

National Council

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Minutes of the National Council Meeting held at Harben House Hotel, Tickford Street, Newport Pagnell, Bucks MK16 9EY, on Saturday 21st April 2018, commencing at 11:00am.

PRESENT:-

CHAIR: A Catt (Sussex)

COUNCILLORS: DL Hockney (Avon), S Hayes (Buckinghamshire), BR Freer (Cambridgeshire), AE Ransome OBE (Cleveland), Mrs DM Jermyn (Cornwall), R Lindner (Dorset), A Thompson (Durham), P Ashleigh (Essex), DB Turner (Hampshire, Regional Chair South), DJ Edwards (Hertfordshire), T Vincent (Norfolk), R Barr (Northamptonshire), N Hurford (Oxfordshire), C Dangerfield (Shropshire), R Loxley (South Yorkshire), B Davison (Suffolk, Regional Chair East), E J Williams (Warwickshire), CN Sewell (Wiltshire), MG Clark (Worcestershire), RB Hudson (Yorkshire).

DEPUTY NATIONAL COUNCILLORS: John Cowell (Derbyshire), Tony Laws (Surrey).

STAFF: Mrs S Sutcliffe (Chief Executive), J Bruck (Director of Business Operations), Miss J Etherden (Executive Assistant, Minute taker)

REGIONAL CHAIRMEN: DB Turner (Hampshire NC and Regional Chair South), B Davison (Suffolk NC and Regional Chair East).

INVITED: Mrs S Deaton (Chairman), M Quartermaine (Director), T Purcell (Director), D Livingstone (Director), G Wood (British League), Marc Mazzucco (Head of the IRP), Jonathan Hall (IRP member)

APOLOGIES: Mrs Jill Parker MBE, Ms S Hughes (Deputy Chairman), K Thomas (Treasurer), S Griew (Director), A Nixon (Director), Ms K Skeggs (Director), M Smith (Director and BUCS), Ms D Paterson (Director), S Mills (Director of Sport), G Yarnall (Head of Development & Volunteering), B Chan (Yorkshire Regional Chairman), C Davison (North East Regional Chairman), Ms K Mudge (Regional Chair South East), Mrs KM Tonge MBE (Cheshire NC, Regional Chair North West and BPTT), Mrs S Pickering (Leicestershire and Regional Chair East Midlands), C Clemett (Rules), J Arnold MBE (ESTTA), J Johns (VETTS), A Murdoch (Bedfordshire), M Mitcham (Berkshire), P Goulding (Devonshire), L Smith (Gloucestershire), H Jutle (Herefordshire), N Le Milliere (Kent), G Rushton (Lancashire), GE Tyler (Lincolnshire), M Close (Middlesex), G Pearson (Northumberland), M Allsop (Nottinghamshire), I Hooper (Somerset), C Bell (Staffordshire), Miss M Fraser (Surrey).

1. INTRODUCTION FROM CHAIRMAN

- 1.1 Tony Catt (AC) welcomed everybody to the National Council meeting.
- 1.2 Sandra Deaton (SD) apologised for Board members not able to attend, Mike Smith (who is at the Schools Championship), Susie Hughes, Keith Thomas, Simon Griew, Kelly Skeggs. The Board is represented by Sara Sutcliffe, Mark Quartermaine, Tom Purcell and SD.

2. MINUTES SILENCE

- 2.1 A minute's silence was held for the following people who had passed away since the last National Council Meeting:

TONY CHATWIN – one of the longest serving and most dedicated servants of Table Tennis in England, Honorary Life member and National Councillor for Derbyshire.

STEVE WELCH – one of our foremost officials, umpire and referee

CAROL BEAMES – a respected administrator, recently of Devon, but with a long association with Brighton and Sussex

DENIS MILLMAN – Chair of Northants League

DOUG YOUNG – President of Worcester League Fixtures Secretary, Worcestershire's Chairman, Umpires Secretary, National Councillor and referee

DENISE BARNETT – disabled table tennis player in Wellingborough League, strong committee member and volunteer.

JACK MELNICK – a respected and renowned umpire.

MALCOLM PENNEY – President and Chairman of Blackmore Vale and Treasurer and Secretary of Salisbury League.

TONY WATTS – President West Wiltshire League

3. INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL (IRP) PRESENTATION

- 3.1 AC introduced Mark Quartermaine (MQ) Senior Independent Director, appointed as Head of Governance Review Group (GRG).
- 3.2 MQ introduced the IRP members in the room. The Chair Marc Mazzucco (MM), independent member, Jonathan Hall (JH), Neil Hurford (NH) and Phil Ashleigh (PA) both from table tennis. Shaun Parsley, also from table tennis was unable to join today's meeting. MM stressed that the presentation being given today has not gone to the Board yet. The interim report will be sent in the next week.
- 3.3 MM introduced JH then thanked the team of 7 on the IRP. MM reiterated that the process has been independent and spent 30 minutes presenting the key findings of the review.
- 3.4 Sara Sutcliffe (SS) explained the process further and said that once the Board has received the interim report next week, the intention is to publish it on the website and to provide a 2-week window for further feedback.
- 3.5 MM then welcomed any comments and questions.

- 3.6 David Hockney (DH) asked with regard to the report, presently we have 25% membership representation on the Board and questioned if that is normal with other sports or should it be greater.
- 3.7 Jonathan Hall (JH) answered that it varies, there is not one solution across NGBs. In the IRP's view the Board has a good balance of membership, skills, knowledge, independence so the composition of the Board is suitable.
- 3.8 SD clarified that in addition to the 3 elected directors, there are also 4 member directors.
- 3.9 Alan Ransome (AER) expressed that there were some concerns that the Board is not fully elected by the members. His suggestion would be that if the majority of the Board were elected by the membership and this would help allay those concerns. He also raised a concern that in the event of Sport England funding being significantly reduced or disappearing altogether, there would be a loss of the senior management group and if the volunteers haven't had the operational experience they have had in the past, then that would leave a very weak situation behind. Finally, he stated he was concerned that if the National Council disappears it would cause a devaluation of the counties.
- 3.10 Susan Hayes (SH) said she thought that the recommendations were very positive. She pointed out that over 25 years ago there were discussions about National Council not being functional.
- 3.11 Tony Laws (TL) asked for clarification that the Chairman is no longer elected.
- 3.12 MM replied that is correct, the Chairman would in future be appointed not elected. That was excepted in the change of Articles in 2017.
- 3.13 Neil Hurford (NH) offered further clarification. An elected director can be appointed as Chairman through a transparent process to get the best person for the job. The Chairman cannot be directly elected but there is nothing to stop a director, (or any other member) applying and being appointed the Chairman.
- 3.14 AER said that at the EGM in 2017 the membership accepted the change to move to an appointed Chairman. It would be a bigger backward move to lose all the public funding.
- 3.15 TL asked for the further clarification that if we wanted to keep Sport England funding we could not elect the Chairman. This was confirmed.
- 3.16 SD confirmed that anyone in membership can put themselves forward to be considered to be a Director. The appointment of directors is done by the Board through a Nominations Committee. That Committee currently includes all elected directors. There are four member Directors as well as the three elected Directors. That is the majority of the Board.
- 3.17 Doug Livingstone (DL) stated it is important to have balanced skills on the Board. That is why an appointment process is appropriate, balanced with elected directors as well.
- 3.18 Diana Jermyn (DJ) said perhaps the people in general do not know who the member Directors are on the Board.

- 3.19 MM said that communication is clearly important and perhaps there were improvements needed. There was a brief discussion about the Board identities being on the website but the website not being easy to navigate.
- 3.20 MM said that a lot of people do not feel they have direct relationship with the Board or the Chairman. The recommendation to establish the Members Advisory Group (MAG) should provide a route for more people to have involvement, more members can get in amongst the top level of governance and have access to the Board. The survey result and the interviews told the IRP that more people wanted to be involved and they felt there weren't or had limited opportunity to get involved.
- 3.21 Chris Dangerfield (CD) said he has concerns but has looked at it from every single angle and in principle liked the idea. Principally he would be more in favour of a new model as he thinks changes are needed but he questioned what compels the Board to actually listen to the MAG?
- 3.22 MM said the MAG, as with all advisory bodies, provide their thoughts and the Board will either accept or reject, or take on board the advice on formulating strategies. However, the Board is the decision-making body. But it is intended that the MAG report to the membership on how the relationship between the MAG and the Board is working.
- 3.23 CD asked for clarification on how the members have the ability to represent the membership on the appointments of the Board and Chairman.
- 3.24 MM explained the recommendation of having two MAG members on the Nominations Committee.
- 3.25 SD said that she believes the MAG would be involved in advising on the strategy with the Board as well as operational issues, the two would work together. Also, it would be great support for the staff because it is not the Board that are delivering, the staff are delivering the strategy and if the MAG is there as an advisory capacity, the staff have always got people to go to for advice.
- 3.26 AER said that the loss of National Council adds to devaluation of counties who are dependent on enthusiastic volunteers and if you take away one of the roles of the councillors, it would be another demotivating factor.
- 3.27 NH said the IRP could not come up with a meaningful role for the counties that was separate to that of the MAG, but he does recognise the counties represent a geographical input that is important.
- 3.28 Phillip Ashleigh (PA) agreed that finding volunteers is tough but thought that finding a skills-based group with like-minded people coming together has more incentive than finding volunteers who wanted to become National Councillors.
- 3.29 CD said historically the elections for the three main positions had generally been a 'team' who set out with a different vision of where they wanted to take the sport, no different to politics. He feels we have now lost the opportunity to know who is going to be setting the vision for our sport for the members themselves. He said the Board could just follow Sport England 's strategy and not do what is right for the sport.

- 3.30 AER reiterated his concern about losing the elected Chairman position. He also stated that National Council is the safeguard which we should not also remove.
- 3.31 MM said it is between the Board and its advisory group to formulate the strategy going forward. Sport England are just concerned whether the money is well spent in the appropriate way.
- 3.32 EJW said that under previous rules you could stand as Chairman. Deputy Chairman or Treasurer and stand as an individual or have a team, and generally was better as a team. Under the new system there were three elected directors and everybody could nominate up to three and any company member could vote. People could still stand as individuals or as teams.
- 3.33 AC thanked MM for the presentation and for everyone's input.

4. REPORT BY TABLE TENNIS ENGLAND CHAIRMAN, TO INCLUDE REPORT FROM BOARD

- 4.1 SD welcomed questions to the paper and gave the following updates:

May 19th is the launch of Ping in Nottingham, the same day as the royal wedding and the FA Cup Final, there will be big screens so hopefully people will be coming past the table tennis tables and will take part. July 18th is National Table Tennis Day.

- 4.2 AER congratulated those involved with the staging of the ITTF Team World Cup at the Copper Box. It was an excellent event and the TV coverage was very good. Unfortunately, the international matches on the Tuesday had a very small crowd. He also questioned holding the National Championships at the Copper Box.
- 4.3 SD said this was clearly explained in her report, we had the Copper Box for ten days, infrastructure was set up, flooring etc. and it comes down to cost of consolidating the three events. Biggest problem of course is that it is a very big venue to fill.
- 4.4 CD congratulated team on the TWC. He too expressed concern about the National Championships both in terms of venue and format.
- 4.5 SD said there was a reduction in spectator numbers but in recent years we sold more tickets than we have ever sold. SD also confirmed that work is being undertaken to look at a qualification tournament.
- 4.6 CD expected that would be very well received.
- 4.7 AER questioned the report about the verbal attack on the Treasurer from the last meeting. He did not agree that it was a personal attack, just asking questions.
- 4.8 AC said everyone deserves respect. The Treasurer did take offence on the day which is unfortunate. Questions should be knowledge based rather than questioning someone's competence.
- 4.9 CD said he agreed with AER that at the very most it was very strong questioning and would argue that it was born out of frustration as the questions were not being answered.
- 4.10 NH said he found the atmosphere of the last meeting a rather difficult and unpleasant experience.

- 4.11 MC expressed concern that clearly the remarks in the report were towards him. He would like to make to be clear, he has never made any comments that imply a personal attack on the Treasurer or indeed made any suggestions of impropriety. His concern has always been that, in his opinion, the report has not been transparent, informative or particularly useful in identifying the financial performance to date. Perhaps his words on occasions might be considered stern, however if this has been misinterpreted as a personal attack on the Treasurer, then he apologises, that was never the intent.
- 4.12 SD said she could not speak for the Treasurer who was not here today but suggested we draw a line under it. Generally, the Council are respectful and make points in a productive way. SD suggested a group could come together and discuss with J. Bruck and the Treasurer.
- 4.13 DH asked about the impact of GDPR.
- 4.14 NH advised people to check the website as there are very simple checklists to tell people what to do and some good advice. NH did add that the website is not always easy to navigate however.
- 4.15 CD confirmed that the plan for TT365 is to ensure that software itself is compliant with GDPR. His concern is the educating of the league and county structure on the risks of copying or exporting information and then storing on your own local machine etc.
- 4.16 SS confirmed there is a lot of advice for clubs and leagues on the website and we will forward a link directly.
- 4.17 CD requested that the AGM/Annual Conference process be made clearer as he felt last year's process was unhelpful.
- 4.18 SD acknowledged and stated that the annual review will be taken at the Annual Conference again and the process for asking questions will be made clear.
- 4.19 EJW asked if there are plans to increase the membership, particularly widening the membership outside those that have to join in leagues?
- 4.20 SD stated that it is continually being discussed, there is a wide range of people who play table tennis who we have no access to, we want to get into the family so they become active player members so we are looking at different kinds of memberships all the time.
- 4.21 MC said on the affiliation fee increase proposal, it is important that we do recognise that Sport England money will keep reducing so he will be recommending to his county members to accept the proposal.
- 4.22 CD said he feels the fee should already be £20 by now and that it's a very good amount to pay but TTE don't do a very good job explaining why members should be paying it. It shouldn't be just about the benefits, it should stress the importance of free insurance and the contribution towards the longevity of league manager. Neither of those two things are actually mentioned and they are the two most likely things that would get support.
- 4.23 SD said that another marketing campaign to the membership is being planned.

4.24 AC said he would like to see the outline of costs and benefits, and to be able to see the cost of membership reflecting what the extra money is for since if you clearly show why it is increasing, most people accept it.

4.43 AC welcomed anything further on affiliation. There was a unanimous show of hands as an indication at this stage that there would be support for the increase submitted to the AGM.

5. REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE TO INCLUDE DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS

5.1 SS explained that it had been a busy quarter for a number of reasons and said thank you for all the comments on the TWC and all the support with the IRP. The TWC was a good opportunity to build a relationship with the BBC who are keen to show table tennis on the BBC sport live streaming channel. SS then welcomed questions and made apologies for Greg Yarnall and Simon Mills.

5.2 AER raised a concern in the report with reference to the proposed reduction in the number of teams at the ITTF World Championships and questioned where the Board stand on the matter.

5.3 SD explained that as a member of the ITTF Board of Directors, she would wait for the presentation of the proposals to understand the rationale.

5.4 AER said there is a group of people the ITTF who feel the World Championships are too big and too costly. He was concerned that England would struggle to qualify if the number of teams was reduced. He felt that the smaller countries benefit greatly as it provides a huge incentive and the opportunity to watch the best players.

5.5 SD agreed it is primarily about finance and marketing and that it had become increasingly tough for the ITTF to get venues to cater for that number of teams. However, from a performance perspective, the aim should be to reach the top 32 male and female teams and not to just go to the World Championships because you can. Of course, we want to see England qualify.

5.6 EJW thought the discussion was very valuable and very important that SD is aware of the issues and concerns.

5.7 SD agreed and added that Europe are represented as a group on Board of Directors and will have a pre-discussion on the propositions before the meeting.

5.8 AER, Chairman of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation, gave an overview of the Commonwealth Games which was held recently in Gold Coast, Australia. He praised the facilities, venue and volunteers and the TV coverage which was excellent with the two main show courts televised all day. Table Tennis had less entries than four years ago in Glasgow. He then detailed the results for England, bronze in the men's team event, men's doubles gold and bronze for the girl's team. Gold and silver were won in the men's para category so the team finished 3rd in the medals table overall.

5.9 SS reiterated the excellence of the event saying it provided a good opportunity to also spend time with ITTF staff and Executive Committee members. SS facilitated a meeting between Birmingham 2022 and ITTF key people to try to influence the scheduling and make sure we get para table tennis in Birmingham 2022. On Simon Mills' (SM) behalf, it was hugely exciting to watch the women get

their first Commonwealth Games medal. On reflection it is a long tournament and the men's team were disappointed to lose in the semi final against Nigeria but proud they turned it round to win bronze against Singapore. The men were a bit disappointing in the singles too but produced a great result to win gold in the men's doubles.

The mixed double Silver for Tin Tin Ho and Liam Pitchford, a repeat of Glasgow 2014 also bodes well. SS then invited questions on SM's report. No more questions.

5.10 Jonathan Bruck (JB) welcomed questions on his report. No questions were asked.

6. STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT

6.1 AER expressed that this was one of the late papers and he would like more time to give it full consideration.

6.2 DH said the reason for bringing the paper now was to make sure everyone was clear on how to deal with alternative resolutions at the AGM based on the solicitor's advice.

6.3 NH said he had read the paper and it seems to resolve the issue.

6.4 MC said he accepts the legal advice on company law is correct. He reminded National Councillors though that the issue last year was that his proposed amendments were turned into alternative special resolution without his approval. He understood the principle set out in the paper but questioned the ability to reject any resolutions not in compliance with the code. The members should be aware of it, not just rejected out of hand because it doesn't comply with the Code of Governance.

6.5 SS explained that it was discussed with lawyers and because of fiduciary duties of the Board, knowing that Sport England could remove the funding, it was legitimate that the Board could withhold such a resolution from the AGM.

6.6 MC understood but believes it should be put to the members.

6.7 SS replied that it could be submitted as an ordinary resolution to request the Board to consider alternatives.

6.8 AER said that the members do have a right to decide if they want to accept the Sport England funding or not and the AGM is the place for it to be discussed and not just blocked.

6.9 There was a short discussion on whether the previous minutes had been approved. The minutes were approved.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO INCLUDE FUTURE NATIONAL COUNCIL DATES

7.1 CD said that he has created a closed National Council forum on TT365 so that debates can be taken outside these meetings. If Council agree it can now go live.

7.2 AC asked for show of hands for this to go ahead, to which most agreed.

7.3 AER asked why a pre-meeting was not called and are future dates being fixed.

- 7.4 AC answered that he had feedback that the pre-meeting was too early for some people to arrive by 10 am. He offered to put this back on the agenda if requested. He questioned if there is time for a meeting in July ahead of the Annual Conference.
- 7.5 AER said there are three options, to have it at 9.30 for one hour like last year in Nottingham, second option is to fix a new date later in July and the third is to not have a meeting until October, but this would be a six-month gap which would be unsatisfactory in his view.
- 7.6 NH said he thought that the pre-meeting did not fulfil a useful role. Meetings in September, January and May would be more appropriate in his opinion.
- 7.7 MC said he thinks that the articles of the association provide for National Council to meet four times a year.
- 7.8 NH clarified that it had previously provided for at least three meetings. Now there are no provisions so National Council can decide how many itself.
- 7.9 AC said so we need to find a date for the next National Council meeting in September.
- 7.10 CD expressed that the National Council should have more formality and that there should be a vote.
- 7.11 NH proposed that for the 2018/19 season we need to meet twice more and find suitable dates in January and May 2019.
- 7.12 AC proposed a vote to hold the three National Council meetings in September, January, and either April or early May. On a show of hands there were no objections.
- 7.13 NS asked if a DVD of the table tennis from the Commonwealth Games can be sold?
- 7.14 AER stated that the Commonwealth Games is very strict and managed in terms of the broadcasting. The BBC have the rights to broadcast in this country and they are the company which has been given the full distribution rights so the BBC are the rights holder and so it would be their call.
- 7.15 AER asked when the election for the Chair of National Council would take place.
- 7.16 CD said TT365 would support the ability to have an online vote which would be anonymous.
- 7.17 AC proposed that the same process as last year using Caroline Williams as returning officer is followed. The majority agreed.
- 7.18 The meeting closed at 1538 hrs.