

MINUTES FOR NATIONAL COUNCIL

APRIL 13, 2024

Copies of papers presented to the meeting are available on the National Council's section of TTE website:

<https://www.tabletennisengland.co.uk/about-us/national-council/national-council-meeting-dates-and-papers/>

Attendees (in person): Neil Hurford (Chair of National Council), Nick Donald (Chair of TTE); Adrian Christy (CEO of TTE), Emma Sutherland (TTE - HR), Ritchie Venner (Board Director, TTE), Josh Reynolds (NC Yorkshire), Joanne Keay-Blyth (TTE), Susie Venner (VETTS Representative).

Attendees via Zoom: Estyn Williams (NC – Warwickshire), Jon Bayliss (NC – Derbyshire); Sue Hayes (NC – Buckinghamshire), Martin Clark (NC – Worcestershire); Malcolm Allsop (NC - Nottinghamshire); Clive Hollingsbee (Deputy NC – Kent), David Edwards (NC – Hertfordshire); Tony Dias (NC – Middlesex); Alex Murdoch (NC – Bedfordshire), Margot Fraser (NC- Surrey); Jonathan Hopson (NC – Berkshire), Karen Tonge OBE (NC – Cheshire); Phil Ashleigh (NC – Essex); Tony Catt (NC – Sussex); Tom Purcell (NC – Lancashire); Steve Joel (NC – Somerset); Alan Ransome OBE (NC – Cleveland), Clive Ellison (Deputy NC – Avon); Tim Giles (NC – IoW), Jos Kelly (Board Director, TTE); Ray James (Board Director – TTE).

Minute taker:
Susie Venner (SV)

Apologies: Shaun Fitzpatrick (NC – Avon), Harry Jutle (NC – Herefordshire), James Kenny (NC – South Yorkshire), Neil Le Milliere (NC – Kent), Reinhard Lindner (NC – Dorset), Noel Sewell (NC – Wiltshire), Shirley Pickering (NC – Leicestershire), Don Parker (Board Director, TTE), Jill Parker (President, TTE).

1. Introduction and Welcome by Chair

Chair of National Council, Neil Hurford (NH) welcomed participants He explained this meeting was a different format to previous National Council meetings as part of transitioning to a more autonomous status. The first part of the meeting would include TTE Board and staff; the second part would be without TTE Board and staff members. NH invited feedback on this new format.

ACTION: National Councillors to provide feedback to NH on the new format of the meetings.

1a: Business interest

No new business interests to be recorded.

1b: Minutes silence

A minute's silence was held for Sylvia Coombes, Ed Londy, Mike Miles, Graham Moore, Ralph Hughes, Tony Clift. Further information about the people we remembered will be provided on the website.

2. Minutes

The minutes were accepted as a complete and accurate record of the meeting of January 27, 2024. Proposed by Jon Bayliss (JB); seconded by Dave Edwards (DE).

3. Actions and matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

It was confirmed that details of the distribution of regional funds is available on website. TTE is chasing those regions who haven't yet responded.

ACTION: TTE (Andy Wilesmith) to follow up regions still outstanding for distribution of their funds.

Martin Clark (MC) raised on-going 'serious concerns' about ITTF finances from the previous meeting, specifically how this could affect TTE and the World Teams event in 2026, and what contingency plans were available should ITTF be unable to fulfil its financial commitments. No-one was available at the time to respond, and MC has since sent an email with these concerns to CEO and Chair of TTE.

Adrian Christy (AC) CEO – TTE confirmed he had asked ITTF for reassurances which had been given.

Nick Donald (ND) Chair of TTE reported that he had recently been to the World Team Championships in Busan where he had attended the finance meeting and spoken with the CFO of the ITTF. He confirmed that TTE needed to be 'comfortable' with the ITTF risk and have a risk mitigation strategy in place. He reported that ITTF had a loss of \$7m this year, but expected to turn it around through WTT, and further potential investors. The risk to TTE had been identified by the Board, as had the need for a risk mitigation strategy.

AC: Also met ITTF CFO and lawyers recently. There would be a cash flow forecast of people and delivery activities from April this year, to take us three months past World Championships. This would help to identify early if there are any challenges with the flow of money coming from ITTF, or others, including UK Sport/Government. He confirmed the worst case is money doesn't come and event doesn't happen. World Championships is ITTF funded not WTT.

Asked why a separate company been created, AC explained that this gave two protections a) don't jeopardise TTE's stability and existence; and b) to protect public funds - UK Sport's funds are 25%.

NH concluded that we will return to this subject in future.

4. Introduction and welcome to TTE Chair – Nick Donald (ND)

ND had prepared a written report and gave a verbal update. He was attending his first NC meeting. He explained his corporate background which had been commercially focused, delivering advice at high level on finance, company law and corporate governance. He stressed he had had to build trust with the people he worked with in order for them to accept his advice. He outlined his passion for sport and his roles on the Boards of English Squash and British Canoeing, where he had dealt with a wide range of stakeholders. He saw his role in TTE to make the Board more effective, to promote table tennis as a sport, and promote TTE domestically and internationally.

He saw one of challenges is that sport is being consumed in a different way and we must make sure that 'we speak the language to the new audience, have people around to use that language'. There was a need to develop people. He concluded by saying that TTE is a member-based organisation not a members' club; that our funding comes from outside our membership and that we all owe a responsibility to members and outside members.

5. TTE Update – Adrian Christy, CEO

AC provided a paper and gave a verbal update.

Newco: Richard Scruton has been appointed Chair of the New Co through an open process and Ed Warner (from UK athletics and Wheelchair Rugby) has been appointed Chair of Event Delivery Board.

NewCo Board will oversee everything eg strategy, budget, the Event Delivery Board is for the World Championships 2026. Recruitment is currently ongoing. The NewCo Board will meet for first time in May and the EDB will meet in June.

Performance: Well into the transition of moving the performance programme from Nottingham to Sheffield. There will be some activity in Nottingham until the end July. Primary focus in Sheffield is Olympic preparation.

Coaching: There were concerns expressed that the recent announcement on coaching indicated that TTE had 'abandoned' coaching and coaching qualifications. AC said that it was fundamental to our success at all levels to have more and better coaches. In the past, coaches tended to disappear once they qualified. He said the only way we can properly give ourselves the time to developing the right approach to coach learning and development is to pause what we are doing. Not abandoned it. Will restart qualifications next April as part of a new development. He said he thinks we have enough coaches, with 3,000 on our books, but we don't know if they are the right ones in right place at right time. Will make it more accessible and relaunch wider coaching.

Technical Officials Academy: Thanks were given to Karen Tonge, Tom Purcell and Steve Smith who had been helping to understand gaps we have with officials, with a shortage at all levels. UK Sport given some money to help put together what is needed and where to support our aspirations.

AC took questions from NC:

AER asked why it was necessary to pause coaching courses, as we now have members who are interested in doing courses and are going to Scotland and Wales for them.

AC replied it was a question of resources. Coach learning sits in Performance team and it's an Olympic year; we are restructuring our financial modelling with UK Sport; we have limited amount of people and time and can't do everything at the same time. Will do some workshops but not qualifications which are paused until April 1, 2025.

Sue Hayes (SH) asked about attendance at the TTE meets the Company Members/Members meetings.

AC replied from memory about 20 Company Members and 31 Members registered to attend but reality of attendance was different. It was reasonably OK.

Jon Bayliss (JB) asked about concerns that people would lose their coaching qualifications and would have to retake as had previously happened. He felt there needed to be better communications about this.

AC confirmed that no coach will lose their qualification. TTE is looking to better understand via a grid model where coaches fit, eg schools, clubs, community, talent, high performance etc and fit a module more specific to coaches' needs. AC confirmed an outside company was looking at this and would report to the Board in July. He explained a government initiative 'Workforce Registration' which will be a National Workforce Registration Scheme, every NGB being consulted, including where will coaches sit. It is expected that there will be a Government scheme for bodies to only use coaches who sit on that scheme.

NH concluded that there is a void between now and April 2025 and felt there is a role for TTE to fill with better communications, so people don't feel abandoned. AC agreed there is need to start communicating.

ACTION: TTE to ensure that there are regular updates on how the review of coaching is progressing and when courses are expected to re-start.

Josh Reynolds (JR) asked if the performance centre in Sheffield will be joined to the Paras who are based there.

AC replied that they would be separate but can't ignore the opportunity and possible shared efficiencies.

JR asked about time frame for Technical Officials. AC said it was not going to be a quick fix and should be an ongoing investment into people.

Alex Murdoch (AM) asked about Olympic qualification for TTE players.

AC said that Liam Pitchford should qualify but didn't expect a men's or women's team to qualify.

Clive Ellison: (CE) asked about an update on Table Tennis United as the power point slides not been updated in months. NH saw that TTU is incredibly important for our sport and felt that National Council had an important role in developing and implementing the TTU strategy. He expected that Table Tennis United would feature on the agenda on a regular basis. Sometimes we would be taking an overview, whilst on other occasions we would explore specific areas. An example of this was today's meeting with the presentation of Diversity & Inclusion and Investing in People which was a key component of Table Tennis United.

AC said there would be an update in annual report, but everything we do and report on is related to TTU.

Martin Clark (MC) queried why no financial report was given to National Council.

AC said that the financial report for 23/24 will come out in annual report, also share numbers going forward. AC has spoken to Neil Hurford and Nick Donald about how TTE's relationship with National Council can be 'reset'. AC felt that National Council was advisory to Board and Management, not that TTE reported to it. He stressed that TTE reported to the Board and the agm, and that he had never understood the level of detail given to National Council re finances and that he didn't see financial reports coming to National Council in future.

Neil Hurford said this is one of issues to be discussed in line with a more autonomous NC.

ACTION: Financial reports to National Council to be discussed further.

6. Articles and Regulations Index Summary

Joanne Keay-Blyth (JKB) submitted a paper with links to updates to regulation changes. The change of 'In Good Standing' to require affiliation to TTE is a further addition on the website. Also looking at General Meeting Regulations, county admin regs, and election regs, which will be presented to the Governance and Risk Committee.

Clive Ellison again raised the point about better communication and gave an example of the lack of published minutes of meetings.

ACTION: NH and CE to discuss and progress.

7. Diversity & Inclusion and Investing in People - Emma Sutherland (ES), TTE Head of People

ES gave a power point presentation stressing the importance of investing in people across the spectrum of TTE. She explained the DIAP (Diversity Inclusivity Action Plan) had three focuses - women and girls; physical/mental differences; and ethnically diverse communities.

ACTION: ES to make presentation available.

8. A More Autonomous National Council and Further Governance Reforms.

TTE Chair, Nick Donald, presented a paper and gave a verbal report. Among the points which led to further discussion and debate were:

- a) He and the CEO felt that National Council was de facto a 'Council' under the terms of the Sport England Code;
- b) In order for National Council not to be a Council it would have to give up any rights/powers, eg its own Standing Orders would need amending;
- c) That Sport England had told him that the governance of TTE was holding back the development of the sport;
- d) The body of Company Members who elect Directors was operating as a 'Council' under the terms of the Sport England Code;
- e) In order for there to be a fifth Elected Director, a 'Council' could not elect more than a third of the Directors (in response to a question, ND confirmed this limit was applicable 'outside a general meeting');
- f) In order for the Company Members not to be a 'Council', the Board would have to have the right of veto of potential candidates for election;
- g) Wanted greater co-operation and more representation.

ND asked for feedback by end of April.

Alan Ransome (AER) summarised the position following Select Committee discussions:

- a) NC doesn't have powers - that was decided back in 2017. At the time, no indication was given that it was a 'close thing' – it either was or wasn't a Council and NC gave up its powers to ensure it was not considered a Council under the terms of the Sport England Code
- b) The Standing Orders of National Council don't represent the true situation, and it has already been recognised that change to the Standing Orders is required to reflect the reality;
- c) National Council has suggested ways to increase representation, eg Clubs;
- d) There should be close liaison between the Board and National Council. Would like a regular point of contact from the Board.
- e) Term limits for National Councillors would mean considerable experience and knowledge is lost;
- f) Concern that the Code is being interpreted through informal discussions whereas the Code and Sport England should be clear, and it should apply across the board to all NGBs, e.g. why is the current situation 'holding the sport back'.
- g) The Board has the opportunity to appoint diverse applicants and in line with the skills matrix – but often chooses not to do so.

Adrian Christy stressed the need for the Board to have the right of veto over candidates for Elected Directors, feeling that the Board knew best when it came to where the skill shortages were.

National Councillors agreed to discuss this further during the afternoon session.

ACTION:

- a) Feedback to TTE (Chair and CEO) by April 30.
- b) Standing Orders of National Council to be updated

Afternoon

(The afternoon session was for National Councillors only. All TTE staff and Board Directors left the meeting)

9. Affiliation and Membership

Estyn Williams (EW) presented a paper and gave a verbal update on progress from the discussion in the January National Council meeting. The paper illustrated discussions which had taken place with Andy Wilesmith, TTE's Head of Development.

There was some discussion about the role of the areas and area managers.

ACTION: Neil Hurford to look for a review of how Areas are working at a future meeting as part of our engagement with the TTU strategy.

ACTION: NH and Estyn Williams to draft response to Andy W - broadly welcoming his input but stressing there is an element of a "top-down" approach to growing membership which is being missed and which could be effective with minimal use of resources.

Dave Edwards (DE) also gave a further update on responses to questions about paper looking at counties and how they are funded, benefits of affiliation etc. Looking at how clubs affiliate to counties. This brings the data collection to an end; we have a representative collection, and it will be brought together with a narrative.

ACTION: DE and NH to take forward.

10. Reports

a) Constitution

AER expanded on the earlier reports about the independence of National Council. He confirmed that Select Committee had discussed this.

Issues that were raised by National Councillors during a full discussion:

- a) National Council had been presented with a lengthy document at short notice by TTE;
- b) Unhelpful to suggest the 2017 decision was 'borderline';
- c) Already under discussion to look at Standing Orders with a view to amend – they pre-dated 2017 when the NC agreed to give up its rights and powers;
- d) Difficult to offer relevant advice if information is withheld, eg finance papers;
- e) Been expecting something like this for some time;
- f) Accept Board is ultimate decision-making authority but Board should still welcome advice from NC and others with significant experience and knowledge of the sport;
- g) There will be consequences if it is deemed a Council exists;

- h) There needs to be better and stronger co-operation, unhelpful to suggest National Council is 'getting in the way';
- i) Right of veto over elected Directors could give Board powers to just put forward who they want;
- j) No transparency about what criteria the Board would use to vet candidates so could be arbitrary;
- k) National Council needs to demonstrate its willingness to step back;
- l) Giving Board powers of right of veto is not democratic – the Board and TTE should welcome diverse opinions and free speech;
- m) This paper from TTE is the start of negotiations – National Council should consider what it wants and is prepared to compromise on;
- n) The TTE paper bundles several issues together but they need to be 'unbundled', eg start with discussions on the Standing Orders;
- o) TTE might say none of its resolved until all of its resolved;
- p) TTE not given NC much time to consider this – very late paper when this has been in the pipeline for some time.

ACTION: Begin work on SOs to indicate a different relationship. NH stressed that he should be involved in any discussions by the Select Committee on updating National Council's Standing Orders.

ACTION: Revert to TTE by end of month.

Election of Secretary – It was agreed that having an independent secretary would work.

ACTION: Progress election of NC Secretary. NH to add the relevant item to the agenda of the next meeting.

Standing Orders Committee: The Select Committee and others had been unhappy that the Standing Orders Committee had been unilaterally disbanded by TTE. Pleased to hear that this has been reviewed and the SO Committee will operate at agm and are making good progress on retaining it for the future.

10b) Competition:

The decision to reconsider TTE Competition Department's move to have JBL over three weekend was welcomed. It was felt a good and sensible result to revert it to two weekends, as the Clubs wished.

The WTT Feeder in Manchester and National Championships, had many positives but it was hoped that further improvements could be made – particularly by improving the spectators' experience. In WTT events, it was noted that many things were out of TTE's hands. Tom Purcell noted that the feedback from WTT officials about the event had been very positive. They felt that the Manchester event had been one of the better ones on the WTT circuit.

Concern that the Grand Prix had been abandoned, and potential clashes with one and two stars having to run on same day.

It was recommended and accepted that Lois Peake replace Liam McTiernan on the Competition Committee – vote carried unanimously.

Josh Reynolds added that from his experience officiating abroad, he felt that there had been a general move to place the emphasis on the players and the viewers' experience, rather than the

spectators and officials. Much of this is driven by WTT's requirements and would be outside TTE's control it.

10c) Disability:

Karen Tonge had left the meeting at lunch-time due to a prior engagement. Sue Hayes reinforced the view that there should be a link with Special Olympics.

11. Yorks County Centenary Celebrations

Josh Reynolds gave a potted history of Yorkshire for past 100 years and the planned celebrations to mark its centenary. NH noted that no doubt other Counties would have significant anniversaries arising over the next few years. He would find out if there was any information in the TTE archives about when the various Counties were formed.

ACTION: NH to contact Diane Webb of the Archives Committee.

12. Election of NC Chair

The Select Committee has been looking for Election Officer and been able to recruit David Hockney. Approved.

13. Date for next meetings:

June 29 agreed. Here is the timeline for the meeting:

- Friday 24th May - Preliminary Letter ahead of meeting, with provisional agenda
- Friday 31st May – Receipt of questions, motions, suggested agenda items etc
- Friday 14th June – Publication of Agenda plus other relevant documents
- Saturday 29th June – Date of Meeting

14. AOB

a) County Champs Conference will take place in June - a fully online meeting. Trophies be posted out.

b) Leagues and counties were encouraged to ensure that they were properly registered and to enlist their Company Members in order to votes. Must be TTE members.

c) Josh Reynolds (JR) discussed fundings arrangements for future National Council meetings.

ACTION: JR will prepare a paper for next meeting.

d) ACTION: NH to clarify figures raised by Clive Ellison with Caroline relating to year 22/23 or 23/34. Subsequent to the meeting, the data in the current Electoral Register had been updated and has been confirmed as correct.