

REGIONAL AUDIENCE COUNCIL for BBC EAST MIDLANDS
Venue: BBC Broadcasting House, London Road, Nottingham

Wednesday 25 February 2009, 6pm

Present:

Phillippa M Denton – Chair	(PMD)	Katharine Stewart	(KST)
Tracey Davenport – Deputy Chair	(TD)	Nigel Hallam	(NH)
Paul Dickerson	(PD)	Glennis Taylor	(GT)
Jonathan English	(JE)	Lillian Nevins	(LN)
Pip Ostell	(PO)	Del Shorley	(DS)

Observers:

Bindu Modi	(BM)	Barry Morris	(BMO)
Dorothy Wright	(DW)	Belinda Basson	(BB)
Hannah Rogers-Gee	(HRG)	Brian Chance	(BC)

Aziz Rashid - HRLP	(AR)
Kate Squire – Managing Editor Radio Leicester	(KSQ)
Carol Webster – Public Accountability Manager	(CW)
Rachel Gunn – Accountability Assistant	(RG)

Apologies:

Sarah McCann – this would have been Sarah’s last meeting. It was agreed that she should be invited to attend the next meeting for members to pass on their thanks and best wishes.

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone, including the nominated members who were attending as observers, and invited all attendees to introduce themselves.

The Chair acknowledged that this would be the last meeting attended by AR who was taking up the post of Head of Region in the North West. The council recorded its thanks to AR for his input, congratulated him on his new appointment and wished him luck for the future. Kate Squire (KSQ) would be acting HRLP until the post was filled. Members welcomed her to the meeting.

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The only outstanding matter was the RAJAR figures for “The Beat “, which had been held over from the previous meeting. The figures were circulated to members and AR explained that RAJAR constituted monthly reports from a sample listener base covering all age groups and minority groups. The figures given represented listeners to The Beat over a period of one month and showed how many people in the different age brackets listen.

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

3. Programme & service review

- Local Radio – highlights from local radio link person

The local radio link members were asked for any additions to their submitted reports.

BBC Radio Derby: NH added to his report emphasising the appointment of Nigel Clough as manager of Derby County, the 25th anniversary of the miners' strike, and the final Money Mountain distribution.

BBC Radio Nottingham: JE had been away for long spells during the period between meetings and had not able to listen very often. He had listened online to catch up, and expressed disappointment at the low bit rate, when downloading. AR reported that all websites are in the process of being upgraded and hoped that this would resolve the problem.

KST asked that the RAC's congratulations be sent to John Holmes for his 40th anniversary at the station.

Radio Leicester: DS noted the balanced story of the anniversary of the miners' strike and the coverage of the recent snowy weather which had been well done and had kept the public informed. He also highlighted the foundation stone ceremony for the extension to the Rainbows Children's Hospice in Loughborough following the Ruby Rainbow Appeal.

AR expressed his pride in the staff team, who had come to work even when other services were shut down during the bad weather. For some staff this had been their first experience of broadcasting in a crisis. He informed the group that a conference between the relevant local authorities and the BBC was planned, to look at systems and processes for future emergencies. During the period there had been extra listeners to the local radio stations and significantly increased traffic to the websites. It was hoped that some of these would become part of the regular audience.

The RAC recorded their appreciation to the staff teams.

DEC/Gaza appeal: PMD outlined the background to members being asked to contribute to the debate and thanked them for their contribution to this which had been fed through to Alison Hastings.

- **Local Radio Overview (for inclusion in Annual Report)**

Members had been asked to listen to their local radio stations in order to contribute to this agenda item.

Generally members felt that local radio met the service licence remit, and that each station had a distinct character. Members who travel across the country noted this

particularly. One member commented that the service licence does not mention an age group, which has been an issue for some listeners.

However there were some criticisms of local radio, ranging over the personalities of the presenters, the degree of entertainment and easy listening offered and the number of times the music is repeated. One member felt that the music played reflected the personality of the presenter.

Members felt that local radio's key strengths lay in helping to hold decision makers to account and in putting national stories into a local context. It was agreed that on the whole they were successful in doing this. They could further reflect community concerns by promoting certain health campaigns and getting particular messages across.

Sports coverage was another important area which drew in a wider audience than the target group and all three local stations excelled in this regard.

4. DRAFT Annual Report:

Copies of the Chair's introduction to the Annual Report were circulated to members who were asked to forward any comments to CW by 27 February.

Action: All members

5. Reports

- **Audience Council England (draft Minutes)**

PMD explained that the February ACE meeting had been replaced at short notice by a conference call due to the inclement weather.

TD asked if the volunteers' letter noted in the minutes could be made available to all council members to give to employers explaining the role and time commitment.

Action: CW to talk to LH

Members asked for more information on the proposed partnerships with ITV: PMD to follow up and feed back to members.

Action: PMD

Members had received the letter from Alison Hastings regarding the accountability review and restructure. PMD invited members' comments. One member felt that there had not been enough time to discuss this issue and he remained concerned about the outcome.

- **Head of Region's report**

AR highlighted from his report the bad weather coverage and the anniversary of the miners' strike which had featured extensively on the *Politics Show*, *Inside Out*, local radio stations and the websites and which had been a huge story for the area.

In summarising his three years as HRLP, he commented that he had had a fantastic time in the East Midlands. During this period, the staff had won lots of industry awards and the TV programmes are now performing well above average. He commended the teams saying that the great thing about them is that they are multi

skilled and 'up for it'. He also said he had learned a lot from the radio editors and wished them all the best of luck.

Several members commented that from the audience perspective, the regional output now has a most welcome freshness and vigour and they hoped that this would continue under the leadership of his successor.

6. Trust business & feedback

ACE Submission to BBC Local PVT (for information)

Impartiality Review (for information) PMD explained that this summary was only a small excerpt from the complete report and that ACE had asked for a larger document to reflect the work that went into this.

Summary Work Plan BBC Trust (for information): PMD noted that the service licence for Radio 2 would be reviewed during the summer and said she would like to allocate listening responsibilities to ensure as wide a coverage as possible. She asked for regular Radio 2 listeners to let CW know when they normally listen so that other members could be asked to monitor other times.

Action: All

7. Outreach

The next outreach event would be looking at Generally Accepted Standards (taste and decency) using Frank Skinner's *Panorama* programme as a springboard for discussion. Members were given a copy of the Huw Weldon lecture with Sue Perkins which went out on BBC Two, which would support the discussion.

The discussion would consider what members and their networks feel about such issues as:

- Language
- The Watershed
- Children watching on demand – relevance of the Watershed again
- Is the BBC pushing the boundaries

PMD asked that each member look at inviting up to four people to attend who would reflect the range and diversity of the region. There was some discussion on how the event would work and where it would be held. It was agreed that the event should take place during the week beginning May 18, and that CW would look for a venue that could accommodate up to a maximum of 50 people.

Action: CW

8. Burning issues

None

9. Any other business

GT commented that during the end credits of the programme *Who Do You Think You Are* with Zoe Wanamaker, a voice over had been inserted which spoiled the atmosphere created by the programme. It was agreed that there are occasions

when voice overs can work well, alerting people to similar programmes coming up, but can also be intrusive as on this occasion. 'Credit squeezing' at the end of programmes continues to be another issue for members. PMD asked for members to note specific programmes and dates when this occurred as this is an ongoing discussion item at ACE.

Action: All

KST asked if she could set up an email group to let people know about the RAC. PMD said that profile raising was an issue for the Trust and the four national Audience Councils had been asked to comment on this. She informed the meeting that ACE would be doing some opinion former work in the future. PD suggested that this was the time for a documentary about the councils i.e. on *Inside Out?*

TD had made a request for a piece from Radio Leicester that had not been on iPlayer. This had been refused and he asked if it was policy to deny such requests? KSQ said that unfortunately the local radio stations do not have the time or resources to produce special requests. AR and KSQ added that there had been some problems with iPlayer of late which had prevented all the usual output being available.

PO commented that a trail for a dancing programme on Red Nose Day had shown a photo of Boy George in his hey day just after he had been imprisoned. She felt that this was in bad taste.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm.

10. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 22 April 2009

Endnote

[We aim to make as much of the minutes available as possible. However, there will be times when sections of the minutes will be withheld from publication. These will be kept to a minimum and clearly marked.]

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