

National Council Minutes 19th March 2022



PRESENT

Great Holm Community Centre & Zoom*

10:00am

Estyn Williams (Chair – Warwickshire)

National Councillors: David L Hockney* (Avon), Alexander Murdoch* (Bedfordshire), Peter Charters* (Berkshire), Brian Freer* (Cambridgeshire) Alan E Ransome OBE (Cleveland), Karen Tonge MBE* (Cheshire), John Cowell (Derbyshire), Phil Ashleigh* (Essex), Ken McLeod* (Hampshire), David Edwards* (Hertfordshire), Tim Giles* (Isle of Wight) James Bolton* (Lancashire) Tony Dias* (Middlesex) Malcolm Allsop* (Nottingham), Ivor Jones* (Northampton), Gareth Pearson* (Northumberland), Noel Sewell (Wiltshire) Neil Hurford (Oxfordshire) Chris Dangerfield (Shropshire), Jos Kelly* (Somerset), James Kenny (South Yorkshire), Margot Fraser* (Surrey), Martin Clark* (Worcestershire), Richard B Hudson* (Yorkshire)

Deputy National Councillors:

Clive Hollinsbee* (Kent), Brian Whitehead* (Buckinghamshire) Tony Catt (Sussex)

Other:

Board Members: Sandra Deaton (SD), Adrian Christy (AC) Kwadjo Adjepong* (KA) Emma Vickers (EV)*, Ray James* (RJ), Don Parker (DP)* Simon Griew* (Board), Priya Samuel (PS)

Staff: Jo Keay-Blyth (JKB) Greg Yarnall (GY)

Minutes : Victoria Wiegleb (VW)

Apologies for Non-Attendance: National Councillors, Deputy National Councillors & Board

Susan Hayes (Buckinghamshire), Susie Venner, Board (SV), Ritchie Venner, Board (RV), Neil Le Milliere (Kent) Mike Smith (British Universities and Colleges Sports (BUCS), Harry Jutle (Herefordshire) Shirley Pickering (Leicester) Mike Holt (Leicester), Tom Purcell Board (TP), Andrew Millman (Devonshire)

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Agenda Item	Discussion	Decision/Action	Who	When
1	<p>Chairman Opening Remarks, Update & Welcome EW (Chair) welcomed everyone to today's meeting, and thanked JKB, VW and all the staff for their assistance in getting the meeting prepared. The Board paper on the AGM and the Report from the Constitution Committee agenda items may take time to get through today, but EW (Chair) did ask National Council to minimise what they need to say in order to keep the meeting to time.</p> <p>Feedback from National Council is welcomed following this meeting and is to be sent to EW(Chair) and VW.</p> <p>Register of Business Interests None</p> <p>Obituaries EW (Chair) asked everyone to remember those who have lost their lives or who are suffering in Ukraine, and our thoughts are with them.</p> <p>Those we have lost since National Council last met were recognised and remembered. The meeting held a 1-minute standing silence in honour of those we have lost.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) and SD advised of two further names to be added: Shaun Bibby & Dennis Worell.</p> <p>Minutes from last meeting The minutes from 4th December 2021 were taken as a true and accurate record.</p> <p>General: EW (Chair) asked National Council to respect the TTE staff and reminded everyone that all staff report to the CEO, and the CEO reports to the Board.</p>	<p>Decision: National Council approved the minutes of 4th Dec 2021 with 100% - this is recorded for accuracy</p>		

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	<p>Matters Arising EW (Chair) asked for any matters arising -none were raised.</p>			
2	<p>Introduction to the Interim CEO – Adrian Christy</p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed AC to Table Tennis England and to National Council.</p> <p>SD reiterated her thanks to TTE staff and advised National Council that previous CEO Sara Sutcliffe MBE is doing well in her new career.</p> <p>Interviews have taken place for the full time CEO, and SD provided an update on this process to National Council. AC has hit the ground running in his position as Interim CEO and the Nom Com will make their decision next week following the CEO interviews.</p> <p>Questions were welcomed but EW (Chair) reiterated that all questions must be asked by the National Councillor in one go to keep the agenda to time.</p> <p>TC (Sussex) told Council that the process is not down to the Board to decide, and he was confused as to how the terms and conditions are still not decided. SD advised that the terms and conditions need to be finalised with regards to the contract.</p> <p>AC introduced himself and thanked National Council for the opportunity to be here today.</p> <p>AM (Bedfordshire) encouraged AC to work with the Board to ensure the membership is key – in response to this question, AC reassured everyone that he hugely values members and there is a high number of stakeholders who have an impact on our sport – however membership is key, and AC totally understands the frustration. AC advised he is very open and transparent – he will give an honest opinion and sometimes you may not agree, but you will know the reason for it.</p> <p>Questions to AC were welcomed.</p> <p>TC (Sussex) asked what’s the most positive thing AC has seen in Table Tennis so far – AC expressed the opportunity to grow; to engage with the 500,000 people who play our sport and move them in to the wider participation - staying for life. AC also commended the staff at TTE.</p>			

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4	<p>Talent & Performance</p> <p><u>Committee Report</u></p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed DP and wished him well on his recovery.</p> <p>DP provided a verbal update to Council and reminded everyone that T&P is a new committee; a subcommittee to the Board chaired by DP – with 3 meetings to date. T&P operate in a way that they check and challenge the performance team and make recommendations. The committee has a strong relationship & has been very professional and has been working well.</p> <p>Since the last meeting, we are now moving towards smaller squads – U19 Boys & Girls, U15 Boys & Girls and U13 Boys & Girls – there will be approx. 12 per squad. 6 boys & 6 girls with a variation dependant on the standards. Each squad will have a named coach supporting the players domestically and going with them to competitions. DP is delighted to say this will now be happening.</p> <p>The override was also discussed, and PC (Berkshire) was praised by DP for his work on this – the recommendation from T&P is that for seniors, we raise the bar from 250 to 75. Juniors have changed from 150 to 25. This came about from a validity point of view.</p> <p>DP also discussed the background of the sport of Table Tennis and how everyone should have the same opportunities to represent England – pay to play is a big challenge but this is something T&P are working on.</p> <p>The Athlete’s Voice is a project that Dr Emma Vickers is focusing on and shall be leading the T&P Committee into this area – this is purely for the players.</p> <p>KPI’s were also briefly talked about, and DP stressed that all teams need to look at improving at the European Youth Championships 2022 and in 2023 looking for two teams to be promoted to the top divisions.</p> <p><u>Paper on Ranking</u></p> <p>PC (Berkshire) recapped his paper that was submitted prior to the meeting.</p>			
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<p>PC (Berkshire) advised Council that the No.2 Cadet ranked in England has ranking points that put him at position 25, but due to him being a promising under 12, the override has kicked in and this has been raised to No.2. PC (Berkshire) felt this highlights the ludicrousness of this system.</p> <p>PC (Berkshire) expressed his view that the Performance Team are taking the youngsters to North Africa to the Tunisian Junior Open in the hope to reach the benchmark to play for England in the European Youth Championships.</p> <p>PC (Berkshire) questioned what is done to staff that are not being successful and are failing.</p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed questions.</p> <p>JK (Somerset) supported PC (Berkshire) and felt that what has happened with the ranking system has had a detrimental effect on the junior sport. Giving the appearance that things are different to what they really are. It also means that juniors are discouraged to play in domestic tournaments as they can pick up points abroad whether they win or lose.</p> <p>CD (Shropshire) stressed that the system needs to be fair for everyone – the credibility to rankings is non-existent in his view.</p> <p>AM (Bedfordshire) fully supports PC (Berkshire) paper and his view is from an umpiring / refereeing event, the feeling is that of concern from the parents about what we are doing with the ranking system.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) advised that the idea of ranking is to promote credibility. We now have complete nonsense and we need to get back to a situation where it is not interfered with in his opinion.</p> <p>KT (Cheshire) welcomed DP’s report and the progress made as well as the report on ranking – it is causing confusion at events with seedings and parents are asking questions.</p> <p>SD agreed that the ITTF have made a mess of the ranking system – a working group is being put together to look at this.</p> <p>SD also advised that the T&P committee did discuss at great length the override, and everyone agreed to the sensible level of 25.</p>			
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<p>5</p>	<p>Board paper on implications of the new Code for Sports Governance, revision of skills matrix, Board resolutions for the AGM and related issues</p> <p>(Considered in break out groups)</p> <p>EW (Chair) when everyone returned invited comments from the room and those on Zoom.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) stressed there are two major issues to be discussed – and suggested trying not to tie these in together.</p> <p>CD (Shropshire) didn't feel there was enough time to discuss the fees and therefore his group will not be able to feedback on this area.</p> <p>EW (Chair) understood both comments and welcomed further discussion.</p> <p>Affiliation Fees: the concept of the Board setting the affiliation fees.</p> <p>JK (Somerset) advised his group were all in agreement that handing over the authority would go down with the membership like a lead balloon, they already feel that their voice is eroded significantly – if this goes to the AGM this will fail. PR work was suggested to gain trust.</p> <p>CD (Shropshire) spoke on his own behalf and of his county and said this feels like Groundhog Day. A different way forward to avoid a rerun of 2017 was suggested. Player fees are the one contentious area that he doesn't feel will go through at the AGM. CD (Shropshire) suggested not repeating mistakes of the past.</p> <p>TC (Sussex) felt the Resolution 1 should be just 1 item, not 3. They should be separated.</p> <p>NH (Oxfordshire) stressed that 4 years ago a vote was taken that we would follow the Sport England code. Changes to the articles have been made and have always been made stating that these changes are “in the code”. We require this level of funding, and our sport couldn't continue without this funding. NH (Oxfordshire) stressed the need to remain on the safe side of the cliff edge.</p> <p>NH (Oxfordshire) suggested that a package from the Board showing a higher level of accountability and transparency to enable this process to be better marketed to the membership be created.</p> <p>GP (Northumberland) didn't feel membership fees were an issue in his area.</p>	<p>Action: To be considered as an agenda item at next meeting</p>		<p>11th June 2022</p>
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<p>PC (Berkshire) raised points from his group, and felt the skills matrix was dealt with last year at the AGM. PC (Berkshire) doesn't feel the skills matrix is fit for purpose as isn't relatable to table tennis. Throughout his group's discussion, it was mentioned about ways in obtaining money from those outside of our membership.</p> <p>SD was welcomed to speak on the affiliations and advised that when this was discussed with the Board, it came about from the consultation with Sport England. In order to get the funding, we need to be compliant with the code. An Extra Board Meeting was held to discuss these issues, and there wasn't a single Board member who disagreed with the principles of allowing the Board to set the affiliation fees.</p> <p>SD remembers when affiliation came in during her time on National Council and things have now changed to the Board being the overall decision-making body. Over the years, issues have arisen – finances then become unstable. SD confirmed that to get funding and be code compliant, this has to go through, or we risk losing our Sport England funding as we did in 2017 for being non-compliant. We need to keep as many current members as we can, and get those who aren't, to be a part of the Table Tennis family.</p> <p>Elected Directors – the concept of how they are screened by the Nominations Committee.</p> <p>PC (Berkshire) felt the proposal is going to receive a short shift by the membership. A power of veto is in his opinion, is outrageous. This removes total power from the membership. PC (Berkshire) has accepted that the Board can declare where they have weaknesses i.e., finances, but he is not happy with the Board being able to veto a member elected to the Board.</p> <p>EW (Chair) asked if 5 candidates went forward and 4 were not suitable, would the latter be vetoed</p> <p>SD confirmed this is not so. The Nomination Committee has to be the decision maker and the criteria is now changed to include Table Tennis people who could and who are classed as independent.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) asked for clarity in that only people who meet the skills matrix criteria, and if the Nom Com felt there was someone who didn't meet the matrix would be barred from applying. AC confirmed that we have to ensure we comply with the code – the code says the Board will put forward its recommendation for anyone who meets the skills matrix.</p> <p>EW (Chair) suggested a vote be taken; 1 vote as to whether it is acceptable for the Nom Com to express an opinion, and 2 if the Nom Com (inaudible)</p>			
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TC (Sussex) felt what we as members need to be very careful, and put forward our own resolutions for the 4th member, with a caveat that there will be no input from the Nom Com.

CD (Shropshire) has listened to what everyone has said and expressed how disappointed he is that everyone is going head on into a crash – this is returning to 2017. Everyone has just viewed their own opinion. AC agreed but asked CD (Shropshire) to help him understand how we do this? EW (Chair) asked for this to be discussed separately and asked for the vote to take place:

- 1) Where it would be acceptable for the Nom Com to rule out certain candidates from the Elected Directors election:

For	1
Against	25
Total	26

- 2) The Nom Com would be entitled to look at each candidate and declare if they felt they met the criteria:

For	18
Against	5
Abstain	3
Total	26

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	<p>This now gives the Board a view of where National Council stand.</p> <p>SD asked if a vote would take place for the Board making the affiliation fees decision – however, the vast majority of the Council felt this was for the Board to go away and find a middle way.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="219 427 680 671"> <tr> <td>For</td> <td>19</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Against</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Abstain</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>24</td> </tr> </table> <p>SD asked the Council to provide any solutions for the way forward.</p>	For	19	Against	2	Abstain	3	Total	24			
For	19											
Against	2											
Abstain	3											
Total	24											
6	<p>Challenges and issues for the Board and the new CEO</p> <p>(Board invited to respond at the next meeting)</p> <p>EW (Chair) advised that this was only published a few weeks ago, so it is unreasonable for the Board to respond today. If the Council have anything specific to say, it will be welcome.</p> <p>AC (Cleveland) went through his report and asked for questions to be taken at the time rather than at the end.</p> <p>KT (Cheshire) suggested on chat this be left to the next meeting, as the audio throughout today’s meeting has not been of good quality.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) felt that further debate be held at the next meeting once the Board have been able to respond.</p> <p>SD advised that this shall be put to the May Board Meeting and EW (Chair) suggested a written report is submitted.</p> <p>CD (Shropshire) asked the Board to be mindful that over 200 hours of volunteer’s time has been put into this report and asked the Board to be mindful of that in their replies.</p>	<p>Action: VW to add to May Board Agenda</p>		<p>Completed</p>								

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7	<p>Future Strategy</p> <p>a. Progress of one year strategy plan</p> <p>SD thanked EW (Chair) for his feedback paper on the strategy that went to the Board. AC provided a presentation to Council on what Board asked him to do in the Dec Meeting.</p> <p>b. Long term strategy and collection of Insight</p> <p>EW (Chair) questioned the data available on the current state of the sport, and asked SD if this is going to be made available to Council.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland)'s view is that this is the best document we have seen and heard in the last 10 years. The questions AC is asking are the right ones, but at least we are beginning to go down the right road. AR (Cleveland) felt this presentation has changed the mood of the meeting entirely.</p> <p>NS (Wiltshire) felt we have a massive amount to learn by what goes on in other countries – Germany for example is somewhere can we learn from. NS (Wiltshire) suggested research be done to add value.</p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed SD & AC to respond to questions.</p> <p>SD advised that we need more data and find out where people are playing. In response to NS (Wiltshire) comment on other countries, SD advised this should also be for other sports. In agreement with AR (Cleveland) SD felt this is a positive direction to focus on for the next 12 months.</p> <p>AC said that first and foremost the decision on where we spend our money has to be done through data. We don't have everything in one place. This takes time and is very expensive. All the learnings will be taken on board.</p> <p>TC (Sussex) felt the various strands of the strategy need to be interlinked and ties into performance.</p>			
8	<p>IT and website issues</p> <p>a. Confirmation of establishment of select committee on IT</p>			

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	<p>This was agreed in principle at the last meeting, and now consultation has taken place with MAG. AM (Bedfordshire) was welcomed to speak and advised that Neil Le Milliere has joined the committee.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="219 320 736 475"> <tr> <td>For</td> <td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Against</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Abstain</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>19</td> </tr> </table> <p>b. Paper on searching for a club CH (Kent) spoke in place of NLM (Kent) and advised all the points are in NLM's paper. This will be taken on board at the select committee.</p>	For	18	Against	0	Abstain	1	Total	19			
For	18											
Against	0											
Abstain	1											
Total	19											
9	<p>Reports</p> <p>a. TTE Chair No further questions / comments from SD.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) felt there were some items missing from the CEO report; significant difficulties in the ETTU and the president being suspended, the Russian company sponsors; a major event in Aug in the commonwealth games and our position; dilemma within the CTF and the India federation being suspended for match fixing, now they are largely responsible for running the commonwealth, AR (Cleveland) felt this needed attention.</p> <p>TC (Sussex) noted the ETTU president being suspended by the committee, and how we get back on to the committee. Our representation on the international stage was also addressed by TC (Sussex).</p> <p>NS (Wiltshire) advised we have a rep on ETTU in Richard Scruton, and he suggested we might put forward our representations through him.</p> <p>In answer to the questions, SD advised that when she wrote her report, the situation wasn't as it is now, but the ETTU president suspended himself from post.</p> <p>The sponsors of ETTU are not Russian and the deputy president is now acting president.</p>											

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	<p>The Executive Board cannot sack / remove their President – the only organisation that can do that is the congress.</p> <p>The Commonwealth games information is limited, and we have not received any information.</p> <p>On the CTF, we have a representative, Susie Venner, but no update has been received to date.</p> <p>We have no one on the Executive Committee and haven't for many years. SD is on the nominations committee and ETTU Board.</p> <p>An international relations committee has been set up and the Board will need to look at succession planning soon.</p> <p>b. Board Minutes https://www.tabletennisengland.co.uk/content/uploads/2022/02/Board-Minutes-Public-9th-10th-Dec-2021.pdf</p> <p>SD welcomed questions on the Board minutes.</p> <p>None raised.</p> <p>c. CEO Report</p> <p>Questions were welcomed throughout the reports, none raised.</p> <p>Head of Operations report</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) asked for clarity on the membership figures, and if we are close to a final figure – JKB confirmed it will be less than 90%.</p> <p>CD (Shropshire) stated on behalf of NLM (Kent) that he is very concerned on the annual returns policy, and he is experiencing lots of complaints about the way it has been handled this year. JKB advised that Council were asked to ensure they stress to every league that they need to get their returns in.</p>			
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	<p>AR (Cleveland) asked if all leagues outstanding, can be forwarded a chaser with a deadline.</p> <p>JKB was invited to respond and advised that the deadline for the annual returns was only Sunday, so the data is still being collected. The initial notice was sent out 4-5 weeks ago, to all Chairman's of leagues and secretaries. JKB also sent a reminder out 2 weeks ago to remind everyone. The team and JKB has spent many days working with those who need help – this is happening on a 1:1 basis. The hope is that by the middle of next week, 90% of the 162 have been cross checked and support has been given. Next week will be consolidating and shared</p> <p>Extra time will be given to assist with the annual returns and final report will be done at the end of the month.</p> <p>Competitions & Events</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) raised concern over the Aldersley Grand prix being cancelled and the fact that there was still no update on this – disappointment was expressed.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) has also heard that there are a few of our top players not playing at the SNC next week and asked for this to be confirmed.</p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed SD / AC to respond.</p> <p>On the questions regarding the top players at the SNC, SD confirmed that Liam Pitchford will not be present as it clashed with DOHA.</p> <p>Paul Drinkhall pulled out of the SNC based on an ankle injury.</p> <p>AC answered the question on the Grand Prix being cancelled and understood the disappointment of this being cancelled. This was due to a significant challenge in the budget and the Board had to make a decision. This also affected the recruitment of staff and tough decisions need to be taken sometimes.</p> <p>d. Other Reports (including Select Committees and MAG)</p> <p>No other comments</p>			
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<p>AOB</p> <p>NH (Oxfordshire) praised EW (Chair) ability. Today’s meeting was difficult with discussion issues and technology hasn’t been up to standard.</p> <p>At the last meeting CD (Shropshire) asked for Council to get in touch with some ideas on how meetings go forward from here. No one did last time, but it can be worked on going forward - NH (Oxfordshire) advised all comments are welcome to improve.</p> <p>EW (Chair) advised that the reason we have had meetings here at the community centre was due to ventilation issues at the Badminton Centre, but now the All-England Room is up and running we can return to the centre.</p> <p>AM (Bedfordshire) asked the Board and CEO to consider the concerns of the membership.</p> <p>Date of next meeting: 11th June 2022 – All England Room, Badminton England & Zoom: hybrid</p> <p>AGM meeting date: 16th July 2022</p>				
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Action	Owner	Timeline
Send GY presentation & united movement link out with minutes	VW	With minutes
Consider Agenda item for update on funding to next meeting	EW / VW	11 th June 2022
Update on Board paper on implications of the new Code for Sports Governance, revision of skills matrix, Board resolutions for the AGM and related issues to be considered as an Agenda Item for next meeting	EW / VW	11 th June 2022
Add constitution paper to Board Agenda for May	VW	Completed