

Regional Audience Council for BBC East Midlands
Minutes of Meeting
WED 10 JAN 2007 AT 6.30PM
CONFERENCE CALL

Present

Phillippa Denton Acting Chair
Paul Burgin
Guy Fennimore
Sarah McCann
Jeanne Nicholls
Tracey Davenport
Andy Harrison

BBC

Aziz Rashid Head, of Regional and Local Programmes East Midlands (HRLP)
Carol Cooke, Public Accountability Manager

1. Chair's welcome, introductions and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the conference call, took the names of who was in attendance and said that she would call people to speak in turn

2. Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday, 6 Dec 2006

- Matters arising

Carol Cooke reported that she had raised the suggestion of having a standing agenda item on local radio on all RAC agendas at the Public Accountability Managers' meeting and it had been regarded as a useful suggestion to be taken forward.

3. Programme Review

- News 6-7pm/ & 10 - 10.40

(Specific reference to Business & Economic coverage)

- Members felt that the special reports had presented business and economic news very successfully, presenting as stories rather than issues which meant that people didn't turn off.
- Items on congestion charges and the cost to the region were very interesting and members felt that business and economic items had been much more edgy, and stronger – more news, and less magazine items; and liked the link between local radio and regional television.
- There was a suggestion that there should be a regular item on evening programmes and possibly a round up of economic activity – e.g. FTSE, business and share news (there used to be a quick 30 second roundup on Radio Nottingham).
- One person would like information on how this region is doing in relation to the rest of the country; what is happening with the regional economy and how it affects the national economy.

BBC Response

- The BBC was looking carefully at what regional programmes had covered on business and economic issues in the last six months.
- The HRLP said that *East Midlands Today* needed to reflect what was happening and the regional BBC had made links with business people and business support agencies.
- The BBC didn't bill the pieces as business stories but as stories about people, to interest the viewer.
- The BBC had organised a debate on Road Pricing and Congestion Charges - council leaders and businesses would be discussing with members of the public - the discussion would be online and broadcast on all three radio stations.

Chair's summary

- There was an appreciation of the wide ranging topics covered in business and economic development.
- National and regional output was good although there could be more depth regionally.
- The vehicle or story you used to highlight a particular issue could make the issue more accessible.

Sports Personality of the Year

(Regional/Network)

- The lead into the 'Sports Personality' programme was well done on local radio
- A member reported that someone reported that there could be a more in-depth report on what happened.
- Many members felt that the national coverage was brilliant - a good review of different sports.
- The live audience resulted in a better atmosphere
- Balance of sporting activities was much better.
- Members felt the voting should be looked at – could be made more equitable.
- Sue Barker was great, but some sports personalities looked a little uncomfortable – not used to talking.
- Some people at the event were annoyed that the cost of the tickets went towards the staging of the event. Perhaps ticket sales could go to *Children in Need*
- Members suggested that the event could be moved to different venues across the country.
- Is the name right? Perhaps 'Sports Achievement of the Year'.
- Some of the clips on the web didn't work but it was a good idea and there was scope for lots of additional information.

BBC comments

There were items every day on EMT during the week of Sports Awards
The whole of the income from phone calls to *Strictly Come Dancing* goes to CiN so perhaps ticket sales could go to *Sport Relief*.

Chair's summing up

Opinions were mixed regarding the venue although most people liked the live audience. There were queries raised re the voting and the idea was mooted that ticket money could go to charity

The idea of moving it around the country was regarded as a good one.

4. Head of Region East Midlands Report

- There was a new Production Editor, Martin Read from Television News in London.
- Emma Agnew was back as TV Editor and would implement the new management structure where all TV staff now reported to her. The Management structure was now in place.
- Very successful Congestion Week programming from Friday 5th January with output on TV, Radio and Online across the region and debate in Lenton on January 11th. On the first day of congestion programming EMT got one of highest audiences for a long time.
- Some shorter items on EMT had been presented by radio presenters; this had been very popular.
- Radio Leicester's Ruby Appeal was being covered by EMT

5. Any Other Business

- Charles Runcie would attend the February meeting – members were invited to pass on questions and queries to CC for Charles' attention.
- Information was supplied on *Nature's Calendar* - events were being proposed in all/most regions over the weekend of Feb 17/18 in partnership with the RSPB. There would be a special edition of *Nature's Calendar* on the Friday (Feb 16) highlighting the weekend events. HR reported that the East Midlands was providing content for the national programme.
- CC asked if people could let her know how they found the conference call format, and explained that Carol Webster, new PAM would be taking over. The RAC recorded its appreciation of the valuable support Carol had provided to the council and wished her every success in the future.
- Regarding the Report on the young people's accountability event – members suggested that any feedback on any other events be sent to RAC members

6. Pre-consultation re iPlayer – Aziz Rashid exited the conference call at this point.

1. Value of proposal

The proposal seems to be promoting the solitary aspect of viewing on a PC, and so did not have value for some members. However new technology would mean that it could be downloaded to your television and watched by more than one person.

It would enable people to view programmes which they might not otherwise be able to see, and would also enable people to download and watch programmes in different places eg on the train.

2. Impact on society

Not everyone would have broadband – at the moment 11% of people would be able to access it properly. One in nine people could use the technology now.

One member said that Sky was coming up with a competitive proposal and suggested that the BBC used their technology. However some members felt that the BBC has to stay in the forefront of technological changes.

One member queried the value of the estimated cost – did this enable people to access support if something goes wrong? Has Disaster Recovery and IT support been factored in? Would there be some 0845/0870 support line for people that had problems with iPlayer?

Channel Four were doing on-demand viewing so members thought that the perception on the part of the BBC was that it had to be done.

The length of time it takes to download – 35 -40 mins for half hour programme - and the picture quality were raised as potential problems

The degree of flexibility was regarded as good but at this point the technology did not appear to be advanced enough.

Independent internet suppliers are nervous about this – people had restrictions about the quantity of what they can download every month under their internet access agreements. Monthly downloads would have cost implications and implications on the part of the internet provider – would this make the internet system crash? Some internet providers have stepped in and restricted the amount of downloads. Will there be a size limit per iPlayer account - like email inbox space?

Will there be parental controls on iPlayer?

Will there be different iPlayer provisions for schools; government bodies; etc?

3. Value for money

Members felt that with ancillary losses, i-Player would cost a lot more than estimated. Had there been a cost analysis done on the potential lost revenue of iPlayer from BBC Worldwide DVD sales (eg why pay for a series of *Spooks* when you could just watch everything over the 13 weeks)?

4. New or existing services

Would it differ substantially from Sky+ which currently can't go into the past and record retrospectively?

5. Replacement or development

Members felt that it might be better for another organisation to take the lead as the new service was not considered to be a replacement or even a development but simply another facet of the current service.

There was a slight concern that it might develop as a pay per view service – which would make it a more exclusive rather than inclusive broadcasting company and therefore not public broadcasting.

6. Downsides

Technical - picture quality and speed of download,
Concern regarding solitary viewing.

Concern about the BBC being tied to a single company, Microsoft, which is interested in getting everything into one package - games console, phone, television, PC. The BBC could effectively end up selling Microsoft.

7. Series stacking could be a useful facility if you missed some episodes then found out that the programme was good – you could go back and watch. Members were not sure how many episodes would be the right number.

8. Regional concerns

Members wondered how it would work if they wanted to watch *East Midlands Today*. They felt that it would not be specifically of regional value.

9. General impressions

Sometimes you need to see things collectively.

10. Any other issues

People were so used to recording now and members wondered if this system would add anything substantially different to Sky+ . Most people now with Sky+ didn't watch in a linear way any more.

Would this system be able to be preloaded onto laptops and if so, was this a potential source of revenue?

People would need high definition television.

Assuming there's no cost to download or access iPlayer, would there be tracking of accounts linked back to TV licences? If so, would there be a disclaimer?

Since it looked as if iPlayer would track what people saved/downloaded, would there be a disclaimer about privacy issues and would the BBC use that information to determine future programming or production?

The biggest issue – a plea for feedback to be taken into account.

The meeting closed.