

National Council Report for Annual Review

I was appointed Chair of National Council in December. I would like to start this report by acknowledging the work of my predecessor, Estyn Williams, who undertook the role for four years. Estyn set an impressively high standard for chairing National Council meetings. In particular, he established National Council as an effective communication channel, providing advice to the Board. He is a hard act to follow. I would also like to thank my National Councillor colleague, Neil Le Milliere who chaired the October meeting.

Three National Council meetings have been held so far this year. A further meeting is scheduled for the end of June. The meetings in October, April and the one planned for the end of June were hybrid meetings with National Councillors having the choice of participating on-line or in person. The January meeting was on-line only.

The Minutes of National Council meetings along with all the relevant documents are published on the National Council page on the Table Tennis England website:

[national-council-meeting-dates-and-papers](#)

This ensures that the deliberations of National Council are open for all to see. In addition, the Archive section of the Table Tennis England website contains details of National Council meetings going back to 2015.

Forging a New Relationship with Table Tennis England

This has been an important year for National Council. As part of forging a new relationship with Table Tennis England, National Councillors have agreed to take greater responsibility for managing their own affairs. This means appointing our own Secretary, rather than the Secretary being a member of staff of Table Tennis England. This change is all part of a suite of measures that will see National Council being a more independent, autonomous body which will enable it to carry out its existing role more effectively and to consider how its role can change as our sport develops.

At the time of writing, discussions are taking place with the Chair and Chief Executive of Table Tennis England to develop a Memorandum of Understanding that will define how the Board and National Council work together for the good of our sport. Hopefully, it will be possible to provide an update at the AGM.

Table Tennis United

The “Table Tennis United” strategy continues to feature heavily in the discussions at National Council meetings. At the January meeting, the Chief Executive provided an update on the progress in implementing the strategy and also outlined how such progress would be monitored. At the April meeting, Emma Sutherland (Head of People at Table Tennis England) provided an update on Diversity, Inclusion and People Development. Diversity and inclusion are critical to the success of table tennis and the development of people is an essential component of the Table Tennis United strategy.

National Council will continue to play a key role in the development and implementation of “Table Tennis United”. In particular, we have front-line experience in the development of table tennis at local level and we will be able to input this experience into the strategy.

Membership

Increasing membership remains a key priority for all of us. We were concerned that development and growth of the membership were not getting sufficient attention by Table Tennis England. We have heard about the steps being taken being taken at Area-level by the Area Managers and the Local Organising Groups. This work is impressive but is clearly resource-intensive. We are encouraging Table Tennis England

to also consider how they grow membership by liaising with other national organisations such as BUCS and U3A whose activities have a table tennis component. This is not intended to replace the local activity but to complement it.

Challenges Faced by Counties

Many counties are facing the challenges of declining membership and in some cases leagues closing. Declining income has made it increasingly difficult to fund county teams, which are a key part of county activities.

We have undertaken a survey to determine whether the problems that specific counties have reported are limited to those counties – or whether it is a more general problem. The indications are that many counties face similar challenges. This will continue to be an important topic for National Council.

Select Committees

The Select Committee provide specialist advice on particular topics. The Select Committee on the Constitution has led in developing the concept of a more autonomous National Council which has more responsibility for managing its own affairs. The Select Committee on Competitions provided important feedback on the Table Tennis England Competition Review. The concerns that were raised about the new format that was suggested for Junior British League led to a re-think by Table Tennis England. The Select Committee on Disability are working with Table Tennis England Area Managers to explore how to bring players with disabilities into the competitive pathway.