



## **Meeting of the BBC Editorial Standards Committee**

### **MINUTES**

9 July 2026

Boardroom 3028, Broadcasting House, London

### **ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

1. Minutes of the 12 May Meeting and Matters Arising
2. Ofcom Session
3. Election De-brief
4. Editorial Risks and Issues
5. Managing AI Editorial Risk
6. Response to the Report on Coverage of the Two-child Benefit Cap
7. Editorial Reviews: Update
8. Editorial Compliance and Complaints
9. AOB

## ATTENDANCE

### *Members:*

- Caroline Thomson                      Chair
- Matt Brittin                              Director-General
- Robbie Gibb                              Non-executive Director
- Chris Jones                              Non-executive Director
- Marinella Soldi                          Non-executive Director

### *With:*

|                            |                                                           |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Cristina Nicolotti Squires | Group Director for Broadcasting and Media, Ofcom (item 2) |
| Siobhan Walsh              | Director, Content Policy, Ofcom (item 2)                  |
| Laura Rhea                 | Head of Standards, Ofcom (item 2)                         |
| Adam Baxter                | External Editorial Adviser                                |
| Alexandra Evans            | External Editorial Adviser                                |
| Rhodri Talfan Davies       | Deputy Director-General                                   |
| Kate Phillips              | Chief Content Officer                                     |
| John McAndrew              | Director of Live & Daily News                             |
| Robert Thompson            | Controller Production, BBC England                        |
| David Jordan               | Director, Editorial Standards and Policy                  |
| Peter Johnston             | Director, Complaints and Editorial Reviews                |
| Paul Oldfield              | Chief of Staff to the Chair and Director-General          |
| Jo Clarke                  | Secretary to the Committee                                |
| Rizwana Rahmani            | Executive Lead, Editorial Policy and Standards            |
| David Grossman             | Senior Editorial Adviser                                  |
| Garmon Rhys                | Director, BBC Wales (item 3)                              |
| Carol Prest                | Portfolio Head of Audiences, Nations (item 3)             |
| Matthew Eltringham         | Senior Editorial Policy Advisor (item 5)                  |
| James Fletcher             | Responsible AI Lead (item 5)                              |
| Simon Coates               | Senior Editorial Adviser (item 7)                         |

## APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

## EDITORIAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES

### **1. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest**

- 1.1 There was a full attendance from Committee members. Apologies were received from the Interim CEO, News and Current Affairs and the Director, Nations who are Executive attendees at the Committee.
- 1.2 No conflicts of interest were declared in addition to those already recorded.

### **2. Minutes from the 12 May Meeting and Matters Arising**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting on the 12 May were approved.

#### *Matters Arising*

- 2.2 The Committee noted that the next update on BBC Arabic would take place at the November meeting.

#### *Dashboard*

- 2.3 The Director, Editorial Reviews and Complaints briefed the Committee on the Dashboard data.
- 2.4 Directors discussed the correction and apology which had been issued following the misquoting of Nigel Farage on Newsnight. Two recent adjudications from Ofcom relating to the Panorama programme on the shooting of Chris Kaba and Restore UK's complaint regarding its lack of representation on the *QuestionTime* panel during the election period were also discussed.

#### *Action Tracker*

- 2.5 The Committee noted the updated action tracker. This now tracked meeting actions as well as actions arising from reviews and ad hoc enquiries. Once completed, actions would be archived to preserve the record.

#### *Forward Business*

- 2.6 The Committee noted the items of business scheduled for upcoming meetings of the Committee in September and November.

### **3. Ofcom Session**

- 3.1 The Committee welcomed representatives from Ofcom for its second session of 2026.
- 3.2 The Chair briefed Ofcom on plans for future thematic reviews. There was discussion of Ofcom's complaints process for complaints received during the Election period, which it was agreed had been quick and effective. Committee members noted an update from Ofcom on the public consultation on the draft Online Material Code.

### **4. Election De-brief**

- 4.1 The Committee received a presentation on the coverage of the May elections and its performance with audiences.
- 4.2 The Committee noted the depth of planning and preparation involved for coverage of a challenging set of elections, with higher numbers of candidates and political parties involved than had traditionally been the case. Increased co-ordination between local and network news teams had delivered comprehensive coverage of both the campaign period and results night.
- 4.3 The Committee discussed the coverage, noting that compliance with the election guidelines had been strong with a low level of complaints from both political parties and the public. The Committee discussed initial data on audience perceptions of impartiality and the extent to which audiences considered the coverage fair and balanced. Directors also discussed young audiences and the initiatives which had been taken to make the election coverage more accessible to them.

### **5. Emerging Editorial Risks and Issues**

- 5.1 The Committee received an update from David Jordan on emerging editorial risks.

### **6. AI Editorial Risk**

- 6.1 The Committee considered a paper providing an update on the governance of editorial use of AI at the BBC. Directors noted that since the last update in September 2025 editorial use had increased, with general purpose tools like Copilot in wider use, and AI capabilities such as transcription, translation, synthetic voice, video editing and content re-versioning being tested or adopted across divisions. The paper also set out how governance, guidance, training and divisional oversight were developing in response, and highlighted challenges around unauthorised use, external suppliers, editorially

appropriate tooling, transparency requirements, and the need to balance bottom-up innovation with clearer strategic direction.

- 6.2 The Committee discussed the paper and the current approach to AI internally and across the industry. The Executive confirmed that the use of AI software in the BBC was logged and that the risk around the editorial use of AI continued to be closely monitored with only a number of software tools authorised for use. Directors discussed how this could be sensibly increased whilst mitigating any risks.

## **7. Response to the Report on Coverage of the Two Child Benefit Cap**

- 7.1 The Controller BBC England introduced the Executive response to the report from the Senior Editorial Adviser on coverage of the two-child benefit cap. The Committee noted that in line with the new process the report had been discussed at the Editorial Standards and Complaints Committee.
- 7.2 ESC welcomed the quality of the response and its associated action plan, which was well-considered and thorough. The Committee agreed that an update on progress with the action plan should return in six months' time.

## **8 Editorial Reviews: Update**

### *Senior Editorial Adviser Workplan*

- 8.1 The Committee approved the proposals for review in the Senior Editorial Adviser workplan.

### *Proposal for Short Form Video Review*

- 8.2 The Committee approved the proposal for a review of the BBC's short-form video content.

### *Thematic Review Updates*

- 8.3 The Committee noted that discussions with its preferred candidate for leadership of the Editorial Review of the Middle East were taking place on the terms of reference and timescale.
- 8.4 The Committee approved the proposal for the thematic review of BBC coverage of climate change. A plan for the approach, methodology and communications plan would come to the September meeting

- 8.5 The Committee noted an update on the implementation programme for the recommendations from the thematic review of portrayal and representation.

## **9. Editorial Compliance and Complaints**

### *Stage 2 Complaints Analysis*

- 9.1 The Committee noted the Stage 2 complaints report.

### *Stage 1 Complaints Reporting*

- 9.2 The Committee noted the complaints reporting for Stage 1 complaints handling.

### *Ofcom Complaints Reports*

- 9.3 The Committee noted the complaints reports which had been submitted to Ofcom over the period.

## **10. AOB**

- 10.1 There was no other business.