

YORKSHIRE REGIONAL AUDIENCE COUNCIL MINUTES

Wednesday 11 May 2011 at 6pm
BBC Leeds

Present: Dr Ian Palmer (Chair)
Bill Cowling
Ruth Ratcliffe
Sally Wright
Nora Whitham
Robert Gibbon
Steve Mardy
Helen Hall
Jaqueline Binns
Gordon Rozario
Leslie Atkinson
Adil Rauf

Apologies: Ann Gurnell
Diane Ives
Emmanuel Ayim
Ajit Singh

BBC Representatives:

Tim Smith	Editor BBC Look North (Deputising for Head of Region)
Carol Cooke	Public Accountability Manager

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were four apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 22 FEBRUARY 2011 AND MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising and the minutes were passed as being an accurate record.

3. PROGRAMME & SERVICE REVIEW

3.1 Royal Wedding: BBC coverage

Comments from the council included the following:

Pre-wedding coverage:

- There were lots of interesting programmes and the build up was just right in terms of individual presenters,
- The BBC covered its Royal Charter obligations, although some members did not think that all presenters were appropriate, and the lack of a Dimbleby was felt.
- The coverage created a feeling of hope and excitement in the nation.

- People watched the Royal weddings through history documentary, and enjoyed the Larry Lamb morning programmes and the documentary on the Middleton family which made fascinating viewing.

On the day coverage:

- Coverage was excellent, although some people felt that Fearne Cotton was not appropriate
- The BBC's view of the palace was not as good as ITV's view but members felt that BBC coverage was better than Sky News which rushed the coverage whereas BBC took time and did things in an orchestrated and tasteful fashion. Members felt that ITV was better at covering the fashions.

Post wedding coverage was fantastic and focussed on discussions about the dress, and rumours about the honeymoon.

Chair's summary

Pre-wedding coverage was appropriate and members enjoyed the documentary on royal weddings through the ages, and the programmes hosted by Lesley Garrett. On the day the BBC's coverage was orchestrated and tasteful, despite the lack of a Dimpleby, and better than Sky News which seemed rushed, although members felt that ITV was better at covering fashion. There was positive interaction between the presenters which was made the coverage slightly more informal and different from other wedding reporting. In general the coverage engendered a positive and celebratory feeling in the nation

3.2 LOCAL RADIO SERVICE LICENCE

Comments from the council included the following:

Sport

- The presenters were passionate and knowledgeable, wanted to share their enthusiasm with their audience and handled the fact that there are two teams in the third division. They make a good job of the major sports but some of minority sports coverage is not so well covered, although race meetings at York are covered. Local radio was not necessarily felt to be the first option for coverage of national sport although Total Sport was good for local and regional sport.

Faith

- Faith programmes was not a huge issue and people did not go to local radio for faith programmes. Radio Leeds manages to attract high profile guests such as bishops on the radio on a Sunday morning. Members wondered if there was a particular focus and whether in fact there needed to be a focus.

Minority/Specialist programming

- *Yorkshire Brass* was excellent and Friday 1950's music and the Hollywood music programme were good. BBC Leeds has Urdu and Bengali programmes and Liz Green's programme picks up minority issues and explores them.

Social media

- Facebook, Twitter – every programme directs and encourages listeners to use social media, including *Look North*. People feel that social networks make the news accessible as people can comment and be interactive. Facebook is like Five Live 606 uncut.

Chairs summary

Football, major sports, and racing at York were well covered but minority sports were not so well covered. Faith programming did not seem to be a huge issue, and people did not go to local radio for faith programmes, although Radio Leeds was commended in attracting high profile guests such as a bishop on the radio on a Sunday morning. Members wondered if indeed there needed to be a faith focus. In terms of Minority/Specialist programming *Yorkshire Brass* was excellent, Friday 1950's music and the Hollywood music programme was good. BBC Leeds have Urdu and Bengali programmes and Liz Green's programme picked up minority issues and explored them. People felt that social networks made the news accessible as people can comment and be interactive very easily. There was a commercial aspect to these sites but they were ubiquitous and this does not seem to be an issue.

BBC response

All radio stations are on FM and online, and BBC Sheffield and Leeds are on DAB, but Radio York is not on DAB.

The advent of iplayer has made specialist and minority programmes much more accessible to listeners.

3.3 LOCAL RADIO LINK REPORTS

The BBC Radio Leeds link report was included in the meeting pack, and the BBC York local radio link person sent the following addendum after a visit to the building.

'The building has been transformed internally - so much so it is nearly unrecognisable. It has been done though with care and attention to both detail and cost. It would appear that where simple, inexpensive but effective cosmetic transformation could be used it has been to allow the money to be spent on the essential technical upgrades. An example in the studios themselves would be using simple colour themed fabric to cover old sound baffles alongside the new BBC Local Radio broadcasting desks (that is I'm sure NOT the right term!) which have embedded, state of the art digital technology that facilitates effective broadcasting. The studio on air at the time was also able to take the presenter and five guests (it was election day) with ease and with the presenter able to see them all - this is such a change since before, congested wires and bolted on screens and shelves hemmed in presenters and made a cluttered environment.

There are now meeting spaces and practical provisions of kitchens etc.

Sarah and her team are very positive and up beat - and undoubtedly there is a new atmosphere: motivated, enthusiastic and "buzzing".

The feedback from listeners is also positive but I wonder if the station could celebrate the new studio more within the community..?

Action

Carol Cooke contacted Radio York who said they had organised a successful tour for the public as soon as the station had reopened. In addition Radio York will be the venue for an RAC outreach event after which the public will be offered the chance of a tour of the building.

4. REPORTS

4.1 Head of Region's report

BBC Radio Sheffield now attracts 260,000 listeners a week- a share of more than 20%- its highest reach for three years.

BBC Radio Leeds attracts 270,000 listeners a week, share of 16.5%, down slightly on the last quarter but up significantly (2.5%) on this time last year.

BBC Radio York attracts 92,000 listeners a week, or 17.1%, which is unchanged but again up (1.7%) on this time last year.

Radio York moved back into its newly-refurbished home a month ago, after spending 10 months broadcasting from Leeds and Scarborough.

Radio stations were sharing Liz Green's afternoon programme, as a 6-month trial due to end in July and will be assessed by the BBC Trust. Some criticism has continued and some has levelled off, as listeners feel familiar with the presenter.

The Bradford and Leeds webpages have merged to become the Leeds and West Yorkshire page; all web sites have been rebranded as part of BBC News, with greater emphasis on local news, weather, travel and sport, and the number of online staff is being reduced from 13 to nine.

Look North remains the top performing regional programme at 6.30 in the country with record audiences and big stories. BBC Yorkshire's annual Performance Review was held in Sheffield at the end of March and was very positive.

Radio Sheffield had an extremely strong year, named BBC Local Radio Station of the Year; Radio Leeds increased its audience significantly; Radio York's mid morning programme was described as 'arguably the best in England';

The Politics Show continues to be pre-recorded on Fridays before broadcast on Sundays, as a cost-saving measure. It does occasional live programmes when the story demands, including in recent weeks in Sheffield during the Lib Dems' spring conference, and last weekend after the local council elections.

Late Kick Off has just completed its second series with viewing figures amongst the strongest in the country, benefitting from a more regular timeslot after *A Question of Sport*.

BBC3 broadcast '*Frankenstein- Live in Leeds*' at the end of March; a live performance of Shelley's masterpiece, which is now an A Level set text, in front of 10,000 people at Kirkstall Abbey.

The *Helicopter Heroes* team is currently making a 5th series with the Yorkshire Air Ambulance to be broadcast in September, and there is a commission to produce a follow-up to '*Dambusters Declassified*' with Martin Shaw, about the life of one of Yorkshire's forgotten World War Two heroes, group captain Bill Pickard.

Helen Thomas will continue to work on the journalism strand of 'Delivering Quality First' until later this month.

4.2 English Regions draft objectives and Local Radio Performance

For information.

4.3 Chair's Report

Audience Council England (Draft January minutes)

The Chair talked to the ACE minutes and highlighted the *Late Kick Off* regular slot, commented on the radio sharing pilot and the idea that local radio would have to split during bad weather or big news stories in different localities.

There had been a perception, at the last meeting, that cuts were having a bigger impact on local and regional broadcasting. Ian had raised this issue and got a response from David Holdsworth explaining that there were cuts across the board.

There had been lots of discussion around DAB.

5. Trust business & feedback

5.1 BBC Trust Workplan 2011/12

5.2 BBC Trust appointments: Chairman and Vice-Chairman

6. Outreach

6.1 Local Radio Service Licence Review

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

There were no burning issues.

8. Any other Business

One member said that *Ariel* magazine was too well, and wastefully, packaged.

9. Date of next meeting:

15 June 2011 Outreach at BBC Sheffield 5 - 7pm

20 June 2011 Outreach at BBC York 5.30 - 7.30pm

For Information: Audience Council Recruitment Campaign Statistics 2011
2010 - 2011 RAC Attendance

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.]