

## Notes of MAG Meeting 16 March 2022

**Present:** Neil Hurford (Chair), Sandy Nash, Dave Randerson, Jo Green, Phil Ashleigh, Kevin Buddell, Steve Pratt, Steve Bertie, Juliet Bertie, Liam McTiernan, David Maddison, Susie Venner (Board Liaison)

**Apologies for Absence:** John Andrews, John Mackey

### **1. Chair's Introduction**

NH welcomed those present to the meeting. Sadly, he had to report that both Dan Simms and Dean Nabarro had decided to stand down from MAG. Both Dan and Dean had wished MAG well for the future and they would both be willing to act as "sounding boards" to MAG whenever required. All MAG members joined in thanking Dan and Dean for their contribution to MAG and looked forward to keeping in touch.

### **2. Notes of Previous Meeting – 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

Noted

### **3. Actions**

All would be handled under the respective agenda items.

### **4. Renewal of Terms of Appointment and Recruitment of New Members**

The MAG members who had been appointed during the initial recruitment round had been in post for three years. NH would contact TTE to arrange for the initial appointments to be extended. It would also make sense to extend the term of appointment for those who were appointed in July 2020.

As two members had stood down, there was the opportunity to recruit additional members of MAG. MAG was limited to 18 members, so there was the opportunity to recruit up to 4 additional members. The general feeling was that it made sense to recruit new members of MAG on a regular basis to refresh and expand the expertise of MAG.

In view of the likely recruitment process, it made sense for MAG to renew its Terms of Reference in order to make sure that they reflected how MAG was operating based on the experience of the last 3 years. The recruitment process would then follow the revision of the Terms of Reference.

### **5. Issue Raised with TTE – Cancellation of the Wolverhampton Grand Prix**

NH had written to the Chair and Chief Executive of TTE expressing concern at the cancellation of the Wolverhampton Grand Prix. We recognised that this would have been a very difficult decision that was not taken lightly. But it was essential that such decisions were made as transparently as possible. NH had confirmed that MAG is always willing to act as a "sounding board" for the Board to provide advice on such difficult decisions and how they are communicated. This issue would be discussed in more detail at the TTE Board when the MAG report to the Board was discussed.

### **6. TTE Board Skills and Diversity Matrix**

The draft Board Skills and Diversity Matrix had been circulated for comments. The following points were made in the discussion:

- There needed to be a greater degree of “granularity” in table tennis skills so that, for example, it explicitly recognised experience in dealing with volunteers, and experience of county and regional table tennis
- Leadership skills should explicitly recognise experience of managing change, and in ensuring transparency and accountability and of on-going review of strategic plans
- The “Equality and Diversity” section needs to be strengthened by the addition of skills sets relating to practical experience in working with partners and specialist organisations on issues relating to Equality and Diversity.

NH would draft a response to TTE making these points.

### **7. Ranking Discussion on Impact of ITTF Override**

The publication of the junior ranking lists at the beginning of the month had given rise to discussion about the application of the ITTF to both senior and junior ranking lists. MAG had discussed this issue in Jan 2021 as part of the Ranking Consultation.

We reaffirmed what we had concluded during that discussion. The “ITTF Override” was a pragmatic approach to ensuring that our “top players” are ranked at the top of the TTE ranking list. But this should be done in a “light touch”, “minimalist” way to avoid distorting the rankings and moving away from the fundamental principles on which the TTE ranking system is based. The consensus seemed to be that for Seniors, it should be limited to those players in the top 100 of the ITTF rankings. For Juniors, we would emphasise an even greater focus on the “light touch”, “minimalist” approach. If a more detailed examination of the data/evidence suggested that the Override was not needed or doing more harm than good – then we would support the removal of the Override from the Junior Rankings.

Ranking is closely linked to “Performance” and a key recommendation of our report on Performance was that strengthening domestic competition should be a key objective to TTE. Whilst we want the Ranking System to be as objective as possible, it should be working with the grain of strengthening domestic competition.

NH would write to the Board Leads on Ranking and Performance to make these points.

### **8. Projects Update**

- (a) **Recruitment and Retention** - The “quantitative research” phase of the project has now been completed. An extensive data set has been compiled of the age-profile of the TTE membership. This covers the TTE membership as a whole, female members, large leagues, and smaller leagues. The impact of a large club on membership profile has been included. A strikingly similar pattern is produced in all cases. Membership rises rapidly in the 10-15 age-group, but by the age of 22, 80% of those who were playing competitively at age 15 no longer do so. Membership remains flat until the 40-45 age group whereupon it rises steadily peaking at age 55 before slowly declining from age 65 onwards. TTE membership has two peaks in membership – one at age 15 and the other at age 55. This is an interesting profile.

The “qualitative research” is now underway. We are engaging with a range of current and ex-members to understand the reasons why they have stayed with the sport, left the sport

or recently returned to the sport. We are doing this via personal contacts and by open invitation on Facebook.

The data this project will provide should be invaluable in understanding the membership profile. Ideally, it will provide an understanding of how we can reduce the proportion of members who stop playing between the ages of 18 and 22, and how we can bring forward the age at which players return to our sport. This would have a massive impact on our membership. These insights need to be at the heart of any strategy to increase membership.

- (b) **Club Participation in National Competitions** - one of the issues raised during the Clubs Development project was that TTE National Competitions should more proactively support the development of clubs. It had been suggested that British League should only accept entries from “proper clubs” (not specifically defined). There was concern that “clubs-of-convenience” were being created purely for the purposes of entering teams in British League. This was one of the issues that MAG agreed to investigate following the “Clubs Development” project.

A data collection phase had been completed and the data was now being analysed to understand the nature and scale of the issue that had been raised.

- (c) **Transparency & Accountability** – the summary of the discussion that had been held on this issue needed to be written up as a MAG report that could be published.

## 9. Any Other Business

- (a) **TTE Board Meeting** – this was scheduled for Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March at the National Championships. NH would be accompanied by Liam McTiernan to present the MAG report to the Board.
- (b) **Sustainability** – issues relating to the environmental sustainability of TTE activities were raised. Does TTE have a sustainability policy/strategy/plan? Ensuring that wherever possible, meetings were held on-line rather than face-to-face would provide a “quick win”. This was something to explore and would be raised at the Board meeting as a possible future project area for MAG.

April 2022