

Format of National Council Meetings – Discussion of Options

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to initiate a discussion of how National Council should hold its meetings even when a return to face-to-face meeting is possible. We should aim to find out what are the preferences of National Councillors.

Background

Covid19 has not only influenced how many organisations have operated over the last four months, there will be enduring impacts in the way they communicate and hold meetings. In particular, there will be much greater use of on-line tools such as Zoom for holding meetings. The benefits are obvious – the lack of a need to travel makes it much easier to arrange meetings and there are significant cost savings. But with on-line meetings the opportunities for informal discussions and networking are reduced.

Table tennis cannot be immune to such changes. Indeed, many clubs, leagues and counties have already held AGMs and other meetings on-line. TTE held its AGM on-line and the National Council meeting in June was on-line. The October meeting will also be on-line. The meetings have gone well – they have been well-attended and the ability to have productive discussions has not been significantly impaired. For those travelling long distances, the on-line format has been significantly beneficial. And, of course, the cost-savings in accommodation and travel costs are significant.

At some stage, the situation with Covid19 will ease such that face-to-face meetings become possible again. But even when it becomes possible to resume face-to-face meetings we should consider the various format that we might use – and decide which one is the best for National Council. That's the purpose of this paper – to initiate a discussion and seek the views of National Councillors

Proposal

This isn't a paper that recommends a particular format. Nor does it set out the pros and cons of the different approaches – I think we all know by now what they are and have probably made up our minds about the balance of advantage and disadvantage. This is simply a proposal that we find out the preferences of National Councillors. For example, do they prefer:

- All face-to-face meetings
- All on-line meetings
- A mixture of the two

There is also the possibility of holding "hybrid" meetings in which some National Councillors participate on-line and some attend the meeting in person at Milton Keynes. This would require that TTE have the technology to implement such an approach.

My view is that as far as possible we should try to identify a consensus solution, ie one that everybody is broadly happy with. This not something that should be agreed by a simple majority vote. And we should avoid anyone being excluded from participating as a National Councillor – either because they are not comfortable using or don't have access to on-line technology or because of the long-distances involved in travelling to meetings makes it difficult to participate.

Neil Hurford
Oxfordshire