

**Minutes of the 3rd meeting of
RTHK Board of Advisors
held at 2:30 pm, 20 May 2011
at Board Room, Broadcasting House, RTHK**

Present :

Mr Lester G. HUANG, JP (Chairman)
Dr Eugene CHAN Kin-keung
Ms FUNG May-gay
Mr Ringo LAM Wing-kwan
Mr C.K. LAU
Mr Maurice LEE Wai-man, JP
Ms Marisa YIU
Miss Lisa Marie DJENG Kar-yee
Mr Raj Sital MOTWANI, BBS, JP
Mr Gordon LEUNG , Acting Director of Broadcasting

Absent with apologies :

Ms Jolly WONG Ka-chi

In attendance from RTHK

Mr TAI Keen-man, Acting Deputy Director of Broadcasting
Miss Jace AU, Leader of RTHK's Working Group on Community Broadcasting
(Agenda item 2)
Mr CHAN Yiu-wah, Head/Digital Audio Broadcasting (Agenda item 2)
Ms CHAN Man-kuen, Head/Corporate Communications Unit (Agenda item 3)
Ms Amy KWONG (Board Secretariat)

Secretary :

Mr David CHOW (Board Secretariat)

-
1. The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting. He said that the meeting would focus on the discussion of the preliminary proposal prepared by RTHK for launching the pilot project for community broadcasting involvement (CBI) services so as to allow time for RTHK to work further on the matter with a view to conducting public consultation and introducing the CBI services tentatively by the end of 2011 and end 2012/early 2013 respectively.

Agenda item 1 : Matters arising

Funeral of the late Mr SZETO Wah

2. The Chairman said that at the last meeting, Mr Gordon LEUNG explained in full the rationale behind the RTHK management's decision not to live webcast the funeral of the late Mr Szeto Wah. Mr LEUNG also advised that RTHK would look into the issue of ambiguity in the editorial decision-making process concerning RTHK.hk. He invited Mr Leung to inform the meeting of the outcome of RTHK's review on the matter.
3. Mr Gordon LEUNG said that the RTHK management had discussed and laid down clear editorial principles for webcast on RTHK.hk. In brief, it was a general principle that RTHK would only webcast its own productions or activities in which RTHK participated in their production, as this was merely to present such productions on the web platform. However, for a production in which RTHK had no involvement at all, whether it should be webcast would be considered on a case-by-case basis by a prescribed committee. Editorial and procedural guidelines in handling webcast on RTHK.hk had been issued to all RTHK producers for compliance.

[Post-meeting note: the concerned guidelines have been made available to the Board on 8.7.2011 for their information.]

Agenda Item 2 : Pilot project for Community Broadcasting Involvement Services (BOA Paper 6/2011)

4. The Chairman said that the paper only set out the preliminary proposal for implementing CBI services. To facilitate the discussion of the meeting, he had gathered an informal focus group comprising a few Members including Dr Eugene CHAN, Mr CK LAU, Mr Maurice LEE and himself to engage in the discussion with RTHK colleagues in the course of their drawing up of the paper.
5. Miss Jace AU introduced the paper.
6. Mr TAI Keen-man elaborated on the time frame for implementing the CBI pilot project. He said that the CBI Fund (CBIF) would be available in 2012/13. Given the time required for processing applications, RTHK aimed at introducing CBI services by end 2012/ early 2013. To this end, RTHK would need to conduct

public consultation tentatively by the end of 2011 with a view to drawing up concrete proposals for the Board's consideration in early 2012. After collecting Members' initial views on the pilot project at the meeting, RTHK would sound out the views of relevant community groups and prepare further papers for the Board's discussion at its coming meetings.

Objectives of CBI services

7. Members generally considered that the objectives of CBI services as proposed were appropriate.

CBI participants

8. Members generally agreed that, at least for the CBI pilot project, applicants for participation should be organizations rather than individual persons because the ability of organizations in producing programmes would likely be higher than that of individual persons. One of the purposes of the CBI services was to enable more participants to benefit from the process, and public money was involved. A higher level of accountability was necessary.
9. Regarding whether restricting applicants to organizations would make it unduly difficult for interested parties to apply for the CBI pilot project, a Member said that any group of two or more persons could apply for registration under the Societies Ordinance. The application process was rather simple, and a society so registered could open bank accounts. It was also noted that many organizations applying for other public funding schemes were registered under the Societies Ordinance.
10. Members considered that RTHK should consider further the possible practicable arrangements concerned.

RTHK's roles

Platform and geographical coverage

11. RTHK recommended that CBI programmes should be carried only on digital audio broadcasting (DAB) channels. In response to a Member's question as to whether the CBI programmes should also be carried on the analogue channels, Mr Tai Keen-man said that during the pilot project, it would be more desirable for the programmes to be broadcast on one platform, i.e. DAB. Another Member said

that if CBI programmes were broadcast on AM and FM channels, the impact on the existing programming on these channels would also need to be considered.

Programme formats and timeslots

12. A Member enquired about the details of the proposals on programme formats and timeslots, e.g., whether pre-recording should be applied to cover the whole 3-year period of the pilot project or only the first year.
13. Some Members shared this concern and considered that RTHK should give more detailed thought to the suggestion because of the following considerations-
 - (a) pre-recording might be seen as a form of censorship;
 - (b) pre-recording would deprive the participants of the opportunity of presenting certain types of programmes such as 'phone-in' programmes;
 - (c) while the need to ensure compliance with relevant broadcasting standards was recognized, it was possible that there were participants who were well-experienced in broadcasting or who had become familiar with it through participating in CBI services over time, whether relaxation could be given to such participants should be considered.
14. Mr TAI Keen-man said that the initial idea of requiring CBI programmes to be firstly pre-recorded was that being the carrier, RTHK would be legally liable for all CBI programmes. Therefore, there was a need for RTHK to ensure compliance with the codes of practices issued by the Broadcasting Authority (BA). RTHK producers would be deployed to provide necessary training and assistance to the participants in enhancing both their broadcasting technique and awareness of the BA requirements.
15. After discussion, Members generally considered that CBI programmes should preferably be pre-recorded but flexibility should also be allowed for live programmes on the basis of merits of individual cases in achieving social gains.

Topics for CBI Programmes

16. A Member enquired whether a CBI participant could apply for a timeslot less than a block of 13 weeks per quarter.

17. Miss Jace AU said that the rationale behind the proposed 13-week blocks was that the CBI participants would be expected to undergo the full programme production process so that they could acquire the required broadcasting technique and experience. To achieve the objective of promoting plurality and diversity, CBI proposals requesting for a shorter timeslot could be considered. However, allowing too small a timeslot would entail resources implications on RTHK because RTHK would then need to provide training to a much bigger number of CBI participants. Besides, it was not desirable if the programming schedule became too fragmented, resulting in a lack of focus and thereby appeal to the audience.
18. Mr TAI Keen-man added that assuming that 4 CBI programmes lasting 1 hour each were arranged each day, RTHK would have to provide training service to some 28 participants per week. The resource implications would multiply if shorter time blocks were to be entertained.
19. Mr CHAN Yiu-wah added that, from practical experience, one should not presume that production of a shorter series or shorter programmes would necessarily be easier than a longer series or longer programmes.
20. After discussion, Members in general supported the proposal that, as a norm, timeslots should be allocated in 13-week blocks, having regard to the benefits of requiring the CBI participants to undergo the full production process and the resource implications on RTHK in providing supporting services to the participants, but timeslots of lesser than 13 weeks could also be considered exceptionally on individual case by case basis.
21. A Member said that the scope of CBI services was rather broad. Therefore, when RTHK considered setting a programming framework for each quarter, the topics needed to be broad enough to encompass creativity and talent nurturing.
22. Mr TAI Keen-man said that RTHK also intended to work in such a direction, such as allocating timeslots by certain target audience groups so as to allow a wider diversity of CBI programmes.

CBI participants' roles

23. A Member said that some participants might not be interested in undergoing the

full process of CBI programme production. They might only wish to present a programme in a very simple format such as following the script to talk into the microphone or simply playing music.

24. Mr CHAN Yiu-wah commented that such simple-format programmes might arguably be not meeting the objectives of CBI services discussed above (namely, that CBI programme applications should demonstrate social gain elements and instill broadcasting knowledge and ethics to the participants). Miss Jace AU added that simple-format programmes such as personal talk shows were already common on many other platforms such as internet radio.

Training service

25. A Member said that CBI was a new concept to the community. Those who were interested in participating in CBI might not have the full knowledge of their involvement in programme production until they had received training from RTHK. Problems might arise if a participant selected for producing CBI programmes subsequently found it difficult to cope with programme production and gave up before completing the allocated timeslots. Therefore, it would be advisable if RTHK could provide training for those interested in CBI services before they submitted their applications. Other Members generally agreed but recognized that the consequential resource implications needed to be considered.
26. A Member suggested RTHK to consider establishing co-operation with education institutes because universities and quite a number of secondary schools had campus radio operations. Another Member suggested that RTHK could consider providing opportunities of audition for the applicants so as to enable them to consider if they could cope with CBI programme production.
27. Mr Gordon LEUNG agreed that whether training or orientation for potential participants before they applied for CBI should be carefully considered, and that this issue should be one of the topics to consult stakeholders.

CBIF

Processing of applications

28. A Member enquired about the detailed application mechanism such as whether unsuccessful applicants or those successful applicants whose productions had a high audienceship should be required to apply afresh in the subsequent round(s)

of application.

29. Miss Jace AU said that, at least for the purposes of the pilot period where demand was expected to far exceed supply, it was proposed that all participants should apply afresh in each round of application so that the timeslots would not be monopolized by a small number of bodies and there would be more chances for all concerned to apply.
30. Members generally concurred with Miss Jace AU. They also felt that if popular CBI programmes were accorded priority in subsequent rounds of application, it would go against the objective of promoting creativity and nourishing talent.
31. Some Members said that to some CBI participants, the opportunity to participate in CBI programmes might be more important to them than funding support from CBIF. They therefore enquired whether it would be more advantageous for an applicant to request for a smaller amount of CBIF funding.
32. Mr Gordon LEUNG said that the objectives of introducing the CBI services were not, as discussed above, normal procurement under which the lowest bid would be selected as a matter of course. Instead, the purposes of the CBIF should be regarded as providing justified assistance to applications which had already been selected in accordance with the CBI objectives. In other words, the amount of funding request should presumably not be a determining factor when evaluating an application. The detailed vetting mechanism would be worked out at a later stage when the key parameters of the CBI pilot project were clearer.

Review mechanism

33. Some Members suggested that a review system should be put in place so as to enhance the fairness of the system and help avoid possible challenges against the vetting committee's decisions.
34. Mr Gordon LEUNG pointed out that the practicalities of setting up a review mechanism needed to be considered. For example, approved applications would be given not only funding but also timeslots for the programmes. Since all timeslots would have been allocated to those successful applications when a request for review was lodged, this would give rise to the question as to whether the other approved programmes should be held up pending the outcome of the review. Another consideration was that applicants could always submit their

proposals afresh in subsequent rounds of application.

35. Some Members felt that, despite these considerations, putting in place a review mechanism might still be worth considering to instill more confidence into the fairness of the selection process. In order to avoid a review holding up the production of other selected programmes, a shorter period for lodging review requests could be stipulated.

Composition of vetting committee

36. A Member said that the scope of CBI services was rather broad. Therefore, it was desirable if the vetting committee could comprise a pool of experts from different fields, so that vetting panels with relevant expertise could be formed to deal with applications concerning different fields. Other Members generally agreed.
37. Mr Gordon LEUNG said that RTHK had yet to give detailed consideration to the composition of the vetting committee, subject to the views of the Board of Advisors, stakeholders and the public about the major parameters of the CBI pilot project.
38. Mr CHAN Yiu-wah added that the programming mix for CBI services had yet to be discussed, and hence the composition of the vetting committee had to be discussed at a later stage.

Summary of the Board's views

39. After discussion, the Chairman summarized the views of the Members as follows-
 - (a) Members had no comment on launching the CBI pilot project on DAB channels and were open-minded as to whether analogue channels should also be used;
 - (b) Members agreed that the objectives of CBI services should be those proposed in the paper;
 - (c) Members agreed that applicants for CBI services should be registered organizations, to be in line with the objectives of the CBI services; and RTHK should further consider the practicalities such as whether

registration under the Societies Ordinance should suffice;

- (d) Members agreed that the participants should be required to undergo a training/orientation process to ensure that they fully understood the responsibilities of a broadcaster before they started programme production; RTHK needed to further consider the practicalities of providing such training/orientation because the CBI applications might have varying degrees of previous experience in broadcasting;
 - (e) in connection with (d) above, RTHK should consider the desirability of providing training to the participants before they submit their funding applications;
 - (f) Members agreed that pre-recorded programmes as the preferred modality would help ensure the quality of the programme and compliance with relevant broadcasting guidelines; however, live programmes could also be considered on the merits of individual cases in achieving social gains;
 - (g) on CBIF, the vetting committee should comprise a pool of members with a sufficiently wide range of expertise, so that vetting panels with the relevant expertise could be formed to consider applications with particular focuses;
 - (h) Members considered that it might be desirable to provide a review mechanism but recognized that the practicalities needed to be thought through.
40. Mr TAI Keen-man said that RTHK would conduct some focus group discussions with organizations and stakeholders who were likely to have an interest in CBI services (e.g. members of the RTHK Programme Advisory Panel), to seek their initial views. On the basis of such feedback, RTHK would refine the proposals and consult the Board of Advisors again. Board Members were welcome to put forward to RTHK any further views they might have at any time.

**Agenda item 3(a) : Quarterly updates on programmes
(BOA Paper 7/2011)**

41. Mr TAI Keen-man introduced the paper and added that an “app” on the Android

platform for RTHK.hk was launched in March 2011. Besides, there had been a trend of sharp increase in the hit-rate for podcasts, as compared to podcasts accessed by desktop computers.

42. Ms Chan Man-kuen introduced the RTHK Youth Opinion Survey which was completed in March 2011.

**Agenda item 3(b) : Quarterly updates on complaints
(BOA Paper 8/2011)**

43. Mr TAI Keen-man introduced the paper which reported two complaints cases which the BA had ruled as being substantiated.

Agenda item 4: Any other business

RTHK Annual Plan 2011/12

44. Mr TAI Keen-man thanked Members for their comments on the draft RTHK Annual Plan 2011/12. The final version had been uploaded to RTHK.hk.

Agenda item 5: Date of next meeting

45. The Chairman said that the next meeting would be held on 26 August 2011 at 2:30 pm in the Board Room of RTHK.
46. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:15 pm.

Secretariat
RTHK Board of Advisors