

RAIDIÓ TEILIFÍS ÉIREANN

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of RTÉ
held on Thursday, 24 March 2022 via Zoom

Present: Moya Doherty (Chair)
Anne O'Leary
Susan Ahern
Robert Shortt
Deborah Kelleher
Daire Hickey
David Harvey
Ian Kehoe
PJ Mathews
Connor Murphy
Jonathan Ruane
Dee Forbes, Director General

In Attendance: Paula Mullooly, Group Secretary
Richard Collins, Chief Financial Officer
Peadar Faherty, Head of Internal Audit
Geraldine O'Leary, Head of Commercial
Debbie Kennedy, Head of Trading, Commercial

1. **New Board Member**
The Board welcomed Jonathan Ruane to the Board and briefly introduced themselves. JR introduced himself to the Board.
2. **Minutes of Meeting**
The Board agreed that the minutes needed to be reviewed and requested that the Secretary do so in conjunction with Ian Kehoe.
3. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**
It was agreed that a Board tracker document would be actioned for next meeting.
4. **Declarations of Interest**
None.
5. **DG's Report**

Covid

The DG acknowledged that it had been hoped to have this meeting be in person but Covid is proving challenging. The high numbers are putting a strain on production and antigen testing every other day has been re-introduced and is proving successful in picking up cases. The plan had been to introduce Hybrid working after Easter but that is under review as site activity needs to be limited for the moment.

Content and Performance

RTÉ is holding up well in terms of audience. The rugby has been strong for both RTÉ and Virgin. News is doing well as is the LLS, Room to Improve, and Dancing with Stars. St Patrick's day coverage of the parade and the LLS did well. ITV and BBC are moving to one hour on soaps but RTÉ has not made any changes here. On Ukraine coverage, Sport and Brainstorm are doing well and the Player is continuing to grow with streams and time spent up. In Drama, Kin won 6 awards at the IFTAs. The DG noted that she would be arranging a meeting next week with Board members to showcase a new development.

Marketplace

The DG noted that GOL would be presenting to the meeting but noted there is still buoyancy and optimism in the market which is helped by a strong audience.

Public Affairs

The DG noted that we are still awaiting publication of FOMC report. She stated that RTÉ, Virgin and other media are working together to provide support for the Ukrainian crisis. The media coalition will work with Community Foundation Ireland to raise funds for local and international charities.

The DG noted that Fiona O'Shea is leaving RTÉ and her replacement will be joining in May. The Chair stated that she would like to wish FOS the very best.

6. Finance Update

(Richard Collins joined the meeting)

Key judgement papers (for approval)

RC noted that there were two judgment papers before the Board for approval. He summarised the papers and noted that there had been a presentation to the Audit and Risk Committee on the papers who had recommended their acceptance to the Board

- IAS1 Going Concern
- IAS19 DB Pension Scheme Assumptions

A resolution was put to the Board to approve the key judgment papers IAS1 on Going Concern and IAS19 on the DB Pension Scheme Assumptions.

Proposed: Anne O'Leary
Seconded: Robert Shortt

Audit update

RC updated the Board on the Audit noting that there were no errors and no internal control issues.

IPU Annual Report 2021 (for approval)

The IPU Accounts for 2021 were put before the Board for approval. The Audit and Risk Committee had reviewed the accounts and recommended their approval to the Board. A resolution was put to the Board that the IPU 2021 Accounts would be approved by the Board.

Proposed: Anne O'Leary
Seconded: Moya Doherty

The Chair suggested that In future IPU reports where the top 50 programmes are listed it might be useful to highlight IP in a different colour.

Financial update 2021

RC brought the Board through the evolution of the 2021 accounts.

7. Update - Commercial Income 2022 Projections

(Geraldine O'Leary & Debbie Kennedy joined the meeting)

GOL identified the key questions for the Board as being how Commercial is doing as against budget and what will be the end of year outcome. GOL noted that Commercial is concentrating on maximising existing lines and developing new ones while being mindful world is changing. RTÉ plays the long game and only does deals it can deliver which means it has a unique position of trust in the market. The teams works very hard to understand client's business and deliver with 360 degree packages.

(Geraldine O'Leary & Debbie Kennedy left the meeting)

8. News - Ukraine and Foreign Reporting

(Jon Williams joined the meeting)

JW updated the Board on news matters in particular Ukraine and on the Digital first project on the Ukraine invasion. In relation to reporters on the ground he noted that it is a very hostile environment and RTÉ has to be careful about asking people to go in.

Jon Williams updated the Board on the World Report which is partly funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs. RTÉ World Report is an ambitious strategy to double RTÉ's presence overseas, join the dots for audiences and showcase international coverage, online, on air and on mobile. RTÉ News will appoint three new roles, initially for a pilot period of two years: Eastern Europe Reporter (TBC) Global Security Reporter (United Nations, New York) Africa Reporter (Nairobi, Kenya). In addition, RTÉ News will create a new 'digital-first' home for its global newsgathering, relaunching the foreign news page of rte.ie/news as RTÉ World Report. The agreement between RTÉ & DFA is underpinned by a series of key principles designed to protect RTÉ's editorial independence.

The Chair asked how staff in N&CA are after two years of Covid and now a War. JW stated that they are exhausted but that their commitment and passion shines through. The Board were enthusiastic about the initiative and the Chair asked JW to pass on the gratitude of the Board to teams in N&CA and good wishes to those travelling to the war zone.

(Jon Williams left the meeting)

9. Board Self-Assessment / Evaluation (Peadar Faherty joined the meeting)

The Chair thanked PF for his document and recommendation. PF stated that the evaluation is a requirement under the Code of Practice and an internal process will achieve what is needed. The next time round will be an external evaluation. PF emphasised the confidentiality of the process. The Board indicated that they were happy to proceed with the internal evaluation.

(Peadar Faherty left the meeting)

10. Workplace Review

The Chair noted that following on from conversations around reviews of staff/contractors she had formed a group with 2 board members leading – David Harvey and Conor Murphy - to meet with the DG and HR to look at the types of contractual relationships in RTÉ. She noted that there would be an initial meeting to discuss terms of reference and timing. This endeavour would give more insight into the make up and types of RTÉ's contractors and analyse the approach to the VEP.

II. Committees

Audit & Risk Committee

AOL updated the Board on the Audit and Risk Committee noting that the Judgment Papers, the IPU Report and Finance had already been covered by RC. The Committee had a private meeting with the Auditors who had nothing to bring to the attention of the Committee and stated that they were happy with provisions including Scope provisions.

Fair Trading Committee

DK noted that the last meeting had not taken place but that the FTO was working on a review on Fair Trading policy.

Programme Committee

DK updated the Board on the recent Committee meeting with Neil Leyden from Online. Neil Leyden informed the Committee that he had joined RTÉ in 2015 as head of RTÉ.ie and on joining he wanted to put a structure in place which, in effect, created “a single point of contact that creates opportunities for our diverse audiences to discover more”. The principles behind RTÉ.ie is to be user centred with universal standards, joined up and diverse content of quality. He noted that RTÉ.ie and the RTÉ News App have doubled traffic and they are now at 3 billion page views annually. NL outlined the Roadmap and Future Initiatives for Online from both a Design and Development perspective and from a Content perspective. There are also social media opportunities that can be availed of. NL set out the learnings for RTÉ.ie post Covid. In particular, the RTÉ brand is trusted, Online growth is exponential, RTÉ.ie makes sense of RTÉ.

Audience Council

PJM updated the Board in relation to the Audience Council. He noted that the Council is required of RTÉ by statute and it submits a report to the Board and a report to the Minister. The Council met in February where the Executive responded to work done in the previous year and that landed very well. They also dealt with next steps in relation to a Council project. The emerging theme is around Climate Change. The Council will meet in April for a dry run for a presentation to the Board in May. PJM noted that RTÉ arranged for the Council to attend the LLS in April and that they were appreciative of that.

12. Any Other Business

The Chair stated that the Board might discuss at a future stage a commemorative art piece for Marian Finucane, a pioneering female presenter and journalist.

There being no other business the meeting concluded.

Maya Achoty

Signed: _____

Chair

Next Meeting: 28 April 2022