

**BBC BOARD - ENGLAND COMMITTEE**

**Minutes**

**13<sup>th</sup> February 2025, 10.00-13.00**

**BBC London, Broadcasting House**

**Members:**

Robbie Gibb      Non-Executive Director (Chair)

Rhodri Talfan Davies Director, Nations

Nick Serota      Non-Executive Director

Jason Horton      Director, Local Production

**With:**

Adrian Mills      Business Operations Director, Local

Patricia Hidalgo      Director, Children's and Education

Mark Grinnell      Executive Lead, Nations (secretary)

Tim Burke      Senior News Editor, BBC Local (item 4)

Rebecca Davis      Head of Audience Research (item 5)

Robert Thompson      Senior Head of Content Production, BBC London and East (item 6)

Anjla Kumar      Senior Finance Business Partner (item 7)

**Agenda:**

- 1      Welcome and previous minutes
- 2      Director England, report
- 3      Director Nations, update
- 4      Impartiality in Local
- 5      Audiences
- 6      Local Value for All
- 7      Finance
- 8      AOB and Close

## **1. Welcome and Previous Minutes**

- 1.1 The minutes from the previous meeting (25<sup>th</sup> September 2024) were approved with no conflicts.
- 1.2 The Chair thanked Non-Executive Director, Nick Serota for his contribution to the England Committee. This would be his last England Committee during his term of office.

## **2. Director England Report**

- 2.1 The Committee heard a summary of recent editorial successes, including multiplatform news investigations into food standards and fraudulent online deliveries.
- 2.2 The Committee discussed BBC master brands for audio content, including the podcast *Salisbury Poisoning* which is part of the *Crime Next Door* brand.
- 2.3 The Committee would visit Bradford during 2025 City Of Culture celebrations.
- 2.4 BBC Local teams have been working in partnership with network programmes, including *The One Show on City of Culture* stories. Recent successes highlighted to the Committee include the series, *Voices of Bradford*. There would be a discussion about legacy from the year which would be a topic for the Committee whilst in Bradford.
- 2.5 The Director updated the Committee on the appointment of a new Senior Head of Content Production in the West Midlands.
- 2.6 The Local Savings plan for 2025/2026 is on track and expected to complete without the need for compulsory redundancies. The Director put on record his thanks to the Leadership team in England for achieving this.
- 2.7 The Director outlined the work on Culture in England. A recent tribunal case in the South West of England found in the BBC's favour.
- 2.8 The Committee heard about Staff Survey outcomes in England which are improved and track above the industry standard.
- 2.9 The Committee discussed the ongoing Culture review to which evidence had been given.

## **3. Director, Nations report**

- 3.1 The Director outlined Nations plans for renewing sports deals for audiences.
- 3.2 The Director noted the stability of Local Radio output in the most recent RAJAR survey.

- 3.3 The BBC and Ofcom are discussing regulatory change to include local hours broadcast after 7pm within the local quota. The BBC would commit to keeping 6am to 2pm Local on stations.
- 3.4 The Director outlined Nations' priorities and editorial focus which underpin the objectives for the division in the next 12 months.
- 3.5 The Committee heard about Generative AI pilots taking place on live sports commentaries and LDRS copy.

#### **4. Impartiality in Local**

- 4.1 The Chair put on record his thanks for the work undertaken by leaders in England to improve impartial news coverage.
- 4.2 An Editorial Standards group would be set up in England to take the learnings from Committee.
- 4.3 There would be Editorial Standards champions in the regions.
- 4.4 The Committee discussed the next steps for implementation of the plans set out in the paper.

#### **5. Audiences**

- 5.1 The Committee heard a summary of the latest audience figures, which is positive for BBC Local with four of the six audience metrics either at or above the targets set in the objectives.
- 5.2 Performance of on-demand audio content has been positive.
- 5.3 In the most recent quarter, RAJAR audience figures return a solid performance for Local Radio in England which is significantly up on the quarter and stable on the year.
- 5.4 The Committee would receive a report on Local Radio audiences comparing a number of variables, including new presentation line ups and shared content versus standalone.
- 5.5 The Committee looked in detail at the London and East. Audiences in London have the highest appreciation of the BBC

#### **6. Local Value for All**

- 6.1 The Committee heard an update on work underway to improve editorial performance in the East of England since the Local Value for All changes were introduced in the region.
- 6.2 The changes include a re-organisation of local story teams, new investigations teams and a new online index for Peterborough.
- 6.3 The Committee heard about work to innovate content to make it more accessible to new audiences, including streaming visualised radio output online.
- 6.4 The Committee noted the success of the LVFA implementation.
- 6.5 The BBC Board would discuss the 1830 development with new sets and audiences.

## **7. Finance**

- 7.1 The Committee heard a summary of spending, which is still on track against targets for the financial year.
- 7.2 BBC Local will achieve savings targets without compulsory redundancies.

## **8. AOB & Close**

- 8.1 There were no other matters arising.
- 8.2 The next meeting would be held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025 in BBC Leeds
- 8.3 There would be a Committee visit to Bradford to meet City of Culture stakeholders and groups.

Ends