

RTÉ Audience Council
Meeting held on Thursday, 26 May 2011
at 11.00 a.m. in the RTÉ Sports & Social Club

COMMUNIQUE

Attendance: Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh (Chairperson); Gerry Ellis; Joe Little (RTÉ Board representative); Donal O'Grady; Robin O'Sullivan; Mary Stuart; Clare Watson

Apologies: Elaine Gallagher; Aoife McLysaght; Deirdre Carroll; Gary Hastings; Rachel Holstead; Alan Smith; Monika Sapielak; Brid O'Brien

In Attendance: Beverly Hanly, Secretary to the Audience Council;
Ryle Nugent, Group Head of Sport

At the outset, the Chairperson made reference to the difficulties recently encountered with notification of non-attendance by members and the consequent problems of achieving a quorum. Section 2.4 of the Standing Orders will be invoked in the case of some members.

Meeting held on 13th January 2011

The Communique of the meeting held on 13 January was adopted [by those present].

Meeting held on 10 March 2011 in Cork

An Aide Memoire of the meeting held on 10 March between members of the Council and staff in RTÉ's Cork Studios had been prepared and circulated. It had been a most informative and interesting exchange of views and had ended with a tour of the facilities.

Secretary's Report

The Council wished to offer good wishes to Sean Óg Ó Ceallachain who had recently retired after a long and distinguished broadcasting career. It also expressed its condolences to the families of the late Phil Greene and Joe Murray, who had both contributed so much to the organisation over many years. The death of Mai Lambert, whose family had a long association with RTÉ, was also noted with regret.

RTÉ Audience Council Annual Report

S96(16) of the Broadcasting Act 2009 obliges the RTÉ Audience Council to submit, no later than 30 June each year, a report to the Minister, the BAI and the Board of RTÉ concerning its deliberations in the previous financial year. A draft report is in the process of being prepared and will be circulated to members for comments prior to its submission.

RTÉ Sport: policy and coverage

Ryle Nugent, Group Head of TV Sport, attended for this item.

Prior to commencing the discussion, Ryle outlined his role and responsibilities and that of the Sports Department. Sports output is coordinated across radio, television and online as well as news. The output also includes 2 or 3 documentaries per year.

A wide ranging discussion followed which included acquisitions of rights; coverage of minority sports; women in sport; Listed Events; rights issues; geo blocking of events; host broadcaster responsibilities; potential options afforded by Saorview; upcoming HD broadcasts.

The presence of female sports commentators was to be welcomed.

The question of accessibility was raised. It was confirmed that sub-titling is available for commentaries on all deferred games and on some live commentaries.

The discussion of this item proved most informative and the members expressed their gratitude to Mr Nugent.

General Election 2011: Synopsis of RTÉ Election Steering Group report

A synopsis of RTÉ's General Election coverage had been provided to the Council. In general, members were of the view that RTÉ's coverage had been most comprehensive across all its services and there were noticeable enhancements/improvements since the last election. Reference was made to earlier discussion by the Council of RTÉ's mechanisms for auditing balance.

The Council asked that its appreciation be conveyed to the RTÉ personnel who had prepared the report.

Members' Issues

The Audience Council, RTÉ and the analysis of the media

A paper entitled *The Audience Council, RTÉ and the analysis of the media* had been circulated in advance to stimulate discussion. Following discussion, it was agreed that the proposal contained therein had merit and should now be presented to the RTÉ Board and management for consideration and response.

Saorview

There was some discussion on this item, with particular emphasis on accessibility. Members were concerned to learn that the set-top boxes currently available do not have the capability to receive audio description. The Council reiterated its wish to see the issue of accessibility being addressed seriously and given priority as time is of the essence in this regards.

Any Other Business

The Council complimented RTÉ for its comprehensive coverage of the recent State Visits by Queen Elizabeth II and President Obama as well as the State Funeral of the former Taoiseach, Dr Garrett FitzGerald. These had placed exceptional demands on the organisation's resources over a short space of time but it had risen to the challenge.

Recent problems with the RTÉ Player encountered by a member will be investigated.

Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 14 July 2011 at 11.00 a.m. in RTÉ.

The main Agenda item will be Saorview (it had been expected to have this on today's agenda but the meeting conflicted with the official launch of the service by the Minister).

Signed: _____
Chairman