



Meeting of the BBC Editorial Standards Committee

MINUTES

11 March 2026

Boardroom 3028, Broadcasting House, London

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Minutes of the 15 January Meeting and Matters Arising
2. Election Guidelines 2026
3. Editorial Risks and Issues
4. Ofcom Session
5. Editorial Reviews: Update
6. Editorial Compliance and Complaints
7. Plan for Lower Trust Audiences
8. BBC Verify
9. AOB

ATTENDANCE

Members:

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

With:

Rhodri Talfan Davies	Executive Director
Kate Phillips	Chief Content Officer
Rhuanedd Richards	Director, Nations
Jonathan Munro	Interim CEO News and Current Affairs
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
Ric Bailey	Chief Adviser Politics
Simon Coates	Senior Editorial Adviser
Emma Theedom	Portfolio Head of Audiences

APOLOGIES

Tim Davie

EDITORIAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES

1. Chair's Introduction

- 1.1 The Chair introduced the first meeting of the Editorial Standards Committee and welcomed the Committee's new membership.

2. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

- 2.1 Tim Davie was an apology for the meeting.
- 2.2 No conflicts of interest were declared in addition to those already recorded.

3. Minutes from the 11 March Meeting and Matters Arising

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting on the 11 March were approved.

Matters Arising

- 3.3 The Committee noted that the Director-General had initiated the fast-track investigatory process following the BAFTA's broadcast.
- 3.4 David Jordan and Peter Johnston briefed the Committee on their positive meeting with History Reclaimed.
- 3.5 The Committee noted an update on the production of the Committee Report for the Annual Report 2025-26.

Action-tracker and Dashboard

- 3.6 The Committee discussed the format and approach to the action-tracker and dashboard, the introduction of which had been agreed as part of its new agenda following the EGSC Review.
- 3.7 Committee members approved the formats subject to some amendments to the information presented on the dashboard.

Forward Business

- 3.8 The Committee noted the items of business scheduled for upcoming meetings of the Committee in May and July.
- 3.9 The Committee requested that a de-brief on election coverage should be added to the agenda for the July meeting.
- 3.10 The Committee agreed that a review of the Committee's effectiveness should be undertaken after six months.

4. Election Guidelines 2026

- 4.1 The Committee welcomed Ric Bailey, Chief Adviser, Politics for discussion of the Election Guidelines 2026.
- 4.2 Directors noted how the plans for relative levels of party coverage based on electoral support were developed and the role of Ofcom's Digest of Past and Current Electoral Support. For the BBC, the start of the Election period would be 30 March.
- 4.3 The Committee discussed the key changes to this year's Guidelines. Directors noted a briefing on the way in which Nations, local and Network News worked closely to provide coverage which engaged and informed the audience, and the importance of transparency and sign-posting content in delivering that experience.
- 4.4 The Committee approved the Election Guidelines 2026. The party election broadcast criteria for Scotland and Wales were also approved.

5. Emerging Editorial Risks and Issues

- 5.1 The Committee received an update from David Jordan on emerging editorial risks.
- 5.2 Committee members discussed the most effective approach to the discussion of pre-broadcast programme risk and assurance around their management. David Jordan and Rhodri Talfan Davies would discuss the matter offline and return to the Committee with a proposed approach.

6. Editorial Reviews: Updates

Senior Editorial Adviser Report

- 6.1 The Committee discussed the Senior Adviser Report.

- 6.2 ESC welcomed the report on political labelling, which concluded that the research demonstrated that the BBC's application of political labels was cautious and consistent, particularly in domestic UK reporting. Editorial decisions were governed by core principles of accuracy and impartiality on a case-by-case basis, using attribution or very clear criteria where labels were applied, with the preference being the description of policy rather than the application of labels.
- 6.3 Directors discussed the complexities of using political labels in international reporting and how to ensure the changing political landscape was reflected accurately.
- 6.4 Directors noted that the review of political labelling had been previously considered at the Executive's Editorial Standards and Complaints Committee [ESCC], in line with the recommendations from the review of EGSC. The ESCC had asked for guidance to be produced based on the report's conclusions which would help to ensure that good practice was embedded and disseminate across the organisation. ESC Committee members endorsed the recommendation.
- 6.4 The report also contained proposals for methodologies to explore story selection on the BBC and how it compared to other media outlets, which the Committee discussed. It was agreed that a short pilot project would be undertaken.

Thematic Review of Middle East Coverage: Update

- 6.5 The Committee noted an update on the search for the leadership of the review.

Thematic Review of BBC Coverage of Energy Policy and Climate Change

- 6.6 The Committee agreed that given current conditions in the Middle East the thematic review on energy policy and climate change should be fast-tracked. Committee member's views on possible candidates for co-chairs would be gathered offline.

7. Editorial Compliance and Complaints

Stage 2 Complaints Analysis

- 7.1 The Committee considered the Stage 2 complaints report.

Stage 1 Complaints Reporting

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

Ofcom Complaints Reports

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

8. Plan for Lower Trust Audiences

8.1 The Committee received a presentation from Jonathan Munro, Interim CEO of News and Current Affairs and Emma Theedom of News, Audiences, which provided an update on the News plan for lower trust audiences.

8.2 The Committee noted that the plan had three planks: Making *Your Voice* a core part of News across all platforms; rooting more journalism in local issues that matter to ‘harder to reach’ audiences; and re-establishing *QuestionTime* as a must watch direct audience engagement programme.

8.3 The Committee asked for an assessment of the plan’s effectiveness to return for consideration after six months.

9. BBC Verify

9.1 The Committee noted an update on plans for BBC Verify.

10. AOB

10.1 The Committee noted an update on the process to appoint two new external Editorial Advisers for the Committee.