

MINUTES OF MAG MEETING - SATURDAY 26th SEPTEMBER 2020

Present

Neil Hurford (Chairman), Kevin Buddell, David Maddison, Steve Pratt, Sandy Nash, Stuart Sherlock, Phil Ashleigh, Liam McTiernan, Juliet Bertie, Steve Bertie, John Andrews, John Mackey, Susie Venner (Board Liaison).

1. Apologies for Absence

Dave Randerson, Dean Nabarro, Dan Sims, Jo Green.

2. Chairman's Introduction

In opening the meeting, NH said that MAG had had a very productive period over the summer and was moving forward on all aspects of its remit – projects, issues and engagement. We had also recruited seven new members. The 2-hour discussion with the Performance Team had been an important milestone for MAG.

3. Notes of Previous Meeting

No comments.

4. Actions from Previous Meeting

These had either been completed or would arise as part of the agenda.

5. MAG Recruitment

NH welcomed the new members of MAG to their first full meeting. The recruitment of 7 new members had widened the skill base and diversity of MAG thereby adding to its robustness.

6. Projects Update

In opening this item, NH noted that he was keen that all MAG activities had an output. In many cases, particularly for projects, this would be in the form of a report. Many reports would go to the Board, but we should avoid over-whelming the Board with reports and only send them the reports that made recommendations for the Board. Some reports would simply be to inform future MAG activities. In general, all reports would be published on the MAG pages of the TTE website.

- (a) **Ranking** – Following the first round of consultation by the Board's Ranking Review Group, it had been decided to stick with the "relative" system. What would now be addressed would be the refinement of the relative system. MAG had significant expertise in this area and could contribute to this next stage. Ranking remained a strategic issue that was important to many people in the TT community. So it made sense for MAG to contribute by compiling insights. LM, KB and SS would all be keen to be part of a project team.

NH would discuss with Simon Griew on how MAG could best contribute.

- (b) **Volunteering** – SV reported that the report had been very well received by the Board. It identified the problems, but also identified solutions. As originally intended, the report would feed into the revision of Mission 2025 and it has been identified as a priority item. The next step is a costing by TTE staff – but in the context of it being seen as an investment. Communication would need to be set up for on-going investment. SP asked NH to diarise a review of the implementation report for 12 months' time.

NH asked if the report could now be published on the TTE website. SV thought this would be ok – but would confirm.

- (c) **Engagement with Counties & Leagues** – NH reported that online discussions had taken place with six counties. Those that had participated had welcomed the opportunity for a conversation with MAG. The meetings provided an update about MAG and enabled counties/leagues to feed into the future MAG work programme. DM emphasised that the meetings had opened channels and created pathways for future communications. A report had been drafted which recorded the issues raised and which would be included in the future MAG work programme. The report would shortly be finalised by incorporating comments from MAG members and published on the MAG pages of the TTE website. In the meantime, the opportunity for further counties to be involved in online discussions remained open. One county had declared such interest.

NH to revise draft of report and publish on website

- (d) **Clubs Development** – Two sessions of discussions had taken place with about 25 leading clubs. A number of important issues had already emerged from the discussions. Round 3 of the discussions was now being planned.

NH would circulate the list of clubs/contacts it was intended to invite

- (e) **Coaching** - NH to convene a meeting to take forward the two project briefs.
- (f) **IT Strategy & Systems**– NH to produce a first draft in collaboration with John Andrews and Dan Simms
- (g) **Engagement with the TT Community** – two sessions were planned. One with “influencers & opinion-formers” and the other with members of TTE’s Advisory Network. Inevitably there was some overlap between the two groups. NH would send out the invites shortly with a view to arranging the sessions for mid-October. Subsequently, it might be decided to hold an engagement session with players in the younger age group (18- 25), particularly in the context of the next item.

NH to send out invites and arrange online discussions.

- (h) **Reducing the Decline in Players in the 18-25 Years Age Bracket** – LM opened this item by saying he had already done some preliminary work on this before joining MAG as it had featured regularly on the “Ping Pong” show. Along with a colleague, he had collected data on the drop out rate of top juniors as they moved to the senior ranks. Given TTE’s limited resources it was important to identify some “quick-wins”. In the discussion, it was noted that VETTS had been successful because there was a strong social element to it – not just competitive table tennis. Maybe there was something that could be learnt from the success of VETTS. A key issue would be building stronger links with university table tennis clubs and helping young players continue their involvement with the game at university.

NH and LM to produce a project brief.

- (i) **National Club League** – one of the key issues that had emerged from the discussions with clubs was the competition structure needed to be more supportive of clubs as they were the back-bone of development. The idea by Matt Porter for an integrated National Clubs

League had gained wide support during the discussions with Clubs. NH had prepared an initial project brief which summarised the concept.

NH to circulate first draft of the project brief for comment.

7. Issues Raised with the Board

(a) Interaction of Performance Team with Players, Coaches & Parents – this had culminated in the discussion with the Performance Team at the beginning of September. MAG needed to feedback to the Board the outcome of the discussion. NH had drafted a report which he would be finalising shortly. The report would be discussed with the Performance Team prior to submission to the Board. It was expected that the report would then be published.

NH to finalise the first draft of the report.

(b) “Ask Us Anything” – this had been initiated by MAG with DN heavily involved in the planning of the event. LM had chaired the session. The event had shown the commitment of TTE to openness and transparency. Hopefully, it would not be a “one-off” but the start of a new way of TTE communicating with the membership. It was recognised that the session had been largely focussed on the “performance” end of the spectrum. But this simply opened up opportunities for other sessions on, eg on competitions, development and grass-roots issues. NH to write to TTE to encourage TTE to build on the success of this event. DM noted that a common thread of the things that MAG had done well is when they are led by relationship building. Building more respectful relationships – and hence more productive ones – was a key role for MAG.

NH to write to TTE.

(c) News Article on Changes to National Championships – MAG had expressed the view to the Board that the News Article on the TTE website which outlined a number of changes to the National Championships and the U-12 National Cup had not been well communicated. We recommended that the Article be withdrawn to allow further consideration of the issues and how best to communicate them. A new Article was produced which explained the rationale for the decision in more detail.

8. Diversity & Inclusion

MAG had been asked to nominate two people to participate in a new initiative by TTE on Diversity & Inclusion. NH had suggested to Juliet Bertie and Steven Bertie that they be the MAG nominees and they had agreed. This was agreed by the meeting.

SV to confirm the MAG nominees with Greg Yarnall.

9. MAG Live!

NH said this was an umbrella that covered a number of initiatives relating to communication and engagement – particularly where social media (very broadly defined) was involved. Many of these initiatives were already underway, so it was important to pull them together strategically so that they represented a coherent approach to communication and engagement. The element of MAG Live! included:

- Facebook – A FB page for posting information, and a FB Group for proactive engagement and as an insight generator for project work
- Email – an email address where members of the TT community could suggest issues for the MAG forward work programme
- Zoom/You Tube – short summaries of projects, live discussions of projects, explaining the role of MAG

This would culminate in a MAG Annual Report to the membership which could be conducted live on Facebook or by Zoom (this would be in addition to a standard MAG Annual Report included in the TTE Annual Review).

NH, LM, SN & KB would produce a paper which explained this initiative in more detail.

10. Streamlining TTE Operations and Reducing Costs

In opening the discussion of this item, KB said that the complex governance structures of TTE were not well understood by the table tennis community. The way TTE is structured seems to give rise to unclear decision-making processes. It was not clear that the costs incurred in running a number of committees provided value for money. The structure reflected how the sport was organised 30-40 years ago and now appeared out of date. Why are we incurring costs for governance structures that offered little benefit.

SV said in looking at decision-making processes in TTE it was important to distinguish what was required by Sport England and what was part of our own processes. Quite simply, we had to comply with Sport England requirements in order to continue receiving funding. For our own processes, we could decide ourselves – but change had proved difficult.

The feeling of the meeting was that it would be very useful to “put a price on governance”. As a first step, all committees should record the direct costs of their meetings. It was felt that in general, meetings within TTE could be held on-line – thereby keeping costs to the minimum. Very occasionally, face-to-face meetings would be required. But this would be the exception rather than the rule. MAG should be an exemplar in this regard.

NH to write to TTE to make this suggestion.

11. MAG Sub-Groups

NH said that it would be beneficial to form sub-groups within MAG to facilitate the management of business. Obvious examples of where Sub-Groups would be useful would be Clubs, Coaches and Technical Officials. These sub-groups could have external representation.

NH to write a note prior to the next meeting outlining the approach to sub-groups

12. TTE Competition Review

SV provided an update. This was expected to be a major piece of work and was an opportunity for a fundamental review. Key questions to address would be – is the competition structure fit for purpose?, is it matched to TTE objectives?, are there too many competitions?

KB noted that with Covid19 making a major impact on the competition programme, it was a good opportunity to wipe the slate clean and come up with a structure that was more closely aligned with the objectives of the sport. This would also make implementation much easier.

NH to write to TTE to confirm our interest in being involved in the Competition Review, including setting the Terms of Reference.

13. Review of Mission 2025

This was a half-way review – but with the focus on looking forward. Are the objectives still realistic? MAG will be asked to comment, particularly in terms of are there any gaps, are targets realistic and what KPIs should be used for monitoring purposes?

SV will keep MAG in the picture.

14. Any Other Business

(a) Feedback from the Board – SV reported the favourable feedback from the TTE Board about MAG's activities over the summer. It was well on the way to fulfilling the objectives as set out in the IRP report in terms of engagement and projects. It was proving to be a real asset to both the Board and to the wider TT community.

(b) Meeting Format- NH that there had been a lot of ground to cover in the meeting. But it was essential to catch up with all that had taken place over the summer. He hoped that future meetings would have fewer items on the agenda which would allow more time for discussion.

15. Date of Next Meeting

On-line meeting on Saturday 21st November at 10am. NH to send out the Zoom invite nearer the time.

16. Cost of the Meeting

The direct costs of the meeting to TTE were: £0.00.