

**Minutes of the 51st Meeting of
RTHK Board of Advisors
held at 9:15 am, 29 November 2019
at Conference Room, G/F, Broadcasting House
30 Broadcast Drive, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon**

Present

Dr Eugene CHAN Kin-keung, BBS, JP (Chairman)

Mr Walter CHAN Kar-lok, SBS, JP

Ms Dilys CHAU Suet-fung

Ms Linda CHOY Siu-min

Professor Anthony FUNG Ying-him

Ms Helen KWAN Po-jen

Ms Shirley LOO Marie Therese, BBS, MH, JP

Dr TIK Chi-yuen, SBS, JP

Mr Augustine WONG Ho-ming, JP

Professor WONG Kam-fai, MH

Ms Elaine WU Siu-ling

Mr LEUNG Ka-wing, Director of Broadcasting

In Attendance from RTHK

Mr Eugene FUNG, Deputy Director of Broadcasting (Review)

Ms CHAN Man-kuen, Deputy Director of Broadcasting (Programmes)

Mr Albert CHEUNG, Assistant Director (Radio & Corporate Programming)

Ms Jace AU, Assistant Director (TV & Corporate Businesses)

Mr Brian CHOW, Controller (Radio)

Ms Natalie CHAN, Controller (Television)

Ms Amen NG, Head/Corporate Communications & Standards

Ms Mayella CHEUNG (Board Secretariat)

Ms Sara FONG (Board Secretariat)

Absent with Apologies

Mr Mohan DATWANI

Ms Eva WONG Ching-hung

Secretary

Ms Yvonne WU (Board Secretariat)

Agenda Item 1 : Confirmation of the Minutes of the Last Meeting

1. Mr Mohan DATWANI and Ms Eva WONG Ching-hung sent their apologies for not being able to join this meeting.
2. Members raised some comments on the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2019 and suggested that the minutes should provide a more detailed account of the discussion. The Chairman would follow-up with the Secretariat to revise the meeting minutes accordingly.
[Post-meeting note: With the consent of the Chairman, the Secretariat circulated the revised minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2019 to Members for perusal on 30 December 2019.]
3. Regarding the meeting minutes of 16 August 2019 which the English version had been endorsed by the Board at the last meeting on 27 September 2019, the Chairman proposed to list the names of the two RTHK reporters related to the complaints in the Chinese version of the minutes. Mr LEUNG Ka-wing expressed his concern to the proposal as the English version of the meeting minutes, without the names of the two reporters, had already been endorsed. He also raised that it was a common practice that the name of the complainee would not be made public. Ms Amen NG supplemented that, in general, the identity of the complainee should be kept confidential. Taking into account the aforesaid concerns, the Chairman withdrew the proposal.

Agenda Item 2 : Matters Arising

4. In respect of paragraph 10 of the minutes of the last meeting, some Members asked about the follow-up actions taken against the two RTHK reporters. Mr LEUNG Ka-wing responded that the concerned cases had been promptly handled in accordance with the prevailing mechanism of complaint handling in RTHK and government regulations. Ms CHAN Man-kuen supplemented that RTHK received diverse views on the performance of the two reporters on those occasions concerned from different groups of audience. Besides, to protect the privacy of employees, RTHK would not disclose the details of disciplinary action taken. She added that while the Board had the function of advising RTHK on matters pertaining to editorial principles, programming standards and quality of programming, the daily operation and staffing matters should be dealt with by the RTHK management. The Chairman said that the Board would not be involved in the day-to-day operation of RTHK. He agreed that the Board would only advise on the direction of complaint handling in RTHK.

5. A Member enquired if RTHK had reflected on the issue or considered implementing new guidelines having regard to the handling of the abovementioned incidents. Mr LEUNG Ka-wing remarked that, after the last meeting, an email had been issued to remind all staff performing field duties that they should adhere to the RTHK Producers' Guidelines ("Guidelines") and should not participate in activities that were not related to their work, so as to maintain the perception of impartiality and fairness of the news by RTHK. The Member queried about the effectiveness of this email reminder. Mr LEUNG Ka-wing said that no similar incident happened again so far.
6. While there was a mechanism for handling staff in breach of the rules and regulations, the Chairman queried the procedures in handling staff who had breached the rules and regulations repeatedly. Mr LEUNG Ka-wing responded that RTHK had all along been following the prevailing civil service disciplinary mechanism, which included different levels of action in handling staffing matters. A Member suggested RTHK to explore whether it could shorten the internal procedural period and set up a Key Performance Indicator to gauge the handling process. The Chairman further questioned if the aforesaid mechanism would be applicable to the part-time staff or freelancers. Ms CHAN Man-kuen explained that all co-workers in RTHK were required to fulfil the contractual obligation and would be liable to disciplinary action.

Agenda Item 3 : Updates on the Role of RTHK regarding Recent Hong Kong Public Events

7. The Chairman said that the Board had received/picked up different feedback on the work of RTHK during the recent incidents. He asked the management to provide more information regarding the incidents concerned. He set out the feedback as follows –
 - (i) A letter dated 24 November 2019 from a freelance writer who was concerned about the attitude and professionalism of a RTHK reporter who joined other journalists in a protest when attending a police press conference;
 - (ii) A letter from a senior citizen who was concerned about the impartiality of RTHK's news reporting and programmes, and urged the Board to ensure RTHK was fulfilling its public purposes;
 - (iii) An article dated 28 November 2019 on Ta Kung Pao contributed by the Hong Kong Association of Media Veterans raising six questions to RTHK and expressing their concerns on the news reporting and programmes of RTHK which were considered to be partial;

- (iv) An article dated 28 November 2019 on Ming Pao written by Professor Clement SO regarding a recent survey which reflected a drop in the credibility of RTHK;
 - (v) Comments made by a Legislative Council Member that RTHK was considered to be biased;
 - (vi) Feedback on RTHK broadcasting the song “Glory to Hong Kong”;
 - (vii) Two pieces of article about RTHK reporters who were accused of throwing bricks and participating in a protest respectively while on duty;
 - (viii) Two photos showing a RTHK staff and a masked protestor who were suspected to be the same person; and
 - (ix) Positive feedback on “This Week” for inviting guests with different stance to attend the interview.
8. Ms CHAN Man-kuen pointed out that many accusations circulated on social media were fake news. With regard to the accusation of a RTHK reporter throwing bricks when on duty, Ms Amen NG said that the Head of Chinese News & Current Affairs Section (“CNCA”) had reviewed the video concerned and confirmed that the object was a pink filter of the reporter’s mask which was dropped on the ground when the police pulled off the mask from the reporter. The CNCA had also published a clarification post on RTHK website to refute that this video was actually a re-make to fabricate the crew throwing bricks. Regarding the attitude and approach of a RTHK reporter in expressing views during the Police press conference, she emphasised that the section head had conducted investigations as well as counselling and coaching to the staff concerned. The management had repeatedly reminded RTHK reporters to strictly adhere to the Guidelines and not to participate in activities that were not related to their work.
9. The Chairman also enquired whether a RTHK part-time reporter was being arrested. Ms CHAN Man-kuen responded that a part-time reporter was being charged of taking part in a riot. Mr LEUNG Ka-wing added that the part-time reporter was not on duty when being arrested in the night of 18 November. The part-time reporter last worked for RTHK on 9 November and was already being suspended from work according to the prevailing procedure.
10. Regarding the two photos showing a RTHK staff and a masked protestor, Ms CHAN Man-kuen said that RTHK was unable to ascertain whether they were the same person as the protestor in the photo was masked.
11. As for the comments made by the Hong Kong Association of Media Veterans, Mr LEUNG Ka-wing said that he had reminded colleagues that public perception should

not be ignored. A Member suggested that RTHK should conduct background check of candidates in its recruitment process. Mr. LEUNG Ka-wing responded that RTHK had all along been following the proper government procedures in recruiting its staff. Another Member remarked that the Hong Kong Association of Media Veterans was concerned about the biased behavior and performance of RTHK staff instead of the recruitment process. The Member suggested that the management should manage the performance of its staff. Mr LEUNG Ka-wing said that the management had made the best effort and taken precautionary actions to ensure that its staff adhered to the Charter of RTHK (“Charter”) and the Guidelines. Another Member stressed that apart from reminding the reporters to comply with the Guidelines, the RTHK management should consider working out a new set of Guidelines to ensure the reporters of RTHK would behave in a prudent and neutral manner at all times. Another Member indicated that the management should ensure that the reporters were well aware of the consequences of breaching the Guidelines.

12. Regarding the letter from a senior citizen, the Chairman said that the sender expected the RTHK’s reporters to serve as an observer and should not participate in the social events in order to maintain an objective reporting. He noted that RTHK had handled the concerned cases in accordance with the prevailing guidelines. He hoped that RTHK could continue to uphold its core value of impartiality as a public broadcaster. For the allegation of partiality of RTHK’s programmes, he stressed that perception was an important aspect to be considered by the management. Ms Amen NG explained that RTHK had endeavoured to include opinions from different perspectives in various programmes in order to provide a full coverage of the issues.
13. A Member cast doubt on the appropriateness of RTHK in live broadcasting the civilian press conference. Mr, LEUNG Ka-wing explained that TV 32 was a live broadcast channel relaying live events. Another Member stated that it would pose reputational risk to RTHK in broadcasting the civilian press conference as the identity of the speakers on the press conference were unknown and the information might not be trustworthy. Mr LEUNG Ka-wing stressed that RTHK had handled the broadcast of civilian press conference with special care as RTHK was accountable for the broadcast. The Chairman remarked that personally he would prefer RTHK not to broadcast the civilian press conference, taking into consideration of public perception. Also, the Chairman considered it controversial for RTHK to broadcast the song “Glory to Hong Kong”.
14. A Member opined that in the current complicated social environment, reporters of RTHK should behave well at all times as they were representing RTHK. Otherwise, it would harm RTHK. RTHK management should take effective action to manage

the staff problem and review the system. Some Members commented that most of the RTHK's productions were of high standard and beneficial to the society. However, some public and current affairs programmes, especially the personal view programmes, were perceived to be biased which undermined the impartiality and credibility of RTHK. A Member considered that RTHK must not have political stance, and the management should be responsible for the problem. Mr LEUNG Ka-wing reiterated that RTHK always listened to the many different feedbacks and the management would endeavour to act in accordance with the Charter in upholding the impartiality and credibility of RTHK.

15. A Member opined that it was normal for an organisation to receive criticism and accusations. The Member believed that though RTHK had taken many actions to ensure its impartiality, it was also important for RTHK to be seen as being impartial in order to allay the biased and negative public perception against RTHK. Members considered that public sentiment should be addressed. Mr LEUNG Ka-wing responded that the management would convey the public feedback to the staff while managing the potential staff sentiment arising from unfair accusations. Nonetheless, the management would continue to make the best effort to ensure fairness and objectivity in programme production.
16. A Member suggested that RTHK should enhance the communication with the Board so that the Board could help clarify unfair criticism on RTHK. The Member considered that RTHK was facing a challenge in restoring its image from negative public perception and hence suggested RTHK to arrange separate sessions with the Board to explore in-depth solutions. Another Member echoed and the Chairman proposed to handle the perception problem by setting up two Working Groups under the Board, i.e. Working Group on Complaints Handling, and a Working Group related to Editorial Principles. Members concurred with the proposal. The Chairman thanked Members for the support and said that he would follow up the suggestions.
17. A Member pointed out that a recent interview on "This Week" was widely considered as fair and objective because guests with different stance were invited on the same occasion. The Member suggested the management to consider producing more such kind of programme in order to restore the impartial image of RTHK. Another Member opined that the media was a powerful tool of public education and RTHK should produce more programmes to promote the understanding of the concept of "One Country, Two Systems" and the sense of citizenship and national identity as stated in the Charter. RTHK colleagues should bear in mind these concepts in their work. The Chairman agreed and concluded that RTHK should take the opportunity

to reinforce its impartial image and promote solidarity of the community which would be conducive to moving Hong Kong forward.

Agenda Item 4: Platforms for Young Talent

18. Mr Brian CHOW of Radio Division and Ms Natalie CHAN of TV Division briefed Members on the platforms for young talent of their respective divisions.
19. The Chairman expressed his appreciation to the platforms provided for young talent. Members also commended the design concepts of the rebranded radio channel logos which were designed by a young designer.
20. The Chairman suggested that RTHK should produce programmes to promote the understanding of the concept of “One Country, Two Systems” and social inclusion where appropriate. Mr LEUNG Ka-wing supplemented that RTHK had all along been producing programmes to engage and target at the young generation, and would continue to do so in the coming year.

Agenda Item 5: Annual Report of the RTHK Board of Advisors 2018-19

21. The Chairman informed the meeting that an Annual Report had been compiled to provide highlights of meetings held in the past year. The Secretariat had circulated the draft Report for Members’ review and no comments were received. The Report was then confirmed and would be posted on the website.

[Post-meeting note: The English Report had been posted on the website on 2 December 2019.]

Agenda Item 6: Updates on RTHK’s Response to Audit Commission’s Report

22. Ms CHAN Man-kuen informed Members of RTHK’s progress on the implementation of the recommendations in the Report of the Audit Commission (the Audit). Details were set out at **Appendix**. Members had no comments on the progress report.

Agenda Item 7(a): Updates on Programmes (BOA Paper 11/2019)

23. Ms CHAN Man-kuen briefed Members on the updates on programmes. Members had no comment on the paper.

Agenda Item 7(b): Updates on Complaints (BOA Paper 12/2019)

24. Ms CHAN Man-kuen introduced the paper. Ms Amen NG introduced a summary of direct feedback from the public. Members had no comment on both documents.

Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business

25. Mr Brian CHOW introduced the “College Christmas Concert – Messiah Encore”, which would be held on 24 December 2019 at the school hall of Wah Yan College (Kowloon). He invited Members to attend the concert.

Agenda Item 7: Date of Next Meeting

26. The next meeting was scheduled for 17 January 2020.

27. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Secretariat

RTHK Board of Advisors

Radio Television Hong Kong: Provision of Programmes
Progress in Implementing the Audit's and Public Accounts Committee's Recommendations
(as at 29.11.2019)

Para. No.	Audit's Recommendations	Progress
Part 2: Production of Programmes		
2.10	<p><i>Planning and Budgetary Control</i></p> <p>Audit has recommended that the Director of Broadcasting (DB) should –</p>	
	<p>take into account information for performance evaluation of individual radio and TV programmes, in order to facilitate the making of more meaningful planning decision for the programmes.</p>	<p>The two high level working groups on programme planning completed the review and formulation of the parameters and mechanism for programme planning. The senior management of RTHK has endorsed the reports submitted in July 2019 by the two working groups. The new Annual Plan cycle will be executed in April 2020.</p>
2.54	<p><i>Community Involvement Broadcasting Service (CIBS)</i></p> <p>Audit has recommended that the DB should –</p>	
	<p>(c) regularly conduct focus group studies to assess the cost-effectiveness of the projects funded by the Community Involvement Broadcasting Fund (CIBF);</p>	<p>The focus group study (with a total of six focus group sessions involving 50 people from successful applicants, unsuccessful applicants, and audiences regardless of whether they have listened to CIBS programmes before) is being conducted from October to November 2019. By 8 November 2019, five sessions have been held.</p>
	<p>(d) post questionnaires on the CIBS website to collect audience views on CIBS projects;</p>	<p>The questionnaire to collect views of the audience was uploaded onto the CIBS website in March 2019.</p> <p>As the recommendation has been implemented and will be carried out on an on-going basis, we recommend that this part be deleted from the next report.</p>

Part 3: Broadcasting of Programmes and New Media Services		
3.6	<p><u>Management of TV Broadcasting Hours</u></p> <p>Audit has recommended that the DB should endeavour to enrich the TV programmes, including –</p>	
	<p>explore ways to enrich the miscellaneous contents of TV 31 and TV 32 with a view to enhancing the channels' attractiveness.</p>	<p>For TV 31, programmes were scheduled round-the-clock (i.e. 24-hour a day) according to programming strategy from 1 April 2019. Miscellaneous content was no longer broadcast on TV 31.</p> <p>For TV 32, the working group as mentioned in para. 2.10 had reviewed its programming strategy. There would be more programme varieties, such as live coverage of local sports events, live relay of important Mainland and overseas events and short interview videos on various topics. The working group had submitted the report to senior management in July 2019.</p>
Part 4: Evaluation of Programmes and Other Administrative Issues		
4.33	<p><u>Evaluation of TV Programmes</u></p> <p>Audit has recommended that the DB should –</p>	
	<p>(d) ascertain the reasons for low ratings of RTHK's programmes and take measures to enhance the popularity of its TV programmes, especially for those which are intended to be popular programmes; and</p>	<p>A working group has been set up to take forward the "Digital Terrestrial Television Penetration Survey" (DTT Penetration Survey), which will be conducted in the fourth quarter of 2019, to collect information and data on the penetration/take-up pattern of the DTT channels, viewing habits and preference of the audience. Results of the</p>

	(e)	take measures to address the issue of lower TV ratings of RTHK TV programmes broadcast on RTHK channels than the ratings of the same programmes broadcast on a commercial channel.	DTT Penetration Survey are expected to be available in the first quarter of 2020.
4.44	<u>Evaluation of Radio Programmes</u> Audit has recommended that the DB should –		
	(a)	keep in view the number of listeners for each of the seven radio channels and take appropriate action to boost the number of listeners for radio channels with decreasing number of listeners; and	The senior management of RTHK has endorsed the report of the Working Group on Audience Surveys for TV and Radio Programmes. The Radio Audience Survey will be conducted in April each year. Information on the appreciation index of selected radio programmes by sampling will also be collected so as to monitor the quality of radio programmes.
	(b)	take measures to improve the appreciation index and awareness level of RTHK's radio channels.	
4.73	<u>Matters Relating to the Charter of RTHK</u> Audit has recommended that the DB should –		
	submit the reports on performance evaluation of RTHK and RTHK's compliance with performance evaluation indicators to the Board of Advisors on a regular basis as required by the Charter of RTHK to facilitate the Board of Advisors to advise on its actual performance against the performance targets and ways to improve service delivery.		The 2018-19 report on performance evaluation of RTHK and RTHK's compliance with performance evaluation indicators had been presented to the BoA at its meeting on 14 June 2019. As the recommendation has been implemented and will be carried out on an on-going basis, we recommend that this part be deleted from the next report.