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Minutes of the National Council Meeting held at Harben House Hotel, Tickford Street, Newport Pagnell, Bucks MK16 9EY, on Saturday 29th September 2018 at 11.00 am.

ATTENDEES:

CHAIR: C Dangerfield (Shropshire)

COUNCILLORS: DL Hockney (Avon), S Hayes (Buckinghamshire), K Tonge MBE (Cheshire), AE Ransome OBE (Cleveland), Mrs DM Jermyn (Cornwall), J Cowell (Derbyshire), R Lindner (Dorset), A Thompson (Durham), P Ashleigh (Essex), L Smith (Gloucestershire), DB Turner (Hampshire), DJ Edwards (Hertfordshire), G Rushton (Lancashire), S Pickering (Leicestershire), T Dias (Middlesex), G Pearson (Northumberland), M Allsop (Nottingham), N Hurford (Oxfordshire), I Hooper (Somerset), R Loxley (South Yorkshire), B Davison (Suffolk), T Catt (Sussex), E J Williams (Warwickshire), CN Sewell (Wiltshire), MG Clark (Worcestershire), RB Hudson (Yorkshire)

DEPUTY COUNCILLORS: C Hollingsbee (Kent), G Wood (Shropshire), P Charters (Berkshire)

STAFF: J Bruck (Director of Business Operations), S Mills (Director of Sport)

REGIONAL CHAIRS: B Davison (East), K Tonge MBE (North West), DB Turner (South)

INVITED: S Deaton (TTE Chair), K Thomas (Treasurer), D Livingstone (Director), J Jones (Minute taker)

REGISTERED BUSINESS INTERESTS: C Dangerfield (Shropshire)

APOLOGIES: Miss M Fraser (Surrey), B Freer (Cambridge), Simon Griew (Director), Jan Johns (VETTS), N Le Millier (Kent), A Millman (Devonshire), M Mitcham (Berkshire), A Murdoch (Bedfordshire), M Smith (Director), D Sullivan, S Sutcliffe (TTE CEO), G Tyler (Lincolnshire)

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT THESE MINUTES FROM THE CHAIR

It has taken me the best part of 2 full days to listen through the recordings from the meeting and attempt to translate them into something meaningful.

The quality of the recordings was at times was inaudible, so I have done my absolute best to ensure all councillors have been quoted accurately. Where the audio was inaudible, I have used my knowledge of the general point being made and my own recollection to produce points that at least make sense.

If anyone feels they have been mis-quoted, I can only apologise. I have done the absolute best I can with what I had to work with. These minutes will be released in draft first, so changes can be made if necessary.

Table Tennis England have always provided the meeting with a minute taker, then produce and distribute the minutes; this is a requirement of standing orders. As Chair I have taken responsibility for the production of these minutes on this occasion, but I should never have been put this situation, it was completely unacceptable, and it cannot be allowed to happen again.

I shall be sending a formal communication to the Board, requesting that in future we are provided with a minute taker that will first have the skills necessary to do the job correctly (which the temp provided didn't have) and secondly be committed to producing a final version of the minutes that are of an appropriate standard (which the provided temp was not). I cannot stress enough how much unnecessary work this has caused me, and I do hope I have your support on this matter.

Chris Dangerfield
National Councillor for Shropshire and Council Chair

1. INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

- 1.1. Chris Dangerfield – Chair (CD) welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 11am.
- 1.2. CD proposed a vote of thanks to Caroline Williams for facilitating the recent National Council election; which was supported by all.
- 1.3. CD expressed his view which he said was shared by other Councillors; which was the general direction of travel seemed to be that National Council would be scrapped and replaced with MAG. He believed this would be a backwards step and a great loss for the association.
- 1.4. Neil Hurford – Oxford (NH) said that he felt the Councillors would benefit from some clarification on the position of the IRP.
- 1.5. CD acknowledged this suggestion and offered Neil that opportunity at the end of the introduction.
- 1.6. CD told the meeting of the standing orders that were in effect and briefed the room on all pertinent aspects.
- 1.7. CD brought everyone's attention to the new room layout which was different to previous meetings; he said he hoped that it would be seen as a positive change which will help members engage easier, given everyone can see and hear each other with ease.
- 1.8. CD expressed his desire to see National Council re-evaluate its role. "We all need to accept that change is needed in order to justify our continuation and hopefully with change can come a new era for National Council."
- 1.9. CD ended by announcing his intention to introduce new technology to Council. "Thanks to modern technology, we can stay in regular contact with each other and debate issues remotely, in a secure manner. We can also engage with the members we represent easily, so they feel like their voice is heard too."
- 1.10. CD invited questions from the floor.
- 1.11. NH provided some clarification on the position of the IRP of which he is a member. He stated that the IRP have never said they want to scrap National Council, but that it needs to demonstrate it still has a role in the new governance structure. "It is for us to decide how we make this relationship effective".
- 1.12. Alan Ransome – Cleveland (AER) said that he did not agree with NH comments or share his optimism and looked forward to the afternoon debate on this topic.
- 1.13. Karen Tonge – Cheshire (KT) National Council Chairs were only ever envisaged to serve for one year, maybe two. She wished the new Chair good luck and thanked Tony Catt – Sussex (TC) for his three years in the Chair.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 2.1. CD asked for points of inaccuracy. There were none.
- 2.2. CD asked for a proposer and seconder that the minutes were recorded as accurate.
 - 2.2.1. Proposed by: RH; Seconded by: MC; All were in favour.
 - 2.2.2. CD explained the purpose of the new actions section on the agenda. There was only one action from the previous meeting and this had not been followed through, but it was on the agenda for later in the day. At future meetings it is expected that this aspect will not take too long, as ideally all actions will have been completed, but this does offer Councillors a form of guarantee to know that actions agreed in Council will be delivered.
- 2.3. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. REPORT OF THE TTE CHAIR AND BOARD

- 3.1. Sandra Deaton - TTE Chair (SD) said that she felt there should be a minute's silence for members that have passed since the previous meeting.
- 3.2. CD said that he had not been informed of anyone passing which was why it was not on the agenda.
- 3.3. SD felt this should be on every agenda, even if there is nothing to report.
- 3.4. CD agreed to ensure this was actioned at the next and all future meetings.
- 3.5. SD presented her report to the room and added a number of points to her report.
- 3.6. ETTU voted 34-21 to show confidence in the remuneration of the president.
- 3.7. SD thanked AER for his support at the ETTU meeting, where he represented Jersey.
- 3.8. There was also a proposition from the association of Malta that the ETTU put together as a proposition asking the ITTF to go back to a world championship of 96 teams for both male and female and this was passed by a large majority.
- 3.9. TTE have a strong representation on ETTU committees.
 - 3.9.1. Youth Committee Chair – Sandra Deaton
 - 3.9.2. Ranking Committee – Simon Griew
 - 3.9.3. Technical Committee – Stuart Sherlock
 - 3.9.4. Umpire and Referee Committee – Karen Tonge
 - 3.9.5. Veterans Committee – Susie Hughes
 - 3.9.6. Para Committee – Mike Smith
 - 3.9.7. Audit Commission – Keith Thomas

- 3.10. The situation with the MAG is the process of putting together a panel to interview potential members has started. David Hockney (Avon) was announced as one of the members.
- 3.11. SD clarified that the office will be moving to the Badminton centre.
- 3.12. SD welcome questions on her report.
- 3.13. AER said following on from SD point about the ETTU vote; from his perspective we need to work to turn-around the ITTF decision as we may now not be able to qualify for the World Team Championships.
- 3.14. AER said that he believed there maybe be a bid for the World Championships in 2026 to be held in England for the 100th year celebrations and asked for reassurance that the event would be financially under-written by a third party. In his experience these events can cost significant sums and he is concerned about the potential losses the association could incur.
- 3.15. SD in reply to AER: "I would hope that National Council would know the Board would not take on an event that would put us at financial risk. The ITTF want to bring this event to England, they have confidence in us and we have reassurance from them that we would not be put under financial pressure."
- 3.16. SD presented the report of the Board; no questions were asked.

4. CEO & DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

- 4.1. SD gave apologies on behalf of Sara Sutcliffe – TTE CEO (SS) and invited questions from the floor on her report; no questions were asked.
- 4.2. Martin Clark - Worcestershire (MC) expressed his disappointment that the questions he had raised and the subsequent answers he had received, were not sent to all members of Council.
- 4.3. MC expressed further disappointment at the responses he had been given to his questions. Whilst a couple of questions had been answered the majority of the answers were to simply say that this was a Board matter and the questions were never answered. He said he felt let down and wondered what other Councilors felt about the reply he had received.
- 4.4. CD said that as this was a talking point in this afternoons meeting, it would be more appropriate to discuss this later. MC agreed.
- 4.5. Keith Thomas – Treasurer (KT) said hard copies of their correspondence had been provided by the office today, and confirmed they were not sent out electronically with the other responses on Friday.
- 4.6. KT read out a statement: "According to the recent IRP recommendations which stated that the Board should be confirmed as having sole responsibility for scrutinising financial reports and challenging the figures and assumptions, this is carried out by the Finance and Audit Committee followed by the Board. The information provided to National Council is a snapshot of that report. The wider membership are made aware of the position through the AGM and again following IRP recommendations are provided

with a high level summary of where money is raised and where it is spent. A concern is that to respond in this amount of detail as requested may be construed as giving National Council powers and rights which could have a consequence for that body from a governance perspective; that is the Board position and we have no further comment at this time.”

- 4.7. Peter Charters – Berkshire (PC) said: “Since my intervention at the AGM I have had many communications from parents and representatives who are bitterly complaining and it’s not all about costs, although these are very high.” The general approach seems to be that we are continuing to grow the size of the squad, as opposed to working with targeted groups. This approach has been tried in the past, during his own time in post as performance VC, he said at the time it wouldn’t work and the results now support his view; “We are declining in our standards and our junior performance”. Our seniors are doing OK currently, but these players came through pre-2012 and their successes cannot be attributed to the current system. “My main concern has and will always be about youth development. If the reason for non-participation with full teams into the European Youth is because they are not good enough, then the question is why aren’t the good enough and what are you going to do about it?” PC ended by requesting that this is looked at in detail and recognized as being a very serious situation and requested that a meeting is held with parents to sort this situation out.
- 4.8. Simon Mills – Director of Sport (SM) replied to PC: We are in a challenging situation, we have very few players and very few parents across the country who understand what is required. We are at an interesting point where we have a lot of players. We have a few that are doing what is needed but most of them are not doing anywhere near enough if they want to be successful at Table Tennis. We are first and foremost working with them to help them understand what is required and setting them reachable levels of achievement. The second point asked about was around parental involvement and SM said that they are working to educate and include parents on the journey. They have a camp setup for next week that he will be at and he will meet with parents to talk about that journey. Regarding the point around the volume of players that TTE are asking to come forward, they are simply responding to a criticism from previous years where the feeling was, it has been a closed shop. The policy is to have an open door for anyone to come in, establish the standards and those that want to work to continue to achieve those standards will move forward. “At the camp coming up on 5/6 Oct you will see a radical reduction in the number of players.”
- 4.9. Tony Catt – Sussex (TC) said other countries are consistently successful but we are not and asked “What kind of research is or has been done to look at what these countries are doing differently?”
- 4.10. SM in reply to TC: “We do benchmark ourselves regularly against our European counter-parts, not just in competition but in conversations around what they are doing.” They connect regularly with Sweden and France and others. A comparison with France was given. They have 600 professional paid coaches. A comment was asked from the floor, “how many do we have?” SM answered that we employ about 6 and there are probably another 6 across the country that would classify themselves as full-time professionals, but whether they are working with performance athletes he couldn’t say. It is possible we have as many as 40-50, but he suspects the number is more likely to be in the single digits and this is one reason why France are ahead of us.
- 4.11. Karen Tonge – Cheshire (KT) said that one of the problems she faces is the academic pressure from

schools. She told the room a story about a young player that clearly demonstrated the pressures and blocks that schools were putting in place. All children of all ages as young as 10 & 11 have been missing training as a result of pressure from schools over SATS or other exams. She said: "This is the climate we now live in so with the best will in the world, the under 10s can probably meet the commitment SM is requesting but the older kids are faced with a stark choice." They lose many kids as a result of this and if they can keep them engaged sometimes they can get them back after their GCSE's but its hit and miss.

- 4.12. SD commented that historically the pull between Sport and Academia has always been an issue but to be successful you need to put the hours in. "The difference between us and the successful countries is not the hours it is the professional approach they take." In France there are no full-time juniors despite what people think, they all have to deal with the academic pressures; they get that done and spend as much time training as they can. She re-iterated the difference was the professional approach and said that this is what Simon is trying to instil.
- 4.13. AER said he agreed with SM on his point about the amount of training hours required.
- 4.14. AER said that he wanted to pick up on PC point and that he is deeply concerned about our recent results. "Our results this year at the European Youth were really appalling. According to the report the girls finished in 18th position, boys' cadets 26th and girl cadets 26th, and these are our future players". He added that England is one of the top 5 or 6 countries in terms of membership and finance, yet here we are with no teams in the top 16 and that really is a terrible and disgraceful situation. "So far as I am concerned this is absolutely not good enough, we should be up there with the Swedes, French and the Germans, as we have been for the majority of the past 100 years." He said that it is only recently that we have been in this very poor position and he would like to know who is taking responsibility for these terrible performances? He then added that it seems that only parents with £15-20k are in a position give their child the opportunities abroad to see their child become a top player and certainly if you look at the like of some of our most successful players from the past like Desmond Douglas and Denis Neale, if they'd have had to find this level of money and come through the current system they would have simply had no chance. He said that Even Liam Pitchford who is now doing well was fortunate in that he started in a good club and was then only a few miles down the road from the national training centre in Sheffield where Jai Li was based, who was one of the top coaches in the world and employed by the ETTA. He said that "Liam is clearly a credit to this association, but he seems now to be a one-off. I hope the Board will agree that all of this is simply not good enough and I would like to know, who is taking responsibility for these failures?"
- 4.15. SM in response to AER: "The answer is very simple, I am, but as you well know producing Table Tennis players takes an awful long time and the situation we have now was 8+ years ago in the making, this is not a new situation." The junior boys today were not supported to the level required when they were starting. The fact is that we are now trying to change that by establishing a standard of training and we are playing catch up. "We agree with you that it is not good enough, but we have to continue to work at it." "Alan Cooke is the technical director leading the program and he is the most established coach in this country, he knows more about Table Tennis than most of the room combined." When it comes to understanding what it takes to be the best in the world, Alan understands that. Does that answer your question? AER: No.

- 4.16. David Hockney – Avon (DH): I am intrigued to know how France can afford 600 coaches and yet we can only afford 6?
- 4.17. SM in reply to DH: “I suspect it is a combination of sponsorship and local support, but I can’t speak to the exact detail of that.”
- 4.18. Geoff Rushton – Lancashire (GR) gave a detailed account of his own experience with his son, Andrew. He said that there is no money on Table Tennis and we need to be realistic about this. We need to get the structure of the sport right before anything else, and until we get all of this right we are never going to produce players to the standard of Denis Neale and all the other great players that we have in the past.
- 4.19. Estyn Williams – Warwickshire (EW) said that young players and their parents sometimes have unrealistic ideas about the amount of training needed. “Have you thought about the very first time you have a new player in for a trial, why not invite someone like Tin Tin or Tom and their parents, so they can tell these new players and their parents what is involved.”
- 4.20. SM in response to EW: They have considered this and in fact did that at the very first camp this year. They brought Sam Walker in to tell his story. SM said that they do a parental mentoring scheme as part of the induction.
- 4.21. Reinhard Lindner – Dorset (RL) asked: “Does Table Tennis England have a plan or a programme to increase the number of professional coaches?”
- 4.22. SM in reply to RL: “We want to create a coaching journey and a profession they can aspire to be part of, but part of the challenge in that is who pays them.”
- 4.23. Ian Hooper – Somerset (IH) said that he teaches GCSE Table Tennis in just one school in Taunton and he has 28 children from age 9. If you multiply that by the amount of secondary schools there are that is potentially a huge source of new players.
- 4.24. NH said he thought this was a fantastic discussion with so many knowledgeable people around the table. “I spoke earlier about making Council effective and this first hour and a half has shown that when we discuss table tennis issues, we actually can be very effective.”
- 4.25. TC said that in Sussex they have a development office who tends to deal with organisations within the county, but without any real interaction with the county itself. This led to 2 bids to the BETT programme for funding, one by Hastings league, who is affiliated to the county and the other by Rother which is not and Rother actually ended up getting more money than Hastings. He said that “We within the county felt a bit aggrieved by this”. The development officer had met a group of people in Horsham that had nothing to do with the county, so BETT seems to be missing its target and we would like to have much greater involvement with our development officer. He added that as Rother have no involvement with the county, he couldn’t speak to the success, therefore he made no judgement.
- 4.26. SM in response to TC: “We are starting to conduct a membership review and one of the goals of this is

to broaden the reach. We know we have X number of players who register with Table Tennis England every year, but we also know there are thousands of others that play Table Tennis but are not engaging with us in a meaningful way at this time, so we are looking for additional ways of engaging that audience.”

- 4.27. Sue Hayes – Buckinghamshire (SH): said that in her experience a lot of our young players have to go abroad because they have a professional club structure. She felt that looking at our own club structure is important and needed. In England we have the premier club programme, but she belongs to a club that was a premier club but ceased their affiliation because “There are too many forms and no benefit”. “As the number of premier clubs have remained static I was wondering if there is going to be a review of premier club programme?”
- 4.28. SM in reply to SH: “The first point is well made, and we agree that clubs are critical.” There are a number of new things coming on this year for premier clubs. The premier club provides an operational framework which it is trying to establish a minimum standard that they can expect from that club. “I do accept that it can be very challenging especially if you include club mark, but it is important to provide people with confidence in the club.” Membership within the Premier Club network is growing this year.
- 4.29. CD added that in his own experience of Premier Club, he too found himself in the same position as SH, where his club were registered with Premier Club, but ceased their affiliation for the same reasons.
- 4.30. SD acknowledged that Premier Club is not an easy accreditation to achieve and keep but Premier Club does force clubs into making good decisions which are beneficial to the long term of the club. One example is the requirement to have a committee with succession planning and that in her own club, without this succession her club would no longer exist.
- 4.31. David Edwards – Hertfordshire (DE) asked for an update on Chris Newton’s role as we move towards the Commonwealth Games 2022. “This will be a significant undertaking and is 2 days per week going to be enough?”
- 4.32. SM in reply to DE: said that they are starting with Chris Newton doing 2 days per week during which time he is looking at the strategy for delivery. When they look at delivery of that strategy it may require additional resource, so at this stage 2 day per week is appropriate.
- 4.33. Tony Dias – Middlesex (TD): “The report says we have 607 coaches, is there any way we can engage with these coaches to improve the performance of the players?”
- 4.34. SM in reply to TD: “The 607 coaches you refer to are the ones that have paid their coach licence fee, they are not necessarily all professional coaches.” A lot of these coaches work in a variety of different settings, a lot of them are not particularly passionate about performance. There are coaches who work in schools or fill the various needs of clubs across the country. It is not just a case of saying we have 607 coaches, if you compare us to France their 600 coaches are all paid professionals.
- 4.35. Richard Hudson – Yorkshire (RH): A ping pong parlour recently opened in Hull. There was a section in the report that said all leagues and clubs were sent an information pack ahead of a new parlour

opening. "Our ping pong parlour opened in Hull at the local shopping centre, but it wasn't until my wife and I walked past it, some 4 weeks after it opened, that we even knew about it. We certainly never received any notification or information pack."

- 4.36. SM said he would look into why a pack had not been received and report back.
- 4.37. AER said that he was disappointed that there had been no competitions report included. He understands that Grand Prix's have undergone a significant change and this has not been reported to Council and it should be. He also believed there are some home matches for the England team, but again that has not been announced to Council. He said that he understand that National Junior Cup is going to be played in Plymouth but his understanding was that these competitions are usually played in the Midlands. He asked why has this decision been taken? He also asked what is happening with the British League, he said: "I personally am up to speed as I am on the committee, but I am sure Council would be interested to hear news, as there are a number of significant things going on". He wanted to know what was happening with County Championships or National Junior and Cadet League. "Why is it that there is no report, what has happened to it?"
- 4.38. SM in response to AER: "There was a report written about competitions because I've seen it." He was not sure why it was not included in the reports, but he said he will ensure it is set around to all Councillors.
- 4.39. SM said with regards to the use of Plymouth: "We have 3 national cups and we have placed those in clubs across the country, there is one in the North, Midlands and South. We are trying to recognise that we have a club structure that runs the length of the country and we are trying to engage and support them." He recognised that it is a long way to go and it will cause challenges for some, so they are making arrangements for a number of mini buses in different areas of the country, so that players can meet at a central location near to them and all travel down together.
- 4.40. CD asked for a show of hands from Councillors that a competitions report should be included in the reports in future. The significant majority of Councillors were in favour of this. SM said this was an omission and a competition would normally be included.
- 4.41. KT: We recently had a ping pong parlour open in Cheshire. We were not included in the setup process which we would have appreciated and were only notified just before it opened, but it does seem that it has been a success. We have been told that on the first 3 days, 350 people used the facility. Some of these players have been to the Halton club which is good and thanks to a lot of publicity by the mayor the club is seeing new visitors, but we would like to be more involved in future.
- 4.42. Phil Ashleigh – Essex (PA) asked that a list of all ping pong parlours are put on the TTE website, so clubs can access this information easily even if they are not notified.
- 4.43. Jonathan Bruck – Operations Director (JB) in response to PA: Yes
- 4.44. CD thanked Council for a positive first half of the meeting and paused the meeting for lunch at 12:45.

5. FUTURE NATIONAL COUNCIL DATES

- 5.1. CD welcomed Councillors back and acknowledged the fact that the Board and staff had chosen not to attend the second half of the meeting.
- 5.2. TC had offered to be the microphone runner for the afternoon session and the Chair had accepted.
- 5.3. CD said that there was a number of significant items in need of discussion and if Council wishes to have meaningful input into these topics, the next meeting would need to be this year. He proposed that the next meeting would be held on Nov 24 this year, with a further 2 meetings next year on 9 Feb and 6 Apr.
- 5.4. NH asked that before we set the dates, we reflect on how often National Council should meet. It was his view that NC should meet twice a year, and this would still be effective for the members. He added that if the Chair felt that there was something of significant importance an impromptu meeting could be called. He felt that with the last meeting being in April, the break of 5 months had been helpful. He also said that we are obliged to consider the cost of these meetings.
- 5.5. CD said that the introduction of new technology may eventually lead to the reduction of meetings, but the new technology is not yet proven, and it needs time to determine if it can truly offer a viable alternative to face to face meeting like this. Also, given the significance of the governance review, now is not the time to be reducing meetings. It was his view that the sensible approach was to accept the meeting dates proposed and review this in 18 months once the governance discussions have been largely resolved and the new technology has had a chance to prove itself.
- 5.6. KT said that she was thought Council had agreed with the Board to reduce meetings to 3 times per year and on this basis that was all the Board were prepared to fund. It was hear understanding that if National Council wishes to meet more than 3 times per year they can, but the counties will need to foot the bill themselves as TTE will not fund it.
- 5.7. CD challenged KT on her statement that Council had ever agreed to permanently reduce meetings to 3 per year.
- 5.8. KT replied that Council didn't need to approve it, the Board just decided and informed us.
- 5.9. NH said that he felt the confusion was over the fact that in a last few years the 4th meeting had always been held on the morning of the AGM and as such many of the costs associated with a full Council meeting were absorbed into the cost of the AGM. He therefore saw why the Board took the view that Council was only to be funded for 3 meetings a year.
- 5.10. AER stated that one of the main functions of this Council is to scrutinize what happens in the sport and the association. It was his view that if we were to meet just twice per year, the chance of scrutiny is dramatically reduced because so much time has passed between meetings. If we want to provide the function of scrutiny, then 4 meetings per year is the correct number. "It has been 4 times for as long as I can remember, that is now more than 50 years and it has worked well for many of those years. Council may no longer be the decision making body but it has always been the scrutiny body and you cannot do the job properly with less than 4 meetings a year."
- 5.11. AER added that regarding the budget it would be his understanding that a budget for this financial year would have been created prior to the 1st April and it wasn't until the Council meeting in mid-April that

we agreed to not hold the July meeting and instead have this meeting in September, so how could the Board have only budgeted for 3 meetings? It was his view that the Chair was correct and that a meeting in November is prudent and we should go ahead with a November meeting and make our case to the Board that they should fund it.

- 5.12. Diane Jermyn – Cornwall (DJ) said she felt that once the MAG is up and running and the new technology is being fully utilised, it may be possible to cut down to 2 meetings per year, but maybe now is premature.
- 5.13. RH referred everyone to the National Council standing orders which state that National Council should hold meetings quarterly.
- 5.14. PA asked for confirmation of the costs involved in running the new technology solutions such as website forums.
- 5.15. CD confirmed that any costs involved in running the website was at his gift as a volunteer and free to Council.
- 5.16. SH said it was her belief that our main function is to advise and if the Board feel a meeting in November would be beneficial to them in their upcoming decisions, then we should work with them in a positive manner to accommodate the meeting, but we must not insist on expensive meetings just because it says so in our constitution, and maybe that is something that needs to be looked at.
- 5.17. DE said that at the meeting in April we agreed to having this meeting in September and he felt that 3 meetings per year would be sufficient given we also have the AGM in July.
- 5.18. CD summarised the discussion and said that clearly there is split opinion and it is clearly not possible to fully resolve in this meeting. As Chair he felt it was his role to ensure that this Council gets an opportunity to debate anything that the Board are likely to be discussing in December or January and even if we are still only going to have 3 meetings this season, he still felt that the next meeting needed to be before the Board make any decisions on MAG and Voting rights, otherwise National Council would not have been given any meaningful involvement in that at all. CD proposed that we put the date in for November and we pencil in the dates for February and April. We can take this up with the Board and if they will support the extra cost for this financial year on the basis that we are transitioning I think that is a relatively fair approach to take. We can review the effect the technology has, we can review the way that MAG are going to interact with Council and the Board and we can then take a view at a more appropriate time as to whether this Council is going to meet 2, 3, 4 or even 5 times per year.
- 5.19. NH asked for clarification as to the purpose of the meeting in November. He felt that if the meeting were to be used primarily to discuss issues like MAG and voting rights, it is a special meeting and not a standard Council meeting, then he would be supportive of the Chairs proposal.
- 5.20. CD said in response to NH has as there was nobody from the Board present to make a decision the most sensible solution was for Council to allow him to take the proposal to the Board. He would present it in such a way so that the November meeting was seen as a special meeting specifically to discussion points around the future governance, the IRP report, MAG and voting rights; and the dates in February & April would be the normal Council meetings.

- 5.21. EW said it was his understanding that the Board were intending to meet in December to discuss MAG and Voting, but he was unclear whether this was going to be a full and final decision-making meeting or just an interim meeting with a decision coming later. It was his view that all 3 dates should be pencilled in. If the Board are intending to make a decision prior to the Council meeting in February then maybe the November meeting is justified, but it should be at the Chairs discretion to discuss this with the Board and make a determination based on facts. CD acknowledged the point.
- 5.22. David Hockney (Avon) – (DH) said “as was announced by Sandra this morning, I have been asked to sit on the MAG selection panel, and we are being asked to shortlist and conduct our interviews during October and November; make of that what you will.”
- 5.22.1. CD asked for clarification: “Is that to elect the members of MAG?”
- 5.22.2. DH replied “it is to interview for MAG.”
- 5.22.3. CD asked for further clarification: “I presume you will then put forward your recommendations”
- 5.22.4. DH replied: “I am not sure, at the moment I have told you everything I know.”
- 5.23. CD formally proposed he be supported to take a proposal to the Board for a special meeting on Nov 24 2018.
- 5.23.1. Vote was 3 against, everyone else in favour.
- 5.24. CD proposed 9 Feb 2019 and 6 Apr 2019 as the last 2 dates for this season.
- 5.24.1. KT objected on the basis that one of the dates clashed with a Para event.
- 5.24.2. Everyone else was in favour.
- 5.25. NH wished to clarify that whilst the April date would be the final meeting of the season, it would in fact be the first meeting of the financial year.
- 5.26. Vote was 1 against, everyone else in favour.

6. FINANCIAL PAPERWORK PRESENTATION DEBATE

- 6.1. CD introduced the topic by saying that the reason it was put on the agenda was that in his own experience of Council the topic of financial reporting is often one of the most frustrating and adversarial aspects of the meeting. It is quite clear that over the last 5 or 6 years the financial reporting has changed beyond recognition and one way or another he feels that Council needs to debate this difficult issue, determine what they feel they need to see in order to do their jobs correctly and then form a consensus around that. It can be put to the Board with a clear message that this is what we want. The goal of this discussion was to ensure we have a wide-ranging debate, then form a sub-group that can look into the various points made and produce a recommendation that National Council can vote upon at the next meeting. CD said that he was hopeful that it will transform this negative part of the meeting, into a positive going forwards. CD opened the debate to the floor.
- 6.2. EW said that MC asks lots of technical questions and I’m not interested really in those, but I would not wish to prohibit anyone, least of all MC from asking those questions. I think the fact they are put down in writing ahead of the meeting is good as it means it doesn’t take up a huge amount of time in the meeting. For me I am less interested in the technicalities of the accounts as there are already procedures in place to do that. I am more interested in seeing substantive information on the big issues.
- 6.3. MC acknowledged that it is usually him that asks questions on finance and he agreed with EW that actually most people are not interested in the technicalities. He then quoted a small section of a reply by KT to one of his questions around the fact that to answer MC questions would be to give powers to National Council that could cause issues with regards to governance. He strongly questioned that

statement and asked how asking a question on finance was any different to asking a question on any other topic discussed at Council and he asked Councillors to consider this point. Despite his attempts over the last few years nothing has changed, he offered his professional services to help in providing an appropriate level of detail, but all attempts to work with the Board on this have been rejected. He added that the narrative from the Board is that they are responsible for finance, there is an audit commission and ultimately National Council doesn't need to see any financial paperwork, therefore what is provided is sufficient. "I think that is wrong, I think we are entitled to have more detail if we want it. I accept that not everybody does, but surely those that do should be entitled to ask whatever questions they feel are appropriate and be provided with a suitable answer."

- 6.4. AER said that within these accounts is a substantial amount of the members money and we are here to represent those members and we have a right to know where that money is being spent. In the past the accounts had an appropriate degree of transparency and anybody that was interested could find the answers to their questions, but this is no longer the case. "I am behind MC on this and I believe that there should be sufficient detail in these accounts for those who are interested and capable, to be able to ask the questions they wish and this is surely in the Board interest too, because if there is something going wrong there is a much better chance it will get spotted and that is ultimately better for everyone."
- 6.5. DJ said that she has no idea how accounts work but she is very grateful that people like Martin and Alan do scrutinise them, so she doesn't have to worry about it.
- 6.6. NH started by endorsing the opening remarks of the Chair and welcomed the chance to discuss this important topic. He said that to really determine what we need, we first need to determine what role we are trying to provide. He said that in past meetings the exchanges had over finance have been less than helpful to the Board and questioned the value provided. He said that he does understand most of the comments made of MC but he agrees with EW and he would welcome more detail around things of a strategic nature as opposed to arguing over the format or a particular heading. He added that the IRP didn't feel it was appropriate for a body like National Council to be having discussions around accounts.
- 6.7. CD added his own view which was that a lot of the reason why MC is asking so many questions is because there is not enough detail being provided in the report for him to satisfy his questions. If more detail was provided, then there is a strong chance that the questions would stop or at least the questions would offer more value the meeting. He added that in his view there is not enough detail in the reporting to be able to get a clear picture and they are presented in such a way that an average person simply cannot understand them anyway; this is in no way helpful.
- 6.8. TC said that anyone can go to the companies house website and get a full copy of TTE accounts.
- 6.9. MC clarified that despite his desire to see more details, he is not suggesting there is anything inappropriate going on within the accounts. He feels we are just not getting enough transparency and as such these reports are actually pointless and mean very little. To illustrate his point around transparency he referred everyone to the accounts and asked someone to tell him what is "other core costs" he added that this is down as £422,000 and there is no way of knowing what this covers. "It is the biggest figure in expenditure under operations and all I asked was what these other core costs were and I was not given an answer, why? What is wrong with asking that question?" He ended by saying that whilst he feels totally justified in asking such a question, despite the best efforts of Council in trying to sort this situation out, he believes the Board will change nothing. He offered to join sub-group.

- 6.10. PC said that he had listened to the comments with great interest and that he has a lot of respect for MC but the question really is do the Board feel they have a duty to be accountable to National Council and he didn't think that they think they do. "As I understand it they have full power to do whatever they want". "I looked at these reports and we are spending a huge amount of money on talent development and performance and I was seriously tempted to ask what are we spending all this money on when costs to parents are so high but I know I can be told to mind my own business, its nothing to do with you and that really is the bottom line of the problem." "Ultimately, I don't think that the Board will take any notice of National Council and nothing will change."
- 6.11. PA said that he feels a radical change has taken place and scrutiny of the accounts is not the job of National Council, it is job of the Board.
- 6.12. CD said the goal of this debate was to attack this difficult subject head on and he feels we have gone some way towards doing that. He said the next step is to put a small sub-group of maybe 3 people together to take the points made today and bring back a proposal that considers all aspects of the debate for the February meeting. CD proposed the creation of a subgroup and this was supported unanimously.
- 6.13. After a short discussion the following members were selected by the Chair and agreed by the meeting to form the sub-group.
- 6.13.1. Martin Clark
- 6.13.2. Neil Hurford
- 6.13.3. Gareth Pearson
- 6.14. PA requested that in future if it transpires that questions are not relayed to all Councillors in advance of the meeting they should still be forwarded after the meeting.
- 6.14.1. CD clarified that he was referring to the missing questions that MC had raised.
- 6.14.2. PA confirmed but also said it should be a precedent going forward.
- 6.14.3. CD agreed to make it an action for the head office staff.

7. STANDING ORDERS

- 7.1. CD said that the meeting had now over-run and as such he feels it appropriate to prioritise and adjust the agenda, so with the support of Council Point 7 on standing orders will be moved online or deferred and we will immediately jump into point 9 which is the future of Council. We will then take the website presentation as the last item of the day and he gave his apologies to those that had requested AOB.
- 7.2. DJ asked if we needed standing orders and if in fact we had the option to not adhere to them.
- 7.3. EW responded that we don't technically require them, but to not have them would be the equivalent of a football match where the referee has no rule book. He added I cannot envisage running a meeting like this without standing orders.

8. MAKING NATIONAL COUNCIL A VALUED RESOURCE

- 8.1. CD introduced the topic and invited Councillors to make their points.

- 8.2. TD asked an opening question: “Is there any “body or group” other than National Council that represents the paying members?”
- 8.3. TC said that he felt the answer was No, and that National Council was currently the only group set up to do that. He felt that the MAG would be more representative of the members given that most members of National Council are over 60 and that MAG would be able to better represent players, coaches, British League, etc. He felt that National Council will continue to exist, but it will become a sub-group of the MAG.
- 8.4. NH said that he felt the question on the agenda “Making National Council a valued resource” was great and he is absolutely committed to debating this issue. He said another way of asking the question could be “How do we make ourselves indispensable to Table Tennis England”. Good governance is about doing things within your remit, so being a valued resource means we undertake our remit. He believes that scrutiny is not a role that National Council should undertake and that our role is to be a high-quality source of advice and a great communicator between members. He added that he felt some of the ideas proposed by CD were exactly what we should be focusing on. He wanted to clarify a point made by AER earlier around National Council being broken; he said that the IRP never said that and in fact what the IRP said was one of the responders to the questionnaire had said it was broken, and they were just quoting that statement. As regards the Board getting rid of National Council, he is unaware of any decision that could be taken to remove National Council by a vote at the AGM and he would never support such a vote in any case. He added that MAG is going to be set up, but it is a bit of an experiment, it may or may not work first time in which case it can be amended, or it may not work at all, in which case the Board would be looking for another source of information and that could be National Council if we can prove that we can be a value to the Board.
- 8.5. AER said that he believes National Council has always been a very valuable part of TTE. “When I was Chairman I was very respectful of Council because I understood its value and importance. I was careful that changes we were making we right for the sport and would be understood and supported by Council. I can tell you that National Council put great pressure on the management committee at the time to take great care of what it was doing.” He acknowledged that things have now changed and National Council is no longer a decision making body; the Board can do what they like without needing to get National Councils approval. It is his belief that despite not being able to make decisions, Council can and should still play that important role of scrutiny. He said that as far as MAG is concerned everyone seems to support this and it can be helpful because it can provide specialist advice to the Board. He feels that the current Board does not have the same level of Table Tennis experience or knowledge as past management committees. The MAG would not be necessary if the Board were elected in manner as was previous with members of sufficient knowledge in the various areas of the sport. He went on to say that a lot of the reports we receive whether they are in the annual report or on the website; are glossed up, we only ever hear about the good bits, we never hear about the bad bits. He referred to SM report on the European Youth, which talked about the girls being 18th place, it didn’t talk about why the cadets finished 26th, but it is our job to ask why, because if we don’t know one will ever know and in bringing attention to this it forces the Board to look closer at the failures. He said that this goes back to his original point which is National Council holds the Board to account. If Council don’t do this, then who will. He felt that National Council represents the members and if the role of National Council is lost or diminished the sport will have lost something very important and it would be a very bad thing.

- 8.6. CD added to the points made by AER: “Alan has a point if you consider the recent changes to the Grand Prix structure. They have been made without any consultation with Council, so when you are approached by your members and they ask what is going on and why these changes are being made what are we supposed to say? Why were we not consulted or at least informed prior to the change?”
- 8.7. NH said National Council should undertake the role set out in our articles which is to advise and act as a 2-way communications channel for the members. We can raise any points we like from international matters to local issues, but it is not our job to scrutinise and hold the Board accountable for their decisions.
- 8.8. DH said that if we are to be a valued resource we need to be more balanced. In the past 2 years he has often gone away from these meetings thinking what a waste of time it was. “Why would anyone expect the Board to value us, if all we do is attack them?” He said we need to be positive moving forward with our approach. He added that many people say that they are here representing their members and he was interested to know how many Councillors report back to their members after Council or make themselves available to the members and how do they do it? He said that personally he does not have a lot of interaction with player members. He reports back to his committee at the county meeting and what happens after that he is unsure. Do the local leagues feed that back to their players? Do those players even care, because he has spoken to many players who are just not interested, a very high percentage of them delete the TTE newsletter without even reading it. He said that communication is a massive issue.
- 8.9. CD commented on DH statement and joked that he had perhaps stolen half of his speech on the website presentation. He took the opportunity to expand a little and said that he agreed with DH sentiments. “We all say we are here representing our members, but how many of us have actually spoken to them. That is one thing that I intend to change or at least give you the tools to be able to change.” One thing that he didn’t agree with DH on, was that he intimated that the players don’t really care and that is probably true of some, but certainly not all and you only need to go on Facebook and look at some of the things that have been posted on topics such as EYS, Performance and a whole raft of issues. “These are our members and they are extremely unhappy yet how many of them have contacted you?” One of National Councils roles is to give them a voice. CD believed this is one of the key issues going forward. “We don’t need the Board for this, we don’t need any help, we can solve this problem from within this room. But once we have engaged we then need to be able to take these views to the Board and that will be far more difficult. Touching on what DH said, how do we change the atmosphere of these meetings, so the Board do value us and the views we are expressing on behalf of our members.”
- 8.10. GR said he felt that Councillors should be representing the counties from which they are elected. There is too much talk of Sport England and not enough discussion around local issues.
- 8.11. Noel Sewell said he attends 3 events a week and his members can speak to him about a range of issues. He believes his county is bucking the trend, things are going extremely well.
- 8.12. Alan Thompson – Durham (AT) said he feels that National Council is adversary to the Board. He also felt on the number of meetings that the Board could easily turn around and say they won’t fund any meetings and if that happened not all counties will have the money to be able to send a representative and finally on finance he said that he owns 3 companies and has a good grasp of accounts but he cannot understand what is presented and all he wants to know is how much is coming in and where is it going?

- 8.13. RL said one important thing is that the role of the MAG needs to be different to the role of National Council and do we yet know the role of the MAG?
- 8.14. CD said that this is a perfect reason why we need a November meeting so this question and others like it can be answered.
- 8.15. CD summarised: "It seems that there are 2 very different views about what role this Council should perform and ultimately we have to find a single view to which we can all agree, otherwise we are just going to continue to argue amongst ourselves and not talk about the important points such as this morning's debate on performance, which was one of the most healthy debates in Council I have been part of. It hit on a point that we were all genuinely concerned about and it wasn't tit for tat, it was genuine questions being asked, good positive suggestions being made, important and valuable information being offered and hopefully being listened to and that is what National Council should be. Whether it is going to be at a global scope or more local, or whether it will be just advisory or perform a function of scrutiny, this debate is going to need to continue."

9. AOB

- 9.1. CD expressed his disappointment in the lack of support from Table Tennis England at this meeting. He said that standing orders require Table Tennis England to provide a secretary for National Council and we have been failed. "I have made an audio recording of today's meeting on my phone, but I have no idea how that will turn out." CD proposed that National Council should recruit a secretary from within Council or maybe from within the community. He asked all Councillors to give consideration to this and come forward with suggestions on how we can deal with this going forward.
- 9.2. KT agreed and said that she felt meetings should be recorded for accuracy but felt this should be made public knowledge before the meeting.
- 9.3. CD agreed and said he would put a notice on the agenda to inform Councillors that a recording would be taken.

10. PRESENTATION ON THE WEBSITE

- 10.1. Whilst CD was setting up the presentation GR interjected with a question on finance:
10.1.1. Do you know what happened to the £185k budget for the website last year?
- 10.1.2. CD said he had no information about this, but what a perfect example of the kind of question a Councillor should be able to ask on finance and he challenged anyone in the room to be able to answer that question based on the financial reports we had been given.
- 10.2. CD confirmed after a question from DJ, that this was a brand-new website dedicated to National Council.
- 10.3. CD presented the website which was received well. Unfortunately, at this point in the meeting the recording ended, so it is not possible to re-count any questions or comments that were made. The minute taker did not record anything from this part of the meeting.

- 10.4. A lot of the presentation was scripted; therefore a copy of the transcript has been included below for information.
- 10.4.1. First let's talk about the goals of this website.
- 10.4.2. It will become the central source of information about Council. Who are the Councillors, how can you contact them, what are we doing, regular updates, etc, but I need help. I am looking for one or more of you to offer a little bit of your time to help me post regular updates to the members; they are not going to read minutes, but a short half page news article summarising what we discussed and what action we are taking, could be very useful. The success depends on some of you helping me.
- 10.4.3. We have a forum, this forum serves 2 functions, it allows for secure, private communication between Councillors, so we are able to debate topics from the comfort of our arm chairs. Secondly, it offers our members the opportunity to engage with us, by posting items on the forum which we can read as well as other players. The key to this tool is in all of you taking time to use it and engage with members; if we just have it there and wait for others to use it, nothing is going to happen; a forum is only as good as its active members; so I need each and every one of you, to get comfortable in using this tool; it really is not difficult and I will offer support to any Councillor that needs it.
- 10.4.4. We can hold votes, in a secure way through the website; we used it for the British League regulations last season and it worked great. We can have debates on the forum and then we can have a formal vote, all again done from your arm chair, but you must engage with this tool to get the best from it.
- 10.4.5. We can do snap polls and we can do it across the entire Table Tennis community, so we can engage the members on a variety of topics and getting a feel for how they feel.
- 10.4.6. By now everyone should have had their photo taken; I think this just makes things a little more personal, a small photo of each Councillor with their contact details just makes it feel a bit more real than talking to an anonymous figure that you can only ever access once at a county AGM. Obviously anyone who is virulently against their photo being shown, would not be forced, this is optional, but I feel it is a valuable thing to have.
- 10.4.7. The website also has other practical uses, such as the ability to be used as a repository for document storage and distribution. If you look under info you will see all the papers for today's meeting, available. They are password protected, so only Councillors and deputies can access them. We also have the option of uploading past minutes, as I have done for the last 3 years.

The meeting ended at 4pm.

Actions

1. CD to ensure there is an agenda item for a minute's silence on future agendas.
2. SM to look into why an information pack had not been received in advance of the Hull ping pong parlour opening and report back.
3. SM to send a copy of the missing competitions report to all Councillors.
4. JB to put a list of all ping pong parlours on the TTE website.
5. CD to take the proposal of the next meeting dates to the Board.
6. HO staff to send Martins questions to all Councillors.
7. CD agreed to put a notice on the agenda to inform Councillors that a recording would be taken at meetings.