

Radio Television Hong Kong Board of Advisors
Annual Report 2019 - 2020
(1 September 2019 - 31 August 2020)

Overview

The Radio Television Hong Kong Board of Advisors (“the Board”) was set up on 1 September 2010 pursuant to the Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong (“the Charter”). The Board advises the Director of Broadcasting (“DB”) on a range of issues relating to the services of RTHK including editorial principles, programming standards, performance evaluation, service improvements and community participation in broadcasting in accordance with the Charter. The Board also receives reports on complaints as regular agenda items and conducts a public opinion survey on RTHK’s performance bi-annually.

2. The Board comprises non-official Members from different sectors of the community who are appointed by the Chief Executive for a term of two years. DB is an ex-officio Member. The Membership List of the Board for the term from 1 September 2018 to 31 August 2020 is at Annex.
3. The Board met on a bi-monthly basis. Members were also invited to attend RTHK functions and observe the production of programmes by RTHK.

Highlights of Work in 2019 - 2020

News, Public and Current Affairs Programmes

4. RTHK presented to the Board the news, public and current affairs programmes produced by the TV Division and the Radio Division. The Board appreciated that the RTHK news team had made great efforts in covering the public events notwithstanding resource constraints. The Board hoped that RTHK would strictly adhere to the Charter, and ensure that the news coverage was objective and impartial and the current affairs programmes were providing comprehensive perspectives and information. The Board was also concerned about the complaints against the professionalism of some RTHK reporters and the criticisms against some programmes’ coverage of the public events. The Board hoped that RTHK would consider public perception and avoid being perceived as selectively picking on any single political camp.

Platforms for Young Talent

5. RTHK briefed the Board on the platforms for young talent of the TV Division and the Radio Division. The Board expressed its appreciation and commended the rebranded radio channel logos designed by a young designer. RTHK stated that it had all along been producing programmes to engage the young generation, which was one of the target groups of the service. The Board suggested that RTHK should produce programmes to promote the understanding of the concept of “One Country, Two Systems” and social inclusion where appropriate.

Programmes on Culture and Heritage

6. RTHK introduced to the Board the programmes on culture and heritage produced by the TV Division and the Radio Division. The Board praised the programmes, suggested that RTHK should promote more on this type of programmes and gave advice on programme scheduling and promotion strategies.

Community Involvement Broadcasting Service

7. RTHK reported to the Board the latest updates on Community Involvement Broadcasting Service (CIBS). The Board agreed that CIBS could provide a platform for the public so that members of the community would have chances to voice their opinions, and expressed support for RTHK’s continuous promotion of CIBS, which had made CIBS a regular service.

Programmes on the National Security Law

8. RTHK introduced to the Board the programmes related to the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“National Security Law”) produced by the TV Division and the Radio Division, and the arrangement for discussions on the National Security Law in the main public and current affairs programmes. In addition, RTHK had all along been working proactively with the Information Services Department and broadcasting official clarification messages and short videos for publicity purposes. The Board noted the matters concerned.

Survey on TV Programme Commissioning

9. RTHK briefed the Board on the results of the survey on TV programme commissioning. The Board considered that the survey report was positive and it reflected that commissioning programmes had enhanced the diversity of RTHK programmes. The Board provided advice on the assessment criteria of TV programme commissioning and the publicity orientation.

Programme Initiatives Related to COVID-19

10. RTHK briefed the Board on the programme initiatives related to COVID-19 specially produced by the TV Division and the Radio Division. The Board praised those programme themes and the arrangement, and encouraged RTHK to cheer up the society and provide anti-pandemic information to different audiences. The Board also expressed its views on the promotion strategies of the programmes.

The Role of RTHK Regarding the Public Events

11. The Board reflected to RTHK the different views received regarding the public events. The Board pointed out that RTHK should adhere to the public purposes and mission as stipulated in the Charter when reporting and handling the public events, so as to provide accurate and impartial information, promote understanding of the concept of “One Country, Two Systems”, and engender a sense of citizenship and national identity.

12. Furthermore, the Board provided three pieces of advice to DB. Firstly, the Board considered that all RTHK programmes were covered by the Charter. They should adhere to the public purposes and mission as stipulated in the Charter, provide accurate and authoritative information, reflect views impartially, and promote understanding of our community, our nation and the world; secondly, the Board hoped that DB and the RTHK management would handle all complaints strictly, and have an overall consideration based on different parties’ advice and should not be hasty; thirdly, the Board hoped that DB would follow the Charter and seek advice of the Board on matters pertaining to editorial principles, programming standards and quality of RTHK programming, so as to ensure that its programmes complied with the

requirements of the Charter.

13. DB said that RTHK would continue to receive advice from the Board prudently according to the requirements of the Charter.

14. The Board received RTHK's responses to the serious warning given by the Communications Authority ("CA") to "Pentaprism" on 20 April 2020 and the warning given to "Headliner" on 19 May 2020. The Board provided four pieces of advice regarding the incident. Firstly, the Board expressed great distress and disappointment at CA's decisions. It reiterated that all RTHK programmes must meet the requirements of the Charter, and according to the Producers' Guidelines, RTHK must ensure that the factual content of its programmes were accurate; secondly, the Board agreed to CA's allegation that the programme concerned was inciting hatred, and opined that RTHK could not allow similar incidents to happen again; thirdly, the Board noticed that there was a serious gap in DB's implementation of the Charter, and it hoped that DB would strictly follow up the issue. In particular, clear guidelines must be issued to RTHK staff, in order that the public purposes and mission of RTHK could be fulfilled; fourthly, the Board hoped to seek a workable mechanism through cooperating with the working groups and DB, so as to monitor the programmes to achieve the public purposes and mission of RTHK.

15. DB stated that whenever a problem existed or it was considered that a problem existed, RTHK would have reviews, and complaints would be handled according to the established mechanism. The RTHK management had attached great importance to CA's decisions, and had handled the matter in a serious and speedy manner after the decisions were made. The management had also launched a review, including the content, presentation, production procedure, and the manpower arrangement of the programme. The Board understood that RTHK had taken timely follow-up and remedial actions on the incident, and opined that RTHK should look forward towards the improvement targets.

Working Groups

16. The Board proposed the formation of working groups in January 2020, in order to discharge its functions as stipulated in the Charter more effectively. The working groups had two meetings on 10 June and 10 August 2020 respectively to discuss about the editorial principles, programming standards

and quality of RTHK programming, and the complaint handling mechanism, so as to provide suggestions to RTHK.

17. Regarding the editorial principles, the Board suggested that RTHK enhance its internal monitoring, reputational risk management, leader's management and the facilitation of communication with the Board. As for complaint handling, the Board suggested that RTHK could consider notifying the Board at the stage of investigation regarding complaints of great importance and public concern. In addition, the Board opined that DB could expound more on the work of RTHK to the media regarding important issues, and lead colleagues to deepen understanding of the spirit and purposes of the Charter.

18. Members considered that the working groups had positive outcomes, not only strengthening communication between RTHK and the Board, but also promoting mutual trust and establishing sound foundations for co-operation. The Board shared the same purposes with RTHK and respected each other. While the communication between the Chairman and DB was of the utmost importance, the Board also expected to strengthen communication beforehand and work hand in hand to bring changes that would benefit RTHK.

RTHK Controlling Officer's Report and Annual Plan

19. The Board was updated on the allocation of resources as set out in the RTHK Controlling Officer's Report 2020-21. The Board was briefed on the Annual Plan for 2020-21 and the direction of programme production. The Board provided advice on RTHK's direction of programme production and contingency arrangements during the pandemic.

Updates on RTHK's Response to Audit Commission's Report

20. RTHK updated the Board on RTHK's progress on the implementation of Audit's recommendations on a bi-monthly basis. The Board noted that RTHK had been proactively implementing the recommendations arising from the Audit Commission's Report and the reviews, and it had reported progress on the follow-up actions to the Legislative Council as required.

Programmes Updates

21. The Board received reports on a bi-monthly basis from RTHK on programmes / major events and projects and offered comments and advice for the consideration of the RTHK management.

Complaints Updates

22. The Board received reports on a bi-monthly basis from RTHK on the complaint cases concerning RTHK handled by CA. The Board also received statistical summary of direct feedback from the public to RTHK at every meeting. These arrangements facilitated the Board to grasp the latest overview of public opinion.

Functions Attended by Members

23. The Board was invited to attend major events organised by RTHK, including the “College Christmas Concert – Messiah Encore!” held on 24 December 2019. In addition, the Board was originally invited to attend the “Lunar New Year Gathering” scheduled on 31 January 2020 and “The Speaker 2020” scheduled on 16 February 2020. However, the two functions were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acknowledgement

24. The Board appreciated the support of the RTHK staff for the meetings of the Board, in particular the many in-depth briefings given by RTHK colleagues to the Board on their work.

**The RTHK Board of Advisors
November 2020**

Membership List of RTHK Board of Advisors
(for the term 1 September 2018 to 31 August 2020)

Chairman:

Dr Eugene CHAN Kin-keung, BBS, JP

Members:

Mr Walter CHAN Kar-lok, SBS, JP

Ms Dilys CHAU Suet-fung

Ms Linda CHOY Siu-min

Mr Mohan DATWANI

Professor Anthony FUNG Ying-him

Ms Helen KWAN Po-jen

Ms Shirley LOO Marie Therese, BBS, MH, JP

Dr TIK Chi Yuen, SBS, JP

Ms Eva WONG Ching-hung

Mr Augustine WONG Ho-ming, JP

Professor WONG Kam-fai, MH

Ms Elaine WU Siu-ling

Ex-Officio Member:

Director of Broadcasting