

Broadcasters' Liaison Group (BLG) Meeting– 28 November 2017

Note of conclusions and action points

Present: Ric Bailey (BBC), Tabby Karamat (BBC), Alasdair MacLeod (BBC Scotland), Lisa Morgan (S4C), Chris Wissun (ITV), Emily Barber (Channel 4), Joan Darroch (STV), Chris Hagan (UTV), Jacqueline McIntyre (BBC NI), Alice Hickey (BBC), Martin Forward (BBC Wales), Rob Shepherd (BBC), Nick Powell (ITV Wales), Janet Maclay (Channel Five), Craig Westwood (Electoral Commission – observer member)

Apologies: Kathleen Carragher (BBC NI), Angharad Evans S4C, Jo Verrill (This is Global)

The Group was joined by Adam Baxter from Ofcom for item 6.

1 NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

- The meeting notes of the last BLG annual meeting of 15 November 2016 and the BLG conference call of 21 April 2017 were circulated. Members were asked to review these notes and to provide any comments. These meeting notes do not purport to be a full record merely a note of the conclusions in action points.

2 RETROSPECTIVE FOR 2017

Local Elections

- The BLG discussed complaints received from members of the public about local election PEBs. Given the nature of the complaints, the BLG members agreed it had been appropriate to refer the complaints to the political parties.

General Election

- The BLG reflected on the PEB allocations where each broadcaster had come to their own decision in respect of allocation.
- Members discussed where PEBs had failed the technical requirements as specified in the BLG production guidelines. It was also agreed to raise with Ofcom some of their specified requirements, such as the set length for radio broadcasts, that appeared to be causing some of the political parties difficulties.

PPBs

- The members discussed Ofcom's decision in October 2016 in respect of the SNP PPB [please refer to the notes of 25 April 2017 BLG meeting which discussed this issue in further detail].

3. THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION UPDATE

- Following the referendum in 2016 the Electoral Commission, along with other bodies such as the Advertising Standards Agency had set up round table meetings to discuss the issues raised by the referendum. Representatives from the BLG had attended the second meeting in March 2017.
- The Electoral Commission invited representatives from the BLG to attend one of its quarterly meetings with representatives, those with compliance responsibility, from the political parties.

4. MATTERS ARISING

- It was noted that the BLG had not received a response to its submission on the Scottish government's consultation on the draft referendum bill.
- When referendum campaigning in 2016 was suspended following the murder of the MP for Batley and Spenningsdale, members noted there had been few issues from the political parties when PEBs had to be rescheduled. It was discussed whether the BLG should have a protocol in place highlighting to political parties that broadcasters may need to reschedule PEBs in light of unforeseen circumstances.

5. REPRESENTATIONS FROM POLITICAL PARTIES.

- The BLG had invited written representations from the political parties on matters relevant to the BLG, including PEBs for the 2018 elections.
- Written representation from the Green party of England and Wales was discussed and noted.

6. OFCOM UPDATE

- Ofcom invited the BLG members for their views on the digests of electoral statistical information produced by Ofcom ahead of the local and general elections in 2017.
- Ofcom asked for views on how the new PPRB rules Broadcast had embedded. As such there was discussion, when considering making additional PEB allocations, about the evidence of past electoral support. Ofcom confirmed that when considering past electoral support, it takes into account the performance in the previous set of corresponding elections over at least two electoral cycles. Less weight is placed on electoral results two or more electoral cycles ago.

7. LOOKING FORWARD TO 2018

Local Elections in England 3 May 2018:

- The elections in 2018 are the local elections to all 32 London boroughs, 34 metropolitan boroughs, 68 district/borough councils and 17 unitary authorities. Each broadcaster would come to decision on PEB allocation for these elections.

8. PRODUCTION GUIDELINES

- The Guidelines were last updated in January 2017 and it was agreed that following today's meeting that some further amendments may be required.

9. BLG WEBSITE

- It was noted that the contact information on the website needed updating and it was the right time to review the website for any further updates required.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Members agreed to keep the annual meeting as per the current arrangement but when required a further conference call could be arranged.