

Yiannis Theodorou
OFCOM
Riverside House
2A Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA

Date: 17 October 2008

Our Ref: AMC/JH

Dear Mr Thoedorou,

Response to Public Service Broadcasting consultation (phase 2)

We write to object to proposals by ITV to merge the three Meridian news services – Meridian South East, Meridian South and Thames Valley – into one, from the start of 2009. Brighton and Hove City councillors unanimously passed a motion at full council (9 October) opposing these cuts and requesting that OFCOM rejects the current proposals.

As the Leader and Chief Executive of Brighton and Hove City Council we are deeply concerned that the amalgamation of local news services will lead to a reduction of quantity and quality of relevant local news available to residents of our city.

We note with concern that ITV plans to axe local news services and halve regional services whilst cutting up to 50% from regional news budgets. Furthermore, it is our understanding that the proposed new regional news programme will cover an area stretching from Kent and south Essex in the east, to Dorset in the west, as well as north to Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. We believe that this geographical area is inappropriately large to be able to offer pertinent local news to the people of Brighton and Hove.

We are concerned that the proposed changes will result in a worse service for viewers and the result will be that local people are less well informed of local issues.

We oppose these plans in the interests of the residents of Brighton & Hove, many of whom rely on ITV Meridian news to keep them informed of local issues. In our opinion alternative sustainable models should be explored by the Government, OFCOM and ITV to help preserve local news into the future.

Yours sincerely,

Alan McCarthy
Chief Executive

Mary Mears
Leader of the Council

