

Regional Audience Council for BBC East Midlands

**Venue: BBC Broadcasting House,
London Road, Nottingham**

Wednesday 18 June 2008, 6.00pm

Present:

Phillippa Denton – Chair
Nigel Hallam
Glennis Taylor
Lillian Nevins
Del Shorley
Paul Dickerson
Katharine Stewart
Samson Aye Aki

Ana McDowall – Consultant
Aziz Rashid – HRLP
Rachel Gunn – Public Accountability Assistant
Carol Webster – Public Accountability Manager

I. Welcome and introductions

Apologies: Tracey Davenport
Sarah McCann
Jonathan English
Pip Ostell

Did not attend:
Andy Zadora- Chrzastowski

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Ana McDowall from RSe Consulting Ltd. Ana was invited to explain her presence at the meeting. She gave a brief overview of the accountability review and her role and explained that she would be observing the first part of the meeting. Prior to the meeting Ana had met with public accountability manager and assistant, the Head of Region, the RAC Chair and two members. Members had been informed of the review at the meeting in April.

The Chair informed members that Steve Kemp had tendered his resignation due to pressures of work. The RAC now has three vacancies to fill.

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

Matters arising:

The Poles are Coming: At the last meeting CW was asked to find out if any of the people questioned outside the job centre would have taken the jobs offered – those shown had all declined. She was also asked to find

out how large an audience there had been for the *White Season*. No response had been received so this was carried forward to September.

The request to feature an East Midlands city on the weather map was raised at ACE by the Chair and has been passed to the Head of Weather. No change has been noted to date and a formal response is awaited.

3. Programme & Service Review

Made in England, on all platforms.

Pollyanna Pickering:

Members felt that Pollyanna Pickering was a natural for TV, and one who had not heard of her did some research on the internet. They felt that the programme covered the region, its diversity and some passions (rugby) very well. The approach was original and innovative; the balance was interesting and gave a true perspective of a multicultural region. Most had either watched the programme or visited the website. One member who had been unable to watch on the night of transmission had downloaded three of the programmes using iPlayer; unfortunately they did not include the East Midlands output, although she found them excellent and enjoyable.

A minority of members would not have watched normally and one stated he did not enjoy it and felt the programme should have been on BBC Two.

Public Purposes met: Members felt that all had been met to some degree, Emerging Communications perhaps less than the others although there had been good support on the website.

BBC Response:

The HRLP explained that moving Pollyanna Pickering out of the country to the cities to make a piece of art and to take her outside of her comfort zone had been a deliberate purpose of the programme. He also explained that this strand was part of a year long partnership with the Arts Council to promote St Georges Day and the arts in general, and next year there will be feedback on what has been achieved in that time.

Children's Provision

Members used their networks of families and friends to get feedback on the programmes; in some cases they listened together. Feedback from all was positive for both *Go4it* and *Big Toe*.

All members had listened to the CDs provided and most thoroughly enjoyed the museum item, although one found it rather "middle class" and lacking in diversity. They felt the presenter brought the piece to life and thought it would encourage children to go to museums by shattering the myth that museums are stuffy. They liked the dramatic sound effects that brought the programme to life. Members were not sure that the audience would be aware of children's radio and asked if it is trailed on CBBC or Cbeebies. There was a discussion on the length of the *Go4it* programme and whether half an hour was too long. Most members felt that this was satisfactory; if children were interested, their attention would be held. Members also asked if the timing was right for both programmes; perhaps *Go4it* would be better earlier in the day and *Big Toe* in the evening when children are going to bed – a sort of junior "Book at Bedtime".

Public Purposes met: Education, creativity.

Silver Street – Radio Leicester

At the last RAC meeting at Radio Leicester, the managing editor Kate Squire asked members for their comments on Silver Street, which had received a handful of complaints.

During the period between meetings, members had listened at various times, some dipping in and out and others listening to the Sunday omnibus edition. A range of views were expressed.

One member felt the programme was too short (8 minutes) and found the timing odd (2.45pm daily). She found it hard to get to know the characters which she found confusing. Another had enjoyed the programme and found the acting good, but agreed that the timing could be better; he suggested the programme should be broadcast during the Breakfast show.

Another member disagreed and felt that the programme lacked good actors with one exception; she felt the story lines needed beefing up. She found the website useful in getting to know the characters.

Two members who had listened to the omnibus found the programme easy to get into and were able to follow the characters. One enjoyed the different story lines and thought it was an interesting representation of different areas of Asian culture as well as mixing into other cultures. The way different aspects of Asian culture were explored was creative and the current storyline on immigration and false passports had a contemporary relevance. One member asked if the programme could be simulcast at the same time it goes out on Asian Network. Another asked who the programme was aimed at. The HRLP explained that the programme was not put on just to serve the Asian community but a broader based audience.

The group agreed that they would like to give the managing editor feedback that the programme could be developed further as it had storylines around issues that affected all communities. It should be longer than 8 minutes and possibly have a full repeat at a different time. It was felt that the programme would appeal to a young vibrant audience that should be held on to but in its current format might not have the wider audience appeal that the producers were hoping for.

BBC Response:

The Head of Region explained that before the programme was launched, profiles of the characters and the story line had been introduced to Radio Leicester listeners. There was also a link on *East Midlands Today*. He also said that it would be difficult to simulcast as Radio Leicester would have to buy in to another station's schedule.

Local Radio Link members' reports

The Chair thanked the link members for their reports and asked each member to give two or three highlights from their report, and for any other comments they would like to add. All reports had been sent out with the papers for the meeting.

BBC Radio Derby: The link member had one item to add to his report. Nigel had met with the managing editor since submitting his report and confirmed that the Money Mountain this year will take place in October. This will be the last as the event is too demanding of resources which the radio station is unable to sustain. One member asked if Big Screen events could be trailed on EMT and local radio. The HRLP confirmed that this does happen. The other big issue for Radio Derby is there is still no DAB.

BBC Radio Leicester: The link member detailed highlights from his report. He added that he had attended the Radio Leicester Big Debate on June 17 which focused on the planned eco town; the debate was available on the website and had featured on the Breakfast show that morning. He also gave notice of a forthcoming debate in the East Midlands around the NHS and the HRLP commented that this would include a link up with Newsnight.

BBC Radio Nottingham: The link member was unable to attend and his report was taken as read. The Chair asked for members to email CW if they had any questions on it.

4. Chair's Report

The draft ACE minutes for May had been sent to members.

The Chair reported on the Audience Councils Day that had taken place in London in April when all four national audience councils had made presentations to the BBC Trust on matters of concern to their nations. The ACE presentation had focused on the importance of the BBC's role in sustaining citizenship, the value audiences place on entertainment, current gaps in services to underserved audiences and the potential for BBC Local to compensate for losses caused by re-prioritisation.

She also noted that two ACE members had met Helen Boaden, the Director of News, to discuss the issue of parachuting in network reporters for significant events; feedback from this meeting would follow at the next ACE meeting.

The Chairman's visit to Leicester on May 8:

Three RAC members and the Chair had had an hour's meeting with Sir Michael Lyons during his visit to Leicester. They also attended the public meeting that took place at a local gallery. All agreed that it had been a great pleasure meeting Sir Michael, he was very approachable and there had been a very open and wide ranging discussion. They felt he handled the open session well and overall his visit would have given him a better understanding of issues in the region.

CW was asked to find out if he still planned to visit Nottingham this year and feed this information back to members.

Action: CW

Impartiality Review:

The Chair invited comments on this recently published report.

Members had noted good regional representation mainly on *Breakfast* with reporters going to different areas, but had not noticed reporters going to the other nations. Some felt that England had been pushed to the side and that the other nations were given a higher profile. They were also concerned that this might be the start of a battle to keep the UK together.

The HRLP expressed surprise that 136 stories failed to mention which region or nation was being referred to.

The Chair explained that the structure of the other national councils is different to ACE. To an extent they have a greater sense of political focus and there is no comparable network of regional representation similar to the RACs. Members felt strongly that the English regions needed to be represented fairly, particularly as they provide 84% of the licence fee.

The Chair asked for any questions or comments from the ACE minutes. The South West RAC had asked if there were too many trails for programmes or whether the balance is right. Members felt that some programmes were very heavily promoted with the same trail shown at every break and asked whether trails should be rotated. The HRLP explained that there are rules about how many trails are shown per hour. He also noted that as a public service broadcaster the BBC may also trail TV programmes on the radio and that in advance of a big event/ programme, every channel and radio station would be asked to trail. This matter has been discussed frequently both at ACE and RAC level. It was suggested that as a way of resolving the issue, either the BBC Executive responsible for trails should attend an ACE meeting or representatives from the Trails department should visit individual RAC meetings. The Chair agreed to raise this at the next ACE meeting.

Action: Chair

The Chair asked members how well they felt the current economic situation had been covered recently; it was agreed this would be discussed at the next meeting. The HRLP said that *EMT* and the local radio stations were already covering this from a number of different angles including how increased fuel costs were affecting local authorities, transport systems and the emergency services whose budgets had already been fixed. He also said that this would be featured on News 24 for a day in the near future – date to be agreed. He agreed to let CW know the date to forward to members.

Action: AR and CW for agenda item

The Chair informed members that local radio stations were now allowed to run competitions again but these had to be signed off in advance by Andy Griffiee (Controller English Regions). Andy had commented at ACE that competitions were not greatly missed by the stations which had found other, more imaginative ways to engage the audience. She asked the link members to feed back at the next meeting if listeners were conscious of, or missed the absence of competitions.

Action: Radio Link Members

The Chair gave members prior notice of two forthcoming programmes that the council will be looking at later in the year:

A film on 40 years since the Beeching Report to be broadcast in September.

A special season in November to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the end of the First World War.

Head of Region's Report:

The Head of Region asked for comments on his report. The recent election coverage was commended. Members had noted and approved the re-branding of *EMT*. He gave an updated presentation of *BBC Local* which will shortly be subject to a Public Value Test by the Trust, to determine if the service should proceed. Members were concerned that the BBC should not be left behind on this issue as the local websites already carry news items and this would simply add videos to an existing facility. AR explained that videos could be used but only if they had been shown previously on *EMT* or had been generated by viewers.

5. Trust Business

PSB Review Phase One paper

These papers, including a speech delivered by the Chairman at the RSA on May 13 had been sent out to members with the minutes. The Chair said that any comments from members would be welcome and there would be further debate on this subject in the future.

6. Outreach

Children's Outreach – June 2008

On 12 June Lillian, Phillippa and Carol had conducted an outreach event around Cbeebies at the Twinkling Stars parent and toddler group held at Holy Trinity Church, Leicester. Lillian and Phillippa gave feedback from the event. A paper will be produced and shared with members at a later date.

Entertainment events - final report

A copy of the final report from the events that took place in February was sent out to members with the papers for the meeting.

7. Burning Issues/Any Other Business

Members asked that during major championships, football coverage should be shown on another channel (BBC2 or 4) rather than disrupt the usual programming on BBC One

One member asked how people could get their events mentioned on local radio. The HRLP said it would be best to email in the details, but there was no guarantee of a mention. He also said that the events diary had been replaced with website links rather than duplicate what was already easily available.

Members commented on the recent Eurovision Song contest and asked whether the time had come for the UK to stop participating in it. Members accepted that the voting system could be better, and also that voting reflected the culture of the countries represented rather than being a political statement.

One member raised the issue of lines behind the news and the weather saying that this was distracting and should be resolved; it is particularly marked on digital.

Another criticised the number of repeats being shown two or three days following the first transmission.

8. Key Issues for ACE meeting

There were none recorded at the meeting. Members were invited to forward any others by email prior to the next ACE meeting which is a video conference on July 8. The Chair agreed to pursue the weather question.

9. Date of next meeting: Note changed to: Wednesday 3 September St Helen's Street, Derby, DE1 3HY

Programmes for Review: To be confirmed

Signed:

Date;

Phillippa M Denton, Chair

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.

The reasons for withholding information are consistent with the Freedom of Information Act which applies to some of the BBC's information. See www.bbc.co.uk/foi for further explanation.]