

#### *Local Election Guidelines*

- 4.2 The Committee approved the draft Election Guidelines for the Local Government, London Authority (including London Mayor) Elections and Police and Crime Commissioner elections which would be held on 2 May 2024.

### *Party Election Broadcasts*

- 4.3 The Committee considered a paper setting out the criteria for the Greater London Authority (“GLA”) elections, which include the London Assembly election, using the Additional Member system; it also included the criteria for first past the post elections in the rest of England.
- 4.4 The Committee noted that since the last time these elections were contested, there had been a minor change to the wording of the GLA criteria (highlighted), clarifying the legal position with regard to the eligibility of independent candidates.
- 4.5 The Committee noted that the criteria had been sent to relevant political parties for comment, which would be brought to the committee (none yet received with regard to PEB criteria). And in setting the criteria and in accordance with PPERA, the BBC was also required to *“have regard, in determining its policy with respect to party political broadcasts, to any views expressed by the Electoral Commission.”* The Commission had been asked for comment and its letter of response was noted by the Committee.
- 4.6 The Committee approved the party election broadcast criteria for the 2 May elections.

## **5. Complaints**

### *Analysis of Editorial Complaints Stage 2*

- 5.1 The Committee considered a paper providing a full account of the findings of ECU and the status of Ofcom complaints during the previous period. The report set out performance against KPIs, a list of the upheld or resolved complaints, with links to the published summaries of the findings, and highlights key themes and significant not upheld cases.
- 5.2 The Committee discussed a number of recent complaints and findings regarding the use of language in the reporting of stories related to gender identity.

### *Complaints Reporting*

- 5.3 The Committee noted the Stage 1 complaints reports for January and February and the Ofcom monthly reports covering the same period.

## **6. Emerging Editorial Risks and Issues**

### *Emerging Issues*

- 6.1 The Committee discussed some of the key areas of risk in BBC coverage over the coming period and how they were being addressed.
- 6.2 The Committee discussed editorial and other risks in the international services.

### *Social Media Guidance Implementation*

- 6.2 The Committee noted an update on the implementation of the social media guidance.

### *Internal Audit: Serota Recommendations*

- 6.3 The Committee noted overview findings from Internal Audit on the implementation of recommendations from the Serota Review. The full report would return to the Committee when completed.

### *Internal Audit: Editorial Compliance, Social Media*

- 6.4 The Committee noted the internal audit report on the editorial compliance of social media use.

### *Serious Editorial Breaches*

- 6.5 The Committee noted and discussed the circumstances of two serious editorial breaches on BBC Arabic Trending and BBC North East/Cumbria, and the actions taken in response.

## **7. Senior Editorial Policy Adviser's Report**

- 7.1 The Committee noted the Senior Editorial Adviser's report and agreed that a session on the use of push notifications should take place at a future meeting.

## **8. AOB**

- 8.1 The Committee noted also noted the action plan for the implementation of the mid-term review recommendations.