

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL AUDIENCE COUNCIL
MINUTES**

Wednesday 8 December 2010
BBC Birmingham / Room 83A

Present:

Belinda Channer	Chair	Paul Taberner
Robin Jones		Valerie Bradley
Linda Connor		David Mason
Sin Ong		Beverly Tomkins
Kollette Super		Zubeda Limbada

Cath Hearne	HRLP
Carol Webster	Public Accountability Manager

Apologies:

Ken Pugh
Theresa Evans
Christian Coleman
Dan Willetts
Meena Bose

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed members to the last meeting of 2010.

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting agreed as accurate.

2.1 Matters arising and action points:

4.2 Chairs report – members agreed to forward feedback on tone and language used during weather reports. This was completed.

CW agreed to forward the links to the videos recorded by members at the ACE seminar in Exeter in July as part of the history of the world programmes. This was actioned but some members had not received it. CW agreed to forward the link again.

Action: CW again

5.0 Members agreed to forward additional comments on the half-year report to CW.

8.3 CW agreed to forward dates for 2011 meetings. This action was completed.

3. Programme & service review

3.1 Blue Peter 22nd November

Most members watched the programme, around half as it was transmitted the remainder later on iPlayer. Some members were unable to watch with children and asked family members and friends to watch with their children and give feedback. The children who watched were aged between 4 and 12 years of age. Feedback given was that boys were less interested than girls, and

the four year old did not enjoy the programme at all. Those children who were interested liked the travel story and the pop music feature.

One member watched the programme with her teenage children who thought the programme was 'lame'.

Members and parents found the programme more grown up than when they had watched it, and felt that it was 'moving with the times'. They thought there was a good mix with lots of different things and it was fast moving. They liked that the animals were still there. However, it was felt that although most children had been happy to watch, that they may not watch in future without being prompted.

One member said that Blue Peter used to be the 'lynch pin' around which other programmes aimed to copy, but it was no longer as 'special' as it used to be. Another said that at one time it stood out but 'nowadays it's one of many'.

Some members felt that the programme was relevant and reflected what children and young people were interested in now. It was felt to be very 'pop' orientated, but this was what the young people liked. One member felt that the Singapore feature was 'silly', but the children he watched with found it acceptable.

One member watched on iPlayer with her nephews aged six and nine who were not regular viewers as they would usually be at the mosque. The six-year-old lost interest very early on, but the older child was interested and enjoyed the travel feature.

Members agreed that at one time the badge was important, but not so much now. In addition, it was felt that members needed to temper their views as it was with their 'memories' that they were looking at the programme.

3.2 Spending Review season (regional coverage contd.)

Members had continued to follow this in news items, online and blogs. One member particularly interested in what was happening in education felt that this had been covered well on all platforms. Another member said that her networks were all concerned and were interested in how they would be affected. Some members had read also Robert Peston's analysis to keep updated. The group felt that online the national perspective was covered well, but local/ regional coverage could have been better. One member felt that the coverage had been good on Radio 4 and particularly on *The World Tonight*, which gave him the information he needed.

The Head of Region reminded members that the review was yet to be published. She explained that the online staff worked for the TV news editors and that items covered on the national news website was not drilled down on the local sites. She told members how the commissioning system worked and that this was being looked at.

The discussion moved on to include the coverage of local news. One member said that he felt unable to rely on BBC local pages for news as it was generally out of date and he also found that the website information was 'out of kilter' with local radio news. Members said that online they generally got their news from the BBC or the Guardian website.

Online weather: Around fifty percent of members use BBC online for weather and travel news. In general, they found both very good, up to date and informative. The link member to BBC Radio Coventry and Warwickshire said that the station used a local school that have their own weather station and gave more localised weather news. In Hereford and Worcester there used to be a link to the website for Paul Damari who gave weather reports from his 'weather station situated at his home', but this no longer appeared as a link on the front page. Members liked the cameras online for the traffic updates

One member said that although the weather information came from the met office, it was sometimes different to that given by the BBC.

3.3 Local Radio Link Reports

The chair invited the link members to update or add to their reports.

BBC Radio Coventry and Warwickshire:

The link member reported that coverage of the commemoration of the Blitz in Coventry had been superb, good quality programming. People in Coventry appreciated how the station commemorated the event.

BBC Radio Hereford and Worcester:

The link member reported that a significant number of members of his networks did not listen to local radio, as they did not like the music. They liked the music on Heart and Smooth which was more to their taste. He asked about the music policy, and the Head of Region explained that all stations followed the same policy and used the same play list. She said that each station had a degree of choice from the playlist. She suggested that Steven Woodhall was invited to a meeting to explain how the playlist was chosen.

Action: CW

BBC Radio Stoke:

The link member reported that she had had opportunity to talk to around two thousand people at an event she had hosted and asked for their perspective on BBC Radio Stoke. The overwhelming feedback was that they did not feel Radio Stoke was for them but for an older generation that did not leave home. However, some said they liked the music more than they had 12 months before and that it felt more up to date.

BBC Radio WM:

Feedback from the link members' networks was that they all loved the football on WM – it was still brilliant and they liked the phone-ins and audience interaction.

Another member said she felt that she had spoken to Andrew Mitchell who was the first politician to talk to the Pakistani community following the floods in Pakistan. She felt that this was a missed opportunity for the BBC in the region.

The Head of Region was asked about the sharing of programmes. She explained that there had been a review and a pilot was scheduled to take place in Kent, Sussex, Surrey Sheffield and Leeds.

4. Reports

4.1 Head of Region's report

The Head of Region added to her report and informed members of schedule changes at Coventry and Warwickshire. She told the meeting that Regional variations of BBC One HD were being launched in three regions (Birmingham, London and Manchester) as well as the Nations and that there was no time schedule for the other regions.

One member felt that the BBC had missed the boat with HD to an extent and that the BBC was no longer the leader in HD Broadcasting. Sky has 50 channels on HD, ITV have all channels on HD; BBC only has two channels on HD.

One or two members said they would like to see the frosted glass screens removed from the Midlands Today studio, behind the presenters. One said that it deflected the light from the cameras and made the presenters look washed out. He also said that he felt the presenters look uncomfortable at the coffee table. The HRLP said she had received complaints that people walking past behind the presenters was a distraction for viewers.

4.2 Chair's Report

Audience Council England (draft minutes)

The Chair gave highlights from the last two ACE meetings.

She reported that *Late Kick Off* had been re-commissioned and would be transmitted from January with a guaranteed 11.05pm slot.

At ACE David Holdsworth had said that there was considerable rethink about DAB and asked for members comments. He said that the BBC was still firmly behind it and was looking to open 60+ transmitters. Some commercial providers were looking to drop them.

The Chair had asked at ACE if the move of BBC Breakfast to Salford would attract key people there. A member also raised the issue of Broadcasting House being developed to be a news hub and asked why such a key news programme would not be going there. Members felt that known presenters remaining with the programme was key to the continued success of the programme.

Members expressed concerns at the impact on other production centres (Birmingham and Bristol) page 9 of ace minutes.

5. Trust business & feedback

5.1 BBC Licence Fee Settlement

Members felt that on the face of it, it seemed reasonable, but from the information given it was difficult to judge. Some felt it could have been worse and felt there was some antipathy from some 'quarters' of the BBC. Members were pleased that the proposal for free licences financed from the Licence fee for people over 75 was not implemented, as this was a Central Government role. Members felt that the way it was done, was 'appalling'; member's networks were concerned at the speed in which this was done and without consultation, 'the licence fee is not a tax, and should have been brought back to the licence fee payer'. Some asked if it was legal for SC4 to be taken on by the BBC.

There were no objections to the world service being taken on by the BBC.

5.2 Network Radio Consultation (ACE submission)

6. November Outreach

6.1 Feedback

The Chair gave feedback on the event that took place at Birmingham Metropolitan College. A diverse group of 15 people attended the event, which was supported by four members. The event had been very successful with very good feedback from participants. The venue management had been very accommodating and supportive of the event.

The Chair stressed the importance of outreach events, which make up a third of the RAC meetings. She asked that members encouraged people from their networks to attend, even if they could not attend themselves.

She asked members for suggestions on how to make the outreach events more successful and for feedback to help make the events successful. Members suggested flexibility to accommodate the target group. Generally, members found Saturday a good day for outreach, as those working did not have to take time out of work.

7. Burning issues – *Delivering the purposes and matters of trust*

There were no burning issues

8. Any other Business

Audience Council working:

Members felt that there was little room on the agenda to discuss issues raised by their networks due to the volume of items from ACE and the Trust. They also wanted feedback from the reviews and events undertaken and felt that this was not forthcoming from the Trust. From the Trust, they would like something acknowledges 'you've said, we've listened, we've done'. This for members is the motivator for being part of the council. It was agreed that this would be an agenda item for the February meeting.

Action: CW/BC

Members expressed concerns at the reports of bullying at *Midlands Today*. They felt that this would become an issue for the council if the programme was affected.

Someone asked why national radio had to be retuned when on the motorway.

9. Date of next event:

Wednesday 16 February 2011

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.]

