

A review to establish the facts around the decision by the BBC to appoint Martin Bashir as Religious Affairs Correspondent in September 2016 and the subsequent re-grading of the role to Religion Editor in 2018

## **Introduction**

1. On 21 May 2021, The Right Honourable Lord Dyson published his report into the circumstances surrounding the interview with Diana, Princess of Wales, which aired on *Panorama* on 20 November 1995 (“**Dyson Report**”). Lord Dyson found that Martin Bashir had behaved in a “*reprehensible*” manner which was in serious breach of the BBC’s editorial standards. He concluded that Martin Bashir had deceived Earl Spencer into introducing him to Diana, Princess of Wales, by showing him fake bank statements on two separate occasions, and that he had fed Diana, Princess of Wales with false information “*to play on her fears in order to arouse her interest in him*”. Lord Dyson also criticised the BBC for (among other things) failing to adequately investigate Martin Bashir’s conduct.
2. The BBC has accepted Lord Dyson’s findings in full. In light of the findings in the Dyson Report, and in particular the criticisms made about Martin Bashir’s integrity, the BBC has faced questions about how Martin Bashir came to be re-employed by the BBC in 2016 as Religious Affairs Correspondent. In the interests of transparency and as part of the BBC’s public commitment to getting to the truth, I was asked by the Director-General to undertake a review into the facts surrounding the decision by the BBC to appoint Martin Bashir in 2016 as Religious Affairs Correspondent and the decision to re-grade his role to Religion Editor in 2018.
3. My Terms of Reference were in the following terms: “*A review to establish the facts around the decision by the BBC to appoint Martin Bashir as Religious Affairs Correspondent in September 2016 and the subsequent re-grading of the role to Religion Editor in 2018*”.
4. In order to address the Terms of Reference, I consider it necessary to address the following three questions:

- (a) Was the recruitment process intended to find the right person for the role as opposed to being pre-determined?
  - (b) What did those who appointed Martin Bashir know about: (i) his previous misconduct in relation to the 1995 *Panorama*; and (ii) his other public controversies?
  - (c) In what circumstances was Martin Bashir's role re-graded in 2018?
5. This review has been undertaken in 14 working days. In that time, I have conducted a proportionate search for documentation and have reviewed the same. I have interviewed 15 key individuals involved in the 2016 and 2018 decisions. I gave all those whom I interviewed a bundle of relevant documents. The interviews were all conducted by me online. I gave any individual whom I was minded to criticise notice of that potential criticism, and an opportunity to respond. I took those responses into account in finalising this report. I am grateful to all of those who have cooperated and assisted with their time.

### **Key factual context**

6. My key factual findings are set out below in response to the three questions identified at §4 above. It is, however, helpful to provide a high-level summary of the key factual context.
7. On 14 June 2016, it was announced that the BBC's then Religious Affairs Correspondent Caroline Wyatt was stepping down with immediate effect due to ill health. This was reported on by the press at the time, and it was announced internally that the BBC would be advertising for a new Religious Affairs Correspondent.
8. On 13 July 2016, the job for Religious Affairs Correspondent was advertised internally with a closing date of 25 July 2016. This was standard process at the time. The job description made it clear that what was being sought was an experienced broadcast journalist who would be able to provide informed and engaging analysis of religious affairs on high-profile output. The accompanying Job Specification provided the following detail about the role:

*“The role of the Religious Affairs Correspondent is a high-profile position, providing expert analysis and insight on the major themes and issues affecting different faiths in the UK and around the world. The successful candidate will be expected to deliver original stories, spot emerging trends and explain them to all audiences with authority and sensitivity. You’ll report on the flagship BBC News television and radio bulletins, in both live and recorded formats, as well as delivering journalism in modern and innovative ways — particularly via short form video and social media. It is expected that the successful candidate will demonstrate a good understanding of different faiths and their impact on society as a whole.”*

9. There were originally seven internal applications. An eighth internal candidate (Candidate X) was identified and invited to apply. On 28 July 2016, three applicants were shortlisted.
10. On or around 29 July 2016, Richard Burgess (BBC UK News Editor, 2016 – present) submitted a case to the Senior Management Remuneration Committee (“**SMRC**”) to be able to pay a higher salary for the role of Religious Affairs Correspondent based on the following justification:

*“We are carrying out an internal recruitment process to appoint Caroline Wyatt’s successor as Religious Affairs Correspondent. Although the internal recruitment process has not yet concluded, the internal response has been disappointing and it is looking quite likely that it will not be possible to make an internal appointment... In view of the possibility of an external appointment, and the specialist nature and profile of this particular brief, we are therefore setting the anticipated salary at a higher level to cover this eventuality and ensure that that [sic] we can attract the best external candidates...”*

11. Between 10 and 17 August 2016, the three shortlisted internal applicants were interviewed by an interview panel comprising Richard Burgess, Liz Shaw (BBC Editor UK Affairs, 2014 – present) and Toby Castle (BBC Deputy News Editor, 2014 – present). Candidate X received the highest score through the interview process. However, the interview panel was unanimous in their view that none of the

candidates interviewed were suitable for the role.

12. On 19 August 2016, the BBC notified the trade unions of its intention to advertise the role externally. On 30 August 2016, an external advertisement was posted to the BBC recruitment website with a closing date of 5 September 2016. It was expressed in the same terms as the internal advertisement.
13. By 26 August 2016 (i.e. before the external advertisement was posted), James Harding (BBC Director of News, 2013-2018), who was actively involved in the recruitment process, had decided that he wanted to interview two candidates at the second stage: internal (Candidate X) and one external (Martin Bashir). Both Candidate X and Martin Bashir were invited for interview as a result.
14. There were 18 applications received following the external advertisement. Between 7 and 12 September 2016, Liz Shaw and Richard Burgess shortlisted two candidates: Martin Bashir and a further internal candidate (Candidate Z). Candidate Z subsequently withdrew prior to interview following a conversation with the incumbent.
15. The interviews took place on 12 September 2016 (Martin Bashir) and 15 September 2016 (Candidate X). The interview panel comprised James Harding, Jonathan Munro (BBC Head of Newsgathering, 2014 –2021, now BBC Deputy Director of News) and Joanna Carr (BBC Head of Current Affairs, 2016-2021).
16. The interview panel was unanimous in selecting Martin Bashir as the better candidate. The decision to appoint Martin Bashir was ultimately taken by James Harding, as BBC Director of News. On 23 September 2016, Martin Bashir was offered the role. The appointment was announced on 26 September 2016.
17. In 2017, the BBC undertook a year-long review of its output that featured religious or ethical topics and areas. The aim of that review was to assess the BBC's overall strategy and revitalise its offering in the areas of Religion and Ethics. Among other things, the review found that stakeholders questioned the BBC's commitment in this area, noting that there was no Religion Editor in BBC News while there were On-Air

Editors in other key genres. In response to this feedback, the BBC committed to creating a global team of reporters, with specific religious expertise, including a Religion Editor. The BBC published a Report outlining the findings of the Review on 20 December 2017. The report noted that the role of Religious Affairs Correspondent would be upgraded to editorship level, with the new title of Religion Editor.

**Question 1: Was the recruitment process intended to find the right person for the role as opposed to being pre-determined?**

18. I am satisfied that the recruitment process was targeted at finding the right person for the role. However, as set out at §27 below I have concerns about how fair and transparent the process was.
19. It is clear to me that James Harding was concerned to ensure that religious affairs were given greater prominence in the BBC's news coverage, and, with that purpose in mind, he considered that the ideal replacement candidate would be an established broadcaster, who would be able to report with authority on the BBC's flagship network news output (in particular, the 6 and 10 O'clock News).
20. As noted above, the role of Religious Affairs Correspondent was first advertised internally. This was standard practice at the time. Having shortlisted and interviewed three candidates, the interview panel reached the unanimous conclusion that none of the internal candidates were suitable. I am satisfied that the panel reached that conclusion because they did not consider that the knowledge and experience of the candidates matched the requirements of the role.
21. Following the internal recruitment process, the position was advertised externally. There were 18 applicants, and Liz Shaw and Richard Burgess shortlisted two candidates for interview: Martin Bashir and an internal candidate (Candidate Z). I note here that Richard Burgess revised the score that Liz Shaw had originally given Martin Bashir by increasing his score against two criteria. This was not usual practice and I heard evidence that it made at least one individual "*slightly uncomfortable*" and made them doubt whether "*things were going in the sort of usual BBC recruitment*

way". I accept those concerns as credible. On balance, however, I accept Richard Burgess' explanation that he revised the scores based solely on his view of Martin Bashir's application and CV, and that *"far from being a kind of casual disregard for the process, it was the opposite. I could have just waved through Liz's scores, he would have been short-listed but I didn't"*. In any event, Martin Bashir was shortlisted using either score.

22. In the end, Candidate Z withdrew prior to the interview following a conversation with the incumbent. However, as noted above, James Harding had by this time decided that he wanted to interview Candidate X, who was the highest scoring individual from the internal recruitment round, and Martin Bashir. The two interviews were conducted by James Harding, Jonathan Munro and Joanna Carr. We have not been able to locate the interview notes for the two interviews. Joanna Carr explained to me that while she cannot be *"100 per cent"* certain, she thinks that interview grids were used. She explained: *"it was a formal, competency-based board, in the sense we had an agreed set of questions that we put to two candidates. We took notes. We discussed and compared performances ... there was a panel. So to that extent I think it was normal"*.
23. The interview panel was unanimous in reaching the conclusion that Martin Bashir was the better candidate. Panellists said they recognised that Martin Bashir was a high-profile broadcaster and had a deep grasp of theology, though Jonathan Munro did consider that his interview was confused in parts (while excellent in others).
24. This is not to say that those involved in the recruitment process thought that Martin Bashir was a perfect candidate. Prior to offering Martin Bashir the role on 23 September 2016, there were internal discussions about whether he should be placed on a fixed-term contract. Individuals involved explained to me that they had qualms about the potential mismatch between Martin Bashir's high-profile *"prime time"* experience and the duties and requirements of the reporting role. In particular, there were concerns about whether Martin Bashir would be sufficiently committed and focused.

25. James Harding has accepted that he was ultimately responsible for Martin Bashir's appointment. In his interview with me he explained: "*we hired Martin Bashir because we thought here was someone who had a deep knowledge of religion, a care about faith, he had covered these stories in the United States where there was a real interest in – a particular interest in, obviously, in arguments about religion and issues of belief and we thought here is someone who is going to vividly thoughtfully bring these stories on air*".
26. I am satisfied that Martin Bashir was appointed as Religious Affairs Correspondent because his knowledge and experience were considered to be the best match to the requirements for the role.
27. Notwithstanding this conclusion, I do have concerns about how fair and transparent the process was. It appears to me that Martin Bashir was viewed as the leading candidate for the appointment from an early stage. Identifying a strong candidate is not itself flawed but, on this occasion, led to other candidates or potential candidates being disadvantaged. Specifically, I have in mind the following:
- (a) On 8 August 2016, Martin Bashir met James Harding and Richard Burgess for coffee to discuss the role. He had earlier met with Jonathan Munro for coffee on 23 June 2016. Although coffee meetings are frequently used to discuss the scope of a role and the appointment process, they should not result in an unfair advantage to any individual candidate. By 26 August 2016, before the advertisement for external interviews had been published, and before Martin Bashir had submitted any application, James Harding had already decided that he wanted to interview Martin Bashir.
- (b) By 26 August 2016, James Harding had also decided to put Candidate X (who had been unsuccessful in the first-round interview) through to the second-round interview. Jonathan Munro said to Richard Burgess that Candidate X should be told that they "*shouldn't expect to get it, but it's a good chance to get some time with [James Harding]*". Richard Burgess subsequently told Candidate X that there was an external candidate who was "*the favourite*". Whilst Jonathan Munro told me that he wanted to convey the strength of the field, I

was told by Candidate X that this led to a perception at the time that it was a “*done deal*” from the outset. This understandably undermined Candidate X’s confidence in the process. I address these concerns further at §29 below.

- (c) Jonathan Munro explained to me that he thought that the reason that James Harding only wanted to interview these two candidates was that James Harding believed a candidate who was appointable would be found from Candidate X and Martin Bashir, and so he would not see anyone else at this stage. James Harding told me that he would generally try to limit the number of candidates in the second round given the time pressure of running BBC News; he says that he added Candidate X to ensure competition.
  - (d) On or around 22 July 2016, Jonathan Munro and James Harding met with another external broadcast journalist for coffee to discuss, among other things, the Religious Affairs Correspondent role (Candidate Y). This was expressed internally to be on the same basis as Martin Bashir. Candidate Y subsequently expressed interest in the role and was given positive feedback. However, in contrast to Martin Bashir, no-one notified Candidate Y of the external advertisement until after the closing date for applications. On 9 September 2016, after chasing up the role, Candidate Y was asked if they wanted to still be considered for the role and told that an application was not necessary. Candidate Y confirmed they would still be interested. However, no-one responded to Candidate Y until 26 September 2016, shortly prior to the announcement of Martin Bashir’s appointment.
28. Despite these shortcomings, I am however satisfied that Martin Bashir was never guaranteed the role, nor considered unassailable by those involved in the recruitment process, including James Harding. Martin Bashir was told on multiple occasions that the BBC would need to complete its internal process before looking externally. In communications, Martin Bashir himself described it as “*a possibility (without promise)*” that he might join the BBC News team, and there is contemporaneous evidence that he was anxiously awaiting the outcome of the BBC’s decision on the role as late as 22 September 2016, the day before he was appointed.

It is also clear that those involved in the recruitment process continued to consider additional candidates throughout, including actively seeking candidates out. In particular, there is contemporaneous evidence that demonstrates that in late September, following Martin Bashir's interview, a further potential internal candidate was approached to see if they might consider the role.

29. As regards Candidate X, I accept and understand Candidate X's evidence that there was a perception that it was a "*done deal*". It is very clear that Martin Bashir was the favourite. However, on balance, I do not consider that James Harding selected Candidate X for the second round of interviews simply to give the perception of a competitive process. James Harding told me he was of the view that Candidate X was "*seriously good*". There were significant differences in the experience and profile of Martin Bashir and Candidate X. For these reasons, in my view, at the time it was improbable, but not impossible, that Candidate X would be the successful candidate.
30. There has been speculation in the media about Tony Hall's involvement in this process. James Harding explained to me that he would keep Tony Hall informed of all senior on-air appointments and all significant outside hires, though he does not remember any specific conversation with Tony Hall about this appointment. James Harding said to me in interview: "*There was no nod. There was no wink. BBC News hired him*". Tony Hall similarly explained that it was very possible that James Harding mentioned the appointment to him, but said that the organisation was run on delegated authority and he trusted James Harding to make the right decisions within News. Tony Hall said that he "*played no part in selecting, choosing, nurturing, finding the religious affairs correspondent*". I am satisfied that although Tony Hall knew that the role was being recruited, he was not involved in the selection of Martin Bashir as the Religious Affairs Correspondent. Some individuals appear to have been of the view that the Director General had sanctioned the appointment. I have seen no evidence to support the idea that there was sign off of Martin Bashir by Tony Hall prior to the appointment. However, I consider that he would have at least known of the decision to appoint Martin Bashir.
31. There has also been speculation in the media that Martin Bashir was re-hired to

contain and/or cover up the events surrounding the 1995 *Panorama* programme. I have found no evidence to support that theory. In my view, it is entirely unfounded. I have found no connection between what happened in 1995/96 and the decision to re-appoint Martin Bashir. Martin Bashir was recruited because he was considered by the final interview panel to be the best candidate for the role. Although the process by which this was done had its shortcomings, I am confident that the recruitment process was targeted at finding the right person for the role.

**Question 2: What did those who appointed Martin Bashir know about: (i) his previous misconduct in relation to the 1995 *Panorama*; and (ii) his other public controversies?**

32. At the outset, it is important to record that the full extent of Martin Bashir's conduct in respect of how he obtained the interview with Diana, Princess of Wales was not known until the Dyson Report was published on 21 May 2021. The BBC has accepted Lord Dyson's findings in full. The 1996 investigation into these events, which was found by Lord Dyson to be "*woefully ineffective*", did not reach the same findings as Lord Dyson. Rather, it concluded that Martin Bashir was "*an honest and honourable man*" and "*contrite*". In 2016, the relevant decision makers at the BBC were not aware of many of the matters found by Lord Dyson.
33. This context is important because in considering the actions of the individuals involved in the recruitment of Martin Bashir, they can only properly be judged against their relevant knowledge as it was in 2016 and not as it stands now in 2021. I have no doubt (and I was told so by some of the participants during interview) that if any of the individuals involved in the appointment of Martin Bashir in 2016 had been aware of what is now publicly known as a result of the Dyson Report, Martin Bashir would have never been reappointed to the BBC.
34. In addition to the 1995 *Panorama* programme, I am aware that Martin Bashir was involved in two other controversies, which were publicly reported and led to him leaving his employment.:
  - (a) In 2008, he was suspended by ABC for comments described as "*crude and sexist*" during a dinner speech at the Asian American Journalists Association

Convention in Chicago. He subsequently apologised for those comments.

- (b) In 2013, he resigned from MSNBC after making derogatory remarks about American politician, Sarah Palin, after she compared the federal debt to slavery. He subsequently apologised for those comments.

35. As regards the events surrounding the 1995 *Panorama* programme, I have focused on the knowledge of the three individuals who interviewed Martin Bashir:

- (a) Based on the documents that I reviewed and the interviews that I conducted, it is clear that Jonathan Munro had some recollection from his time at ITN about the controversy surrounding the 1995 *Panorama* programme. During the recruitment process, he took steps to find out more about it, including by speaking to Steve Hewlett (*Panorama* Editor, 1995-1997). As part of that research, Jonathan Munro was told that Martin Bashir had faked documents, but that Diana, Princess of Wales, had provided a handwritten letter to say that she had not been misled, and that because of this, Tony Hall had not investigated further. In these circumstances, Jonathan Munro considered that these allegations were “*spent*”. Jonathan Munro was told by Steve Hewlett that he regarded the episode as a “*vague lingering doubt*”. In Steve Hewlett’s view, it was more a case of a keen naïve reporter overstepping the mark rather than something “*more worrying*”. Steve Hewlett suggested that they speak to Tony Hall in case he saw problems. Jonathan Munro considered that the appropriate course was to raise these issues with James Harding, which is what he did.
- (b) James Harding could not recall having any prior knowledge of the events surrounding the 1995 *Panorama* programme, although it is clear from the contemporaneous documents that this was brought to his attention by Jonathan Munro. It does not appear that James Harding made efforts independent of what he described to me as Jonathan Munro’s “*concerted efforts*” to conduct due diligence on Martin Bashir, and he said that he could not recall having had any specific discussions with Tony Hall about the events surrounding the 1995 *Panorama* programme.

- (c) Joanna Carr had no recollection of the events surrounding the 1995 *Panorama* programme. I have seen nothing to contradict that account.
36. As regards the other publicly reported controversies described at §34 above:
- (a) Jonathan Munro told me that he was aware of the Asian American Journalists Association Convention and the Sarah Palin incidents. He recalls discussing both of these incidents with James Harding. Jonathan Munro's recollection was that he considered that the Asian American Journalists Association Convention incident was not on air, and that it was a "*misjudged joke*". I disagree with that characterisation. Jonathan Munro further recalls that he and James Harding considered that the Sarah Palin incident was in a different category because it was on air, but they felt that it could be disregarded on the basis that Martin Bashir was not being engaged to cover US politics or global diplomacy.
- (b) James Harding told me that he could not recollect the Asian American Journalists Association Convention. He said he knew there was controversy "*around something said around Sarah Palin*" but could not recall more. On balance, I accept Jonathan Munro's account that he did discuss both incidents with James Harding on the basis that he was able to provide a relatively detailed account of this discussion.
- (c) Joanna Carr indicated that she was not aware of any of these incidents. She told me that she was "*pretty sure*" that she knew that Martin Bashir had resigned from MSNBC but was not aware of the reasons why. I have seen nothing to contradict that account.
37. It is clear that some background research was done into Martin Bashir, in particular by Jonathan Munro. As regards the 1995 *Panorama* programme, I consider that the view expressed by Jonathan Munro (and which appears to have been accepted by James Harding) was understandable because it was consistent with the BBC's corporate knowledge at that time (see §32 above). Of course, in light of the Dyson Report that assessment was wrong but as set out at §33 above I can only assess the actions of individuals and the judgments made with their knowledge at the time. It

would not have been reasonable to expect Jonathan Munro or James Harding to reinvestigate the incidents surrounding the 1995 *Panorama* programme at that stage. Notwithstanding that, I think it would have been appropriate for James Harding to have a discussion with Tony Hall about this matter, to ensure that he was properly informed.

38. As regards the other publicly reported controversies, I consider that the matters were not given sufficient regard by James Harding. This is most clearly illustrated by the fact that James Harding had no recollection at all of the Asian American Journalists Association Convention incident, and little recollection of the Sarah Palin incident. Although it is not possible to say whether or not consideration of these matters would have changed the recruitment outcome, I consider that James Harding, as the individual ultimately responsible for the appointment, should have given proper consideration to these matters prior to appointing Martin Bashir. In my view, this was not done.
39. There are other controversies regarding Martin Bashir's work in the public domain which were not considered by those appointing him. James Harding told me that he would not conduct a media sweep for any candidate he was meeting as part of an interview process. There was and is no requirement in BBC recruitment policy nor any consensus around the appropriateness of conducting adverse media screening. Accordingly, I make no finding in respect of any failure to do so.
40. A question has been raised as to whether the BBC took up references for Martin Bashir. I have confirmed that they took up references from ABC and MSNBC. Neither referred to the publicly reported controversies or that there was any disciplinary process involved in his departure from the companies.

**Question 3: In what circumstances was Martin Bashir's role re-graded in 2018?**

41. As noted above, in 2017, the BBC undertook a year-long review of its output that featured religious or ethical topics and areas. Martin Bashir was one of the nine members on the project team for the review. Among other things, the review found that stakeholders questioned the BBC's commitment in this area, noting that there

was no Religion Editor in BBC News while there were On-Air Editors in other key genres. In response to this feedback, the BBC decided to (among other things) create a global team of reporters, with specific religious expertise, led by a Religious Affairs Editor. This was signed off by the Executive Committee on 10 October 2017.

42. By 4 December 2017, James Harding had confirmed Martin Bashir's role as Religious Affairs Correspondent would be upgraded into the Religion Editor role. James Harding told me he did so on the basis of an understanding that this had already been approved by the Executive Committee. On 8 December 2017, Richard Burgess commenced the process of seeking approval for the change in grade and salary. The proposal and justification in support of the case read as follows:

*“The BBC’s Religion and Ethics Review, commissioned by Director-General Tony Hall, has recommended the appointment of an on-air Religion Editor. The role will sit within a new Religious Affairs Unit, with specialist correspondents located in Delhi, Lagos and Cairo. The appointment of an on-air Editor is intended to increase the profile of religious stories on key BBC News output, to broaden the editorial scope of coverage and to offer a deeper understanding of long-running issues and global events. We propose to move the current Religious Affairs correspondent, Martin Bashir, who is highly regarded and knowledgeable in this field, to the on-air Editor role.”*

43. The BBC published a report outlining the findings of the review on 20 December 2017. The report noted that the role of Religious Affairs Correspondent would be upgraded to editorship level, with the new title of Religion Editor. On 14 February 2018, the SMRC provided back-dated approval of Martin Bashir's new role with effect from 20 December 2017 as on-air Editor for a proposed salary increase of 10.4%.
44. I consider that there were good reasons at the time to: (i) appoint a Religion Editor; and (ii) to re-grade Martin Bashir into that role. It appears that the formalities of the regrading process were not followed. However, having consulted with BBC Human Resources, I am comfortable that the same result would have been reached if the

formalities had been observed. That process would have proposed the closure of the Religious Affairs Correspondent role and Martin Bashir, having been at risk of redundancy, considered as a priority candidate for redeployment into the new Religion Editor role.

45. I have seen no evidence that the issues of the 1995 *Panorama* or the other controversies relating to Martin Bashir that were in the public domain were considered as part of the re-grading decision. However, I can see no reason why any of these issues would have been revisited at that time, given that Martin Bashir was a current employee at the time that the re-grading decision was taken, and nothing had occurred to prompt consideration of these issues.
46. I note that Martin Bashir was involved in the review that recommended the creation of a Religion Editor in BBC News. What I have established in the time available is that Martin Bashir had no involvement in the decision to appoint him to that role. Nevertheless, I consider that there should have been greater awareness of the need for transparency in relation to Martin Bashir's involvement in the review, including in the final report published on 20 December 2017, and the potential for conflicts of interest should have been considered and transparently addressed as part of the decision-making.

### **Conclusion**

47. In my view, the recruitment process for the Religious Affairs Correspondent was targeted at finding the right person for the role. Although there were some shortcomings in the process by which he was re-employed, I am satisfied that that Martin Bashir was ultimately appointed because his knowledge and experience were considered to be the best match to the requirements for the role at that time. I have found no evidence that Martin Bashir was re-hired to contain and/or cover up the events surrounding the 1995 *Panorama* programme. In my view, that theory is entirely unfounded.
48. As regards the due diligence conducted on Martin Bashir, the actions of the individuals involved in the recruitment and re-grading of Martin Bashir can only

properly be judged against the state of the BBC's corporate understanding as it was in 2016 and not as it stands now in 2021. None of the individuals involved in the recruitment of Martin Bashir had knowledge of all of the matters contained in the Dyson Report. I have no doubt that if any of the individuals involved in the appointment of Martin Bashir in 2016 had been aware of what is now publicly known as a result of the Dyson Report, Martin Bashir would have never been reappointed to the BBC.