

**RTÉ Audience Council**  
**Meeting held on Thursday 27 October 2011 at 11.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. in RTÉ**

**Communique**

**Attendance:** Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh (Chairperson); Gerry Ellis; Donal O'Grady; Robin O'Sullivan; Mary Stuart; Rachel Holstead; Joe Little (RTÉ Board representative); Ebun Akpoveta; Paddy Richardson; Deirdre Carroll; Bríd O'Brien

**Apologies:** Clare Watson

**In Attendance:** Beverly Hanly, Secretary to the RTÉ Audience Council  
Adrian Moynes, RTÉ Group Secretary  
Roger Childs, Editor, Religious Programmes

**Communique 1 September 2011**

The Communique was adopted and signed.

**Matter Arising**

Saorview: the Council wished to reiterate its concern that no State agency is to provide financial support to disadvantaged people to help them make the digital switchover. The importance of any information on Saorview being made available in accessible formats was emphasised. The Council also recommended that a helpline be available after the ASO date for a period of time to assist people who, for whatever reason, did not take the necessary steps beforehand.

**Secretary's Report**

The Secretary updated the Council on developments in RTÉ since the last meeting.

The Council would like to receive the internal RTÉ report, or an executive summary of same, which issues following the Presidential election and two referenda.

The Prime Time Investigates programme *Mission to Prey* is the subject of legal proceedings and internal editorial review. The outcome of that review will be communicated to the Council, for its consideration, in due course. Council members emphasised the seriousness of the issues arising from the programme, while also recognising the importance of investigative journalism to the fulfilment of RTÉ's public service remit.

The Council welcomed the Director General's lecture at DCU on 17 October in which he set out his vision and intent for RTÉ's future provision of public service media. Members acknowledged that the organisation's current financial pressures would challenge its ability to sustain the existing range and quality of output.

It was confirmed that the Council's desire that the post of Environment Correspondent be filled at the earliest opportunity had been brought to the attention of the management in News and Current Affairs.

**Draft Programme of Events 2012**

A draft list of possible public events which the Council might organise or in which it might participate had been circulated. The purpose of this programme of activities would be to facilitate the Council in actively discharging its statutory role, and also to raise the public's

awareness of the existence and role of the RTÉ Audience Council. The response of the Council to the general scope and content of the draft programme was positive. Following consideration of each item, it was agreed that a revised version of the programme – taking account of the views expressed – would be prepared in advance of the next meeting.

In relation to the media programme on Radio, the Chairman informed the Council that he understood that its proposal was under active consideration and that an executive decision is expected by the end of the year.

### **Members' Issues**

Concern was raised about the RTÉ Radio Player which had been launched recently. There was some disappointment expressed due to the fact that it was not accessible to all. Had it been made known that this shortcoming would be addressed in the version of the Player to be released early in 2012, this reaction might have been avoided.

The *Local Heroes* enterprise initiative was welcomed by several members of the Council, but a view was also expressed that support for the initiative needed to remember that objectivity in reporting and commentary remained important and that enterprise took place in a commercially competitive environment.

The view was strongly expressed that satirical programmes such as *Green Tea* should not mock public figures on the grounds of their actual or supposed sexual orientation.

A concern was also raised about the dangers of creeping sensationalism in journalism in general. It was noted that a number of organisations were becoming wary of assisting journalists because of fears of sensationalist reporting.

### **Future Meetings**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 15 December at 2.30 p.m. and will be preceded by the meeting with the RTÉ Board at 1.00 p.m.

A provisional list of meetings for 2012 will be circulated in advance of the next meeting for agreement at that meeting.

### **Section 2.4 of the Standing Orders**

An amendment to this Section was circulated in session for consideration and, if agreed, for adoption at the next meeting.

### **Religious Programming**

Roger Childs, Editor Religious Programmes, gave an overview of the work of his department. It covered a wide range of issues and prompted a lively discussion – from general principles and the needs of various constituents of the target audience, to the chiming of the Angelus. The Council thanked Roger for his time in preparing the presentation and for attending today's meeting.

*Signed* \_\_\_\_\_  
*Chairperson*