



Meeting of the BBC Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee

MINUTES

Tuesday 10 December, 2019
New Broadcasting House, London

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Minutes of the 16 October Meeting
2. BBC Breakfast complaint
3. Public Perceptions of Impartiality
4. Papers for noting
5. AOB

ATTENDANCE

Members:

- Ian Hargreaves Non-executive director (Chair)
- Tanni Grey-Thompson Non-executive director
- Tony Hall Director-General
- Nicholas Serota Non-executive director
- Fran Unsworth Director, News

With:

- David Jordan Director, Editorial Policy and Standards
- Ken MacQuarrie Director, Nations and Regions
- Phil Harrold Company Secretary
- Jo Clarke Secretary
- Chris Banatvala Independent Media Consultant (item 2)
- Gautam Rangarajan Director, Strategy
- Emma Theedom BBC News Audiences

APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

EDITORIAL GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES

1. Minutes from the 16 October 2019 meeting

- 1.1 The minutes were approved.

2. BBC Breakfast complaint

Editorial Complaints Handling: Full Report

- 2.1 The Chair of the Committee thanked Chris Banatvala for his thorough and effective analysis of the complaints handling of the BBC Breakfast complaint regarding Naga Munchetty.
- 2.2 The Committee discussed the recommendations contained within the report. These were primarily operational and included changes in the complaints process, which would require adjustments to the Complaints Framework. Any change to the Complaints Framework would require agreement with Ofcom and potentially a public consultation.
- 2.3 The Committee approved the recommendations. It was agreed that management actions, such as the arrangement of a secondment into the Editorial Complaints Unit, could be implemented immediately. A management response to Chris Banatvala's work would also be produced for approval at Executive Committee, with a view to future publication. The changes to the Complaints Framework would require liaison with Ofcom, and potentially a public consultation. It was agreed that Ian Hargreaves and Chris Banatvala would attend the Ofcom meeting.
- 2.4 In broader discussion, Committee members reflected on the language used in complaints findings, where wording such as "upheld" was used, and agreed that applying a less formal format should be considered.

Impartiality Guidance

- 2.5 Following the Naga Munchetty complaint decision the Director General asked the Director of Editorial Policy and Standards to produce a piece of editorial policy guidance about some of the impartiality issues raised by the 17 July 2019 edition of Breakfast News and the reaction to the subsequent complaints finding. Some of the issues are already dealt with by the Editorial Guidelines but Guidance offers an opportunity to give more detailed advice.
- 2.5 Committee members considered the draft guidance, which was intended for discussion and feedback. Unlike the Editorial Guidelines, Guidance is not usually agreed at the

EGSC or the Board so that it can be amended and adjusted to cope with new circumstances as they arise.

- 2.6 The draft Impartiality Guidance would go forward to the Board for information and would be made available to staff.

3. Public Perceptions of Impartiality

- 3.1 The Committee considered a paper and presentation which outlined initial findings from a programme of research commissioned to understand what could be done to understand audience perceptions of BBC impartiality. It set out the latest figures, explained the factors affecting audience perceptions of impartiality and how these impacted perceived BBC impartiality. The work also proposed a number of next steps towards addressing areas, particularly in tone and presentation, which viewers found off-putting.

4. AOB

- 4.1 The Committee noted the most recent complaints reporting.