



Meeting of the BBC England Committee

BBC Nottingham

MINUTES

9th May 2024

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

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ATTENDANCE

Members:

- Robbie Gibb (Chair), Non-Executive Director
- Nick Serota, Non-Executive Director
- Jason Horton, Director of Production, BBC Local
- Sarah Calcott, Acting Director, BBC Nations
- Samir Shah, Chairman, BBC Board

With:

- Patricia Hidalgo, Director, Childrens' and Education
- Lucy Collins, Acting Senior News Editor, West Midlands (*item 6*)
- Aftab Gulzar, Executive Editor, BBC Radio Derby and BBC Radio Stoke (*item 6*)
- Richard Crook, Private Secretary to the Chairman
- Hayley Valentine, Senior Head of Content Production, Midlands (*items 4 and 5*)
- Peter Johnston, Director of Complaints and Editorial Reviews (*item 6*)
- Rebecca Davis, Head of Audience Research (*item 7*)
- Anjla Kumar, Finance Business Partner (*item 8*)
- Mark Grinnell, Executive Lead, Nations (*secretary*)

Apologies:

- Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director, Nations
- Adrian Mills, Business Operations Director, BBC Local

ENGLAND COMMITTEE MINUTES – 9th May 2024

1. Introduction and minutes of previous England Committee

1.1 The minutes of the last Committee meeting (8th February 2024) were approved and no new conflicts were presented.

1.2 The Committee offered feedback on the draft text for the Annual Report and Accounts, namely to give more prominence to the way transformative change was achieved within BBC Local in England.

2. Director, Nations Update

2.1 The Committee heard how leaders have aligned future plans for the Nations with the Director General's recent 'BBC for the future' speech.

2.2 Full Year Performance Review (FYPR) has taken place for England, looking at audience and finance figures, business organisation and culture. The outcome from this meeting will be represented along with that of the other BBC Divisions in the Nations FYPR to be held with the BBC Executive Committee in May 2024.

2.3 The Committee discussed the importance of maintaining Local Radio service and TV programmes within any future savings plans set out in this Charter period.

2.4 There would be a conversation between Childrens' and Nations on future opportunities to work together.

2.5 The Committee discussed the BBC Staff Survey results which shows an increase in staff engagement scores since the Local Value For All changes.

2.6 The next Committee would hear a report on occupancy in newsrooms and offices post Covid.

3. Director, England report

3.1 The Chair thanked the Director for his robust and exemplary handling of recent editorial challenges within England.

3.2 The Committee heard a report on the increased consumption of online news stories since the change in resourcing in newsrooms in England.

3.3 The Committee heard how content made for linear radio programmes has been lifted onto online content to reach a wider audience.

3.4 The Midlands launched their 'local story team', which would aim to increase the volume and consumption of stories published online.

3.5 Recruitment for the remaining local story teams in England is a piece of work to be completed.

- 3.6 The Committee heard about successes in the ‘in court’ podcast series on BBC Sounds, which was commissioned within the new Audio Commissioning structure in BBC England.
- 3.7 Within England there still a small number of people ‘at risk’ of redundancy who are currently re-training within the wider organisation.
- 3.8 The Committee discussed the new BBC Investigations Unit within Local in England which has delivered stories pan nation.

4. Reviews and Impartiality

- 4.1 The Committee discussed recent examples of journalism on the *Midlands Today* Programme and how impartiality training would be implemented within the news operation in the region.
- 4.2 Impartiality training sessions and the BBC Impartiality Champions scheme, as piloted in Scotland, would be rolled out within BBC Local in England following the evaluation of the pilot scheme in the Midlands.
- 4.3 The Committee discussed the widely used BBC Audience Map and how this might be used best within the impartiality framework.
- 4.4 The Senior News Editors in England would undertake a piece of work to understand and regulate impartiality discussions when planning for the 1830 programmes.
- 4.5 The Committee discussed the recently published Migration Review and the implementation of the actions from the report in newsrooms in BBC Local in England.
- 4.6 The England leadership team would invite the report’s author to address staff.

5. Regional report

- 5.1 The Committee heard how there had been a significant restructure of leadership in the region with new Editors in post.
- 5.2 The implementation of new ways of working have given more emphasis to digital content and weekend output within the region.
- 5.3 The Committee heard that stakeholder management within the region is a significant part of the Senior Head of Content Production’s (SHCP) new role
- 5.4 The BBC’s plans to relocate to Digbeth has been widely welcomed by the local community.

5.5 The Chair congratulated the SHCP on the weekend and sport plans for the region.

6. Local Editors

- 6.1 The Committee reviewed a showreel of recent editorial content in the Midlands region, including the recent live audience debate for the West and East Midlands Mayoral elections which featured on TV, Radio and online.
- 6.2 The Nations and Local Directors would meet with News Division to discuss planning for the elections and sharing coverage.

7. Audiences

- 7.1 Performance in England has been strongest in digital platforms with positive performance from signed-in users.
- 7.2 Audience decline to linear platforms is more pronounced in the South of England although performance in that part of the country remains the strongest.
- 7.3 TV news online was on target despite linear decline.

8. Finance

- 8.1 The finance report was noted.

9. AOB and close

- 9.1 The next meeting would be in BBC Radio Lancashire in Blackburn in September 2024.
- 9.2 There were no other matters arising.