Executive Board

9 May 2011
1030 – 1430
Rm 3028, Broadcasting House, London

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Attendees

Present
Mark Thompson (Chair) Director-General
Helen Boaden Director, News
Tim Davie Director, Audio and Music (A&M)
George Entwistle Director, Vision
Zarin Patel Group Finance Director
Ralph Rivera Director, Future Media
Caroline Thomson Chief Operating Officer
Marcus Agius Senior non-executive director
Simon Burke Non-executive director
Val Gooding Non-executive director
Mike Lynch Non-executive director
Robert Webb Non-executive director

With
Mary Wilkinson Acting Head of the Director-General's Office
Lynsey Tweddel Head of the Executive Unit (secretary)
Jessica Cecil Director of Delivering Quality First project (item 3)
John Tate Director, Policy and Strategy (items 3 and 10)
Peter Horrocks Director, Global News (item 4)
Michael Hill Managing Director, UK Radioplayer Ltd (item 6)
John Smith Chief Executive, BBC Worldwide (items 7)
Anna Mallett Controller, Business Strategy (items 7)
Helen Normoyle Director of Marketing and Audiences (item 8)
Nicholas Eldred Group General Counsel (item 9)
Balbir Binning Controller, Fair Trading and BBC Compliance Officer (item 9)

Apologies
None
1 Minutes from the Executive Board meeting on 7 March 2011

1.1 The minutes from the November Board were approved and the summary for publication noted.

2 General update

2.1 The Board reviewed coverage of a number of high profile news items, noting it had already been a big year in terms of broadcasting, including stories such as the Royal Wedding, the Middle East spring, Osama Bin Laden and UK elections. The Board was reminded of the safety procedures and protocols in place for reporters operating in hostile and dangerous environments.

3 Delivering Quality First

3.1 John Tate and Jessica Cecil provided an update on the project, noting that a crucial point was approaching as the outcomes of the workstreams reached conclusion.

3.2 It was agreed that it would be useful to fast track some elements, where sensible and achievable.

3.3 The Board discussed the need for a clear communications plan, internally and externally, noting that this had already formed part of the process. A clear audience narrative and reference to the Licence Fee settlement was also important. The Board discussed achievement of the 20% target, agreeing it was essential as part of this to identify areas of reinvestment.

4 Proposal for BBC Hindi Radio

4.1 This paper set out a proposal to enhance the World Service’s current shortwave service in Hindi, and to sustain that service for two full years.

4.2 The Board agreed that the Hindi shortwave service should be sustained, at two half hour programmes per day, until the end of March 2013. It was noted that this paper would be considered by the Trust.

5 BBC Online Outage on 29 March 2011

5.1 Ralph Rivera updated the Board on the outage, explaining the BBC’s technology infrastructure.

6 Radio Player live demo

6.1 Michael Hill (Managing Director of Radioplayer) provided a live demonstration of the player and also explained the background and rationale behind its inception. It had received good feedback from the industry.
6.2 The growing importance of meta data was acknowledged with respect to determining search results – it was noted that it may be necessary to implement some standards and protocols in this area. Commercial stations welcomed the potential for revenue created by space in the pop up box.

6.3 The Radioplayer was currently only available to Ofcom regulated stations although pressure to use the tool was being received from non-regulated stations. An open source tool had been developed to help those stations with little resources design their own pop up box.

7 Commercial update

7.1 John Smith provided an update on commercial matters.

8 Director updates

a) Audiences and all services

8.1 Executive Board discussed the Quarterly Performance Report and the audience update which featured Future Media this month.

b) Regulatory and industry

8.2 Caroline Thomson provided an update on regulatory and industry matters.

c) Finance

8.3 Zarin Patel provided an update on finance matters.

8.4 The Board noted the Finance Report and the update on the Continuous Improvement Programme.

d) News

8.5 The Board noted the news update provided by Helen Boaden.

Papers for approval

9 Quarterly Compliance Report

9.1 This paper provided the Compliance Report for the fourth quarter of 2010/11 and the annual review for 2010/11.

9.2 The Board reviewed the quarterly report, including the annual analysis of compliance. It was noted that internal audit had recently examined the BBC’s compliance function and reported that it had added significant value to the business.

10 Mobile Apps Review of Competitive Impact

10.1 This paper explained that when the BBC Trust approved the BBC’s mobile applications (apps) proposal in July 2010, it stated that it expected the BBC to undertake a review six months after launch in order to ensure ongoing compliance with regulatory requirements.
The Trust stated that in circumstances where the BBC’s apps have an unanticipated impact on the market, it would remain open to the Trust to call the proposals back in for further consideration or to consider any Fair Trading complaints on appeal. This paper provided a summary of the results of the review.

10.2 The Board noted the paper and approved it for onward progression to the Trust. It was recognised that there was a need to be able to move quickly in this area.

11 Global News Annual Performance Review

11.1 This paper summarised BBC Global News’ 2010-2011 annual performance.

11.2 The Board noted the review and approved it for onward progression to the Trust.

12 Summary Work Plan

12.1 This paper explained that the BBC Trust’s final conclusions on Putting Quality First required the BBC Executive to publish an ‘annual business plan that will set out for each BBC service not just the immediate remit and vision but also any major new proposals and investments, stretching more than one year ahead where possible and taking a more concise form than current Statements of Programme Policy.’ The Trust also asked the Executive to publish an annual budget alongside the business plan. This paper presented the first such plan for approval. It was noted that the budget section was being amended and the version in the paper therefore remained draft.

12.2 The Summary Workplan was approved for publication online during May.

13 Executive Annual Training Report

13.1 This paper explained that under the BBC Agreement with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Executive Board was required to meet specific obligations for the training and development of BBC staff and the wider industry. The paper demonstrated how these obligations had been met for the 2010/11 financial year.

13.2 The Board approved the report for onward progression to the Trust. The Board highlighted in particular how successful the team had been at transforming the Academy into a strategic tool for the organisation.

14 Annual Strategic Contracts

14.1 This paper provided a report on the performance of the BBC’s portfolio of strategic contracts. It was the second annual report and met a principal recommendation of the National Audit Office review of the BBC’s major contracts, published on 18 March 2009. The report provided an over-arching view of savings, service performance and notable activity across the portfolio over the period. It also gave a critical analysis of where improvement or further action may be required to ensure continued and ongoing value was being delivered from the portfolio.
14.2 The Board noted the update on the strategic contract portfolio.

15 Summary of updates to the Finance Committee Standing Orders

15.1 This paper outlined changes that had been made to the Standing Orders of the Finance Committee and the BBC Investment Policy and Guidelines.

15.2 The Board approved the changes to the Finance Committee Standing Orders and BBC Investment Policy and Guidelines.

Papers for noting

16 Summary of papers and actions from Finance Committee

16.1 The Board noted the summary of discussions and actions at the Finance Committee meetings held on 8 and 22 February and 8 March 2011.