

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL AUDIENCE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES**

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010  
BBC Birmingham

**Present:**

|                 |              |                |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Linda Connor    | Acting Chair | Kollette Super |
| Betty Foster    |              | Kenneth Pugh   |
| Rob Skelton     |              | Meena Bose     |
| Bonnie Harris   |              | Paul Taberner  |
| Beverly Tomkins |              | Sin Ong        |

|               |                               |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| Cath Hearne   | HRLP                          |
| Peter Knowles | Controller BBC Parliament     |
| Carol Webster | Public Accountability Manager |

**Apologies:**

|                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Belinda Channer | Robin Jones           |
| Dan Willetts    | Christina Orford-Hall |
| Zubeda Limbada  |                       |

**1. Welcome and introductions:**

The Acting Chair welcomed members to the meeting, and explained that she was standing in for the Chair and Deputy Chair in their absence. She welcomed the Head of Region to the meeting and Peter Knowles, Controller, BBC Parliament who would be showing a presentation of Democracy Live.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

There were a number of action points from the November 2009 and the January 2010 meetings.

November meeting:

A number of members had commented on the prominence being given to Radio WM presenter Joanne Malin, with on air trails for her radio programme at 8.30 each morning. They were concerned that this seemed disproportionate compared with that given to the other radio stations and presenters. The HRLP said that this was a key business decision pointing audiences to the programme and that this would continue. She pointed out that Radio WM was performing worse than any of the five West Midlands radio stations and that the promotions were to help to address this. Members still felt that this was overexposure and suggested that other WM presenters could be featured, and still wanted to see the other stations promoted; they asked if the effects would be monitored/audited. The Head of Region said that the RAJAR figures would be looked at, as well as engaging with focus groups. She said that the audience was steady.

January conference call:

CW agreed to explore the possibility of having a future meeting at the Drama Village; to be carried forward.

**Action: CW**

A member had asked about the cost of collecting the licence fee. CW agreed to carry this forward.

**Action: CW**

### 3. Democracy Live

There followed a presentation by Peter Knowles, the Controller of BBC Parliament. Following the presentation members expressed their appreciation, commented on the excellent camera work and could see this being responsible for a lot of good change in parliament. A question and answer session followed.

### 4. Programme & service review

#### 4.1 *A History of the World* (launched Jan 18)

Members had listened and found the programmes interesting and educational. Some had visited the local website and liked the links and the local context. They liked the collaboration with the British Museum and talked about the events that took place at Birmingham Museum in partnership with Radio WM. Members would like to have seen the objects as well and felt that this could work well on TV. It was felt that this was the sort of thing the BBC did well and that the Public Purposes were met.

#### 4.2 *Late Kick Off* (launched Jan 18)

There were a number of football fans among members and at least one football widow. Football fans thought it was 'okay' that for some people it bridged the gap between MOTD, going behind the football stories and giving credence to championship and lower league teams. It was described as informal, entertaining and engaging giving comprehensive views of the areas and teams which suited non-football fans. There were comments about the camera angle saying it was a bit odd! All thought the timing was wrong (some recorded it or watched again on iPlayer), and also commented that the scheduled time often changed. Most liked the style of the presenter and thought he was very good.

The HRLP commented that the timing would be reviewed after the series end in May. She said that the schedulers were obviously concerned to see how it works before making changes.

#### 4.3 Local Radio – link reports:

Radio Coventry and Warwickshire: The link member had nothing to add to her report. Another member asked about the rebranding of the station and why this was.

The HRLP said that it was about getting the brand better known rather than changing anything.

Radio Hereford and Worcester: The report had been received by members. The link member had sent his apology for the meeting. There were no questions.

Radio Shropshire: This was the last meeting for the link member. He commented that during his term which started at the same time as the Trust, he had seen an improvement in the focus on local radio, which had been a concern for many following the disbandment of the LAC's. He was pleased to see a regular agenda item to discuss local radio as well as the link members report.

Radio WM: The link member reported that she had been disappointed that there was only a 10 second slot on Midlands Today when the new kidney unit opened at Birmingham Children's Hospital, as most of the money raised was from the region and was strongly supported by Radio WM.

Radio Stoke: The link member apologised for not presenting a paper report, but she had not been able to listen due to work commitments and working away from Stoke. Members of her network who normally fed into the report were also at work and hadn't been able to listen, especially as now on digital and not available in the car. Only listened for traffic report, school closures etc.

## 5. Reports

### 5.1 Head of Region's report

The HRLP's report was tabled. She explained that she had been involved in the Strategy Review and wanted to give an up to date report at the meeting. She informed members of the reorganisation of the 'office' spaces to make communications more effective.

She offered to do a presentation in the autumn on the Local Radio Taskforce.

Members gave positive feedback on *Inside Out* presented by Mary Rhodes, and Lindsay Doyle's presentation of the arts and culture was also praised. The HRLP thanked members for their comments. She left the meeting at this point.

After she had left the meeting members said that they found it difficult to read such a detailed report at the meeting and said they would appreciate receiving the report with the rest of the meeting papers in future.

### 5.2 Chair's Report:

Audience Council England (Draft February & March minutes): members had been sent both sets of minutes for information and feedback.

- Feedback from AC Presentation to the Trust (Jan 19): The Chair had attended the Audience Councils day where all four nation's councils were represented. She and two other ACE members gave a presentation to the Trust on the work of ACE and the RAC's. She reported that it had been a good day and was very informative. The day was also mentioned in the March ACE papers.
- Regional Council's Annual Report: The Chairs intro had already been sent to members and the full report was tabled. Members were informed that the report was made up of reports from meetings during the year which they had already seen so there should be no surprises. If there were any queries they were asked to talk to CW.

## 6. Trust business & feedback

### 6.1 Strategy Review:

- The five editorial priorities were discussed and members questioned 'events that bring nations together' versus reducing the cost of sports, and questioned if big sporting events didn't bring the nations together what did.
- The time is right for a review we are all in a situation where we have to work smarter.
- The BBC has tried to cover every base, to be populist, and seems to have lost the core of the BBC values.
- It makes sense to do fewer things better rather than doing more for less.
- Good idea to focus the Asian Network where there are large Asian populations.
- It would be good to have some benchmark against which these five questions are based.

- Does the BBC have authority to say that C4 should cater for teens? Young people do still cherish the BBC and they should be catered for as licence fee payers. What would bring them back if they were lost now?
- It is the right time for a review? Taking into consideration the current climate it was felt that the time was right.

**6.2** Project Canvas – ACE response: paper circulated with minutes for information.

**6.3** On demand services – ACE Summary: paper circulated with minutes for information.

## **7. Outreach**

**7.1** Topics for 2010 – tbc: The topics are still to be agreed but the dates have been set. The first will take place in June.

**8. Burning issues** – there were no burning issues.

## **9. Any other Business**

East Enders on line was terrible, cringey, etc. the portrayal of teenagers.

Silent Witness has lost its way.

- **Harborne Retune event:** This event took place on Thursday 25 February and around 20 local residents and agencies attended. Two people from the BBC distribution team came and gave a presentation as part of raising awareness of the need to retune. The Chair and one RAC member attended and facilitated the event.
- **Recruitment:** The PAM reported that the recruitment process had taken place, two members had facilitated part of this and four nominations had been put forward to ACE. If successful their first meeting would be May 12.
- **Farewell and thank you to retiring members:** For three members this was their last meeting. They were presented with paperweights and thanks were passed on from the Chair and Deputy in their absence, the Trustee for England and the Head of Governance and Accountability. They were thanked for their contribution as Local Radio Link Members, for their input and for facilitating at outreach events, for engaging with their networks and bringing their feedback to council meetings and for attending Trust events.

**10. Date of next meeting:**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

## **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.]*

