

# National Council Minutes 24<sup>th</sup> April 2021



## PRESENT

10:00am

Estyn Williams (Chair – Warwickshire)

**National Councillors:** David L Hockney (Avon), Peter Charters (Berkshire), Alex Murdoch (Bedfordshire) Susan Hayes (Buckinghamshire), Mike Atkinson (Buckinghamshire), Brian Freer (Cambridgeshire) Karen Tonge MBE (Cheshire), Alan E Ransome OBE (Cleveland), Reinhard Lindner (Dorset) Phil Ashleigh (Essex), Dave Adamson (Gloucester), Ken MacLeod (Hampshire) Harmesh Jutle (Herefordshire), David Edwards (Hertfordshire) Tim Giles (Isle of Wight) Neil Le Milliere (Kent) Jim Bolton (Lancashire) Tony Dias (Middlesex) Ivor Jones (Northampton), Malcolm Allsop (Nottingham), Gareth Pearson (Northumberland), Neil Hurford (Oxfordshire), James Kenny (South Yorkshire), Chris Dangerfield (Shropshire) Jos Kelly (Somerset) Margot Fraser (Surrey), James Skinner (Sussex), Martin Clark (Worcestershire), Richard B Hudson (Yorkshire)

### Deputy National Councillors:

Mike Holt (Leicestershire) Mike Starkie (Derbyshire)

### Other:

Mike Smith (British Universities and Colleges Sports (BUCS), Jill Parker MBE (President), Kim Mudge (SE Regional Committee Chair)

**Board Members:** Sandra Deaton (SD), Sara Sutcliffe MBE (SS) Susie Venner (SV), Don Parker (DP) Tom Purcell (TP) Simon Griew (SG) Mark Quartermaine (MQ)

**Staff:** Jo Keay-Blyth (JKB) Matthew Stanforth (MS) Greg Yarnall (GY)

**Minutes :** Victoria Wiegleb (VW)

### Apologies / Non-Attendance: National Councillors & Deputy National Councillors:

Diana Jermyn (Cornwall), John Cowell (Derbyshire), Martin Ireland (Lancashire), Shirley Pickering (Leicestershire), George Tyler (Lincolnshire), Malcolm MacFarlane (Warwickshire), Charles Noel Sewell (Wiltshire).

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Agenda Item	Paper No	Discussion	Decision/Action	Who	When
1	N/A	<p><b>Chairman Opening Remarks, Update &amp; Welcome</b> EW (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked JKB / VW and all the staff who helped to get today's meeting arranged.</p> <p><b>Elected Director Vacancy</b> EW (Chair) advised that National Councillors should now be receiving their ballot papers for the Elected Director vacancy. There are 3 candidates: Mike Bishop, Darren Morgan &amp; Richie Venner. Votes are required by Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021.</p> <p><b>Terms of Office for National Council</b> EW (Chair) advised that the existing terms of office finish immediately after the AGM this year. Regulations require that counties elect their National Councillor for next year between 1<sup>st</sup> May – 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021.</p> <p><b>Obituaries</b> Those we have lost since National Council last met were recognised and remembered: Eric Baker Chester Barnes Geof Bax Derek Butt Graeme Sopp Peter Williams</p> <p><b>Minutes from last meeting</b> The minutes from 16<sup>th</sup> January 2021 were put to National Council to approve – a poll was launched and 100% of the members approved the minutes. These were taken as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	<p><b>Decision:</b> National Council approved the minutes of 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2021</p>		

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		<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p>AR (Cleveland) advised that he has asked for the Board Code of Conduct to be circulated to National Council. JKB responded that it will be available on the website once Board has approved the Board Guidance Pack in June.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) raised a query about both the AGM timetable itself (dates for propositions seemed earlier than usual) and when the timetable was released. JKB advised that both the timetable and the date it was made available followed previous years and had not changed. AR requested this be reconsidered by the Board for future as the date for propositions is more than 3 months before the AGM itself.</p>			
2		<p><b>TTE Chairman's Report (Change to Agenda order)</b></p> <p>SD apologised that she would need to leave the meeting early due to an ETTU Executive Board meeting. SD updated her report and invited questions. The Board is very aware of the discussions on transparency and accountability and is considering further actions including working with MAG to discuss ways of improving.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) asked the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Why is the timescale for recruitment of three appointed directors so tight, only 3 weeks until their terms end? AR (Cleveland) also raised the current definition of independent with respect to Board appointments.</li> </ol> <p>In response SD advised that the Board have agreed that the 3 Appointed Directors whose term is coming to an end will serve until the June Board meeting and the new directors taking office after that meeting.</p> <p>SD further explained that the Code of Sports Governance states that we must have at least 3 Independent Directors who have no close connection or bias to the sport. SD advised the Board have listened to debate about the definition of Independent Directors and has agreed a change of policy and the Nominations Committee will have discretion to consider all material facts to determine an individual's independence. Being an active player member will not in itself prevent someone from being classed as an independent director going forward. This will be explained in the role description for the appointed directors.</p>			

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	<p>2) AR (Cleveland) queried the decision to hold the AGM virtually over zoom and felt that given the progress with the vaccinations, this decision should be revisited. AR (Cleveland) also requested that EW (Chair) chairs the AGM this year instead of SD.</p> <p>SD responded that the Board had considered a physical meeting but had agreed it was not feasible or advisable with so many uncertainties still in place. CD (Shropshire) also asked via chat for this decision to be revisited. SD said the Board would look at it again.</p> <p>SD advised she will be Chair of the AGM. Whilst agreeing that EW (Chair) did a fantastic job of chairing the EGM, there is absolutely no reason why SD should not chair the AGM as Chairperson of the association.</p> <p>3) Funding for Junior players was also raised by AR (Cleveland) and how the current process of receiving these funds needs to change. AR (Cleveland) hopes that the Board have more funding in mind due to the demand required.</p> <p>In response SD agreed TTE needs a lot of money to run the performance programme. Talent Pathway funding is significantly reduced since 2012. UK Sport has not provided any significant funding since 2012. Performance money for senior players comes primarily out of TTE's money, SD reassured National Council that the Board is very aware and where there is funding available to support the programme it will be made available.</p> <p>JK (Somerset) advised he was pleased to hear about the funding, but asked that it is to be considered that the funding goes to the right people as he felt there had been some peculiar decisions in the past.</p> <p>SD invited Matthew Stanforth (MS) to respond.</p> <p>MS advised that there are 2 main sources of external funding awards for young athletes – Sport Aid and Backing the Best. Sport Aid provides localised awards from £500 to £1,500 paid directly to the athlete. We currently have 8 athletes receiving Sports Aid. Backing the Best is a talent scheme based on family means testing, up to £5,000. For these awards, MS advised TTE prioritise these from Junior squad working down through the pathway. In the last year, only 8 players put their names forward for the Backing the Best scheme.</p>			
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		<p><b>Board Report</b></p> <p>SD introduced this report and welcomed questions.</p> <p>TD (Middlesex) via chat commented that there is hardly any diversity on the TTE Board and hopes this is part of the recruitment consideration. SD confirmed that diversity is an element for consideration and encourages more diverse applicants.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) raised a concern he had heard regarding the arrangements for Home Nations funding from UK Sport and the proposal ‘to make Scotland a sub-committee of England’ which had been brought to his attention.</p> <p>SD advised that the information AR (Cleveland) provided is incorrect. In order to secure the UK Sport funding, it would need to be channelled via a Code compliant organisation and Table Tennis England is the only appropriate body currently. SD asked SS to explain further. SS confirmed that the bid to UK Sport was for ‘progression funding’ for a limited British pathway programme. All the Home Nations are signatories to an MOU that underpinned the bid which set out the proposed governance structure (approved by the Home Nations) – a GB committee with senior representatives of all the Home Nations and underpinned by an Ops Group of the Head Coaches of all the Home Nations. However, to be Code compliant it would sit as a subcommittee of TTE as it wasn’t possible to just tweak the dormant BTTF structure as it would need a complete overhaul to be Code compliant. Unlike the former BTTF company there would be voting equality within the GB committee structure. Scotland have provided feedback and changes are being actioned within that structure that has been agreed in principle with the MOU.</p> <p>SS invited AR (Cleveland) the opportunity to call her at any time to discuss any matters to avoid him coming to National Council with incorrect / misinformed information.</p>			
3		<p><b>ITTF Matters</b></p> <p>AR (Cleveland) introduced his paper on the matter, he advised that he was aware of the serious issues within the ITTF and it is very concerning to see the President and Deputy President falling out so publicly. He also referred to changes to the WTT/ITTF ranking systems and the reduced structure of the World Championships and the impact this will have on other home nations in particular. Finally, AR (Cleveland) raised a concern that has been raised by some of the national federations including</p>			

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		<p>Germany that those running World Table Tennis are also employed by the ITTF and there is a conflict of interest. Threats of legal cases between the ITTF and Germany are also damaging the sports credibility globally.</p> <p>EW (Chair) invited SD to introduce her paper on international issues and also to respond to AR (Cleveland).</p> <p>SD thanked AR (Cleveland) for this paper. SD confirmed that the ETTU is pushing hard (more than any other continental body) to seek changes to the ranking system as the current model isn't acceptable to Europe. SD agreed that the public fall out at the top of the ITTF is damaging and disgraceful and expect there to be changes. The issues raised by Germany are also damaging. However, Germany alleged corruption which the ITTF refute and an external investigation confirmed that the WTT structure is acceptable. Neither side will apologise. SD confirmed that through her role on ETTU she is keeping close to developments and exerting influence via the ETTU. Finally, SD confirmed that TTE is working both logistically and politically to bring WTT events to England soon.</p> <p>TP (Board) asked to speak and advised that he had seen a critical report from the Referee of the WTT event recently, in particular that WTT have the ability to override certain ITTF rules. TP urged that ITTF and WTT rules need to be aligned.</p>			
4		<p><b>The Way Forward as Covid Recedes</b></p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed SS and Greg Yarnall (GY) to present.</p> <p>SS began by thanking GY and his team for their continued hard work over the last season adapting the Governance guidelines on a regular basis.</p> <p>SS discussed recent research carried out by Sheffield Hallam University looking at Covid impacts across the sports sector. Generally, there is a sense that recovery will happen, at least back to 75-80% pre covid levels within 12 months. Sport England have been incredibly supportive of NGBs and grants to clubs have been well received. The priority for the next 12 months is recovery and helping players, coaches and clubs get back on their feet.</p>			

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		<p>GY presented the return from covid strategy and the Sport England Uniting the Movement strategy. The presentation will be made available via the website/with the minutes.</p> <p>TTE strategy/Mission 2025 update - SS reminded the meeting that Sport England provided TTE with a one-year roll over award on the same level of funding, £1.95m. A one year set of goals has been agreed with Sport England and the TTE operational plan will be aligned to this. The clear priority is recovery. Customer Experience and participation programmes will be a continued focus. Digital assets are also being assessed and ongoing work on how we become more digitally driven.</p> <p>A revised Code of Sports Governance will be issued by Government in the summer. Sport England will provide more clarity on funding bid process beyond March 2020 this summer. Indications of treating NGBs as 'long term system partners' rather than transactional deliverers.</p> <p>National Council was advised that there is a new TTE business level zoom account available for counties, leagues, clubs to use. Email their meeting requests to Victoria Wiegleb and she will book it.</p> <p>There is a Board Strategy Day planned for June/July to discuss the revision of Mission 2025 and/or renewed strategy taking into account the impact of covid. National Council will be consulted in this process.</p> <p>Some chat messages about coach licences. GY advised they are looking into an extension of coaching licenses but there are additional elements to consider. GY will update as soon as he can.</p> <p>JS (Sussex) asked via the chat box to ensure that the strategic statements and deliverables are underpinned with measurable resources. SS advised the Board are looking at that.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) raised a concern regarding the volunteers not returning as they are vital to the running of the clubs / associations. GY advised that in both surveys volunteers have been asked if they plan to come back. Plans are being developed to assist the return of volunteers and it is an opportunity to engage new and younger volunteers too. 10 new clubs have signed up to the Young Ambassador Programme. The new Diversity, Inclusion and Volunteering Officer will have this as part of their focus.</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> Presentation to be sent out with minutes</p>	<p>VW</p>	<p>Completed</p>
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5		<p><b>Format of Council meetings after Covid</b></p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed NH (Oxfordshire) to speak.</p> <p>NH (Oxfordshire) proposed that National Council keep the online meetings as an option going forward and see how it goes / compares to a face-to-face meeting. NH (Oxfordshire) also proposed that those wishing to join remotely should have the choice to do so at any meeting in the future. There were no questions.</p> <p>EW (Chair) requested the poll be launched for Vote 1 to state that at least one meeting a year will be held online.</p> <p><b>The results were 77% for, 15% against and 8% abstained – EW confirmed this is carried.</b></p> <p>EW (Chair) asked for Vote 2 to be launched to state that National Councillors should be permitted to join a meeting online as they so wish.</p> <p><b>The results were 89% for, 7% against, 4% abstained – EW confirmed this is carried.</b></p> <p>CD (Shropshire) asked for clarification that only National Councillors were voting. EW (Chair) confirmed that this is a standard requirement and everyone is aware of that.</p> <p>NLM (Kent) commented that if people were not present at today’s meeting, then they could not vote. EW (Chair) advised this is the usual process, i.e., no proxies, for a Council meeting. The votes remain as carried.</p>	<p><b>Decision:</b> Carried that 1 meeting a year will be held remotely</p> <p><b>Decision:</b> Carried that National Councillors can attend remotely if required</p>		
6		<p><b>Select Committee on Disability</b></p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed KT (Cheshire) to speak. KT (Cheshire) discussed her paper advising of who is on the committee. Discussions are now taking place and are looking at what can be done at grass roots level as a starting point. KT (Cheshire) had spoken to GY and this work would complement the work on diversity and inclusion. Reports will be provided to National Council as the committee continues.</p>			



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7		<p><b>Affiliation Fees</b></p> <p><b>Board Proposals</b></p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed SS to speak. SS advised the Board listened to the feedback from the last National Council meeting. The Board confirmed its intention to freeze membership fees next season and offer a 50% discount for next season for those who have taken out Compete membership for this season. SS also advised that 1-2% of Compete membership have so far requested this discount.</p> <p>From 1<sup>st</sup> May a 15-month membership is being offered to encourage return to competitive play as lockdown restrictions ease. – SS advised National Council in detail on this.</p> <p>EW (Chair) then welcomed CD (Shropshire) to speak.</p> <p>CD (Shropshire) provided a detailed narrative on how members are not happy for being charged when they haven't picked up a ball. CD (Shropshire) was pleased that the Board have attempted to address the concerns, but feels that the proposal doesn't fundamentally address the problem hence his proposition to the AGM to provide free membership to anyone who paid for membership this season. He stated this was not about the money but about fairness, everyone had received the same benefit of the work done by TTE but not everyone had paid. The rationale is set out in the AGM proposition which has not been provided to Council. CD (Shropshire) continued that reserves could be used to cover the shortfall and the Board proposal was short sighted. He also commented that in his opinion the Board abuse their position of influence through the statements and message on the website and through the email system.</p> <p>EW (Chair) apologised if any papers had been missed, however didn't recall receiving any papers from CD (Shropshire). AGM resolutions are not due to be published until 30<sup>th</sup> April so if CD (Shropshire) wanted it discussed he should have submitted a paper. EW (Chair) advised CD (Shropshire) to put his proposition in the chat box, which he did and read it out.</p> <p>NLM (Kent) supports CD (Shropshire) and reported 50% of Kent leagues complaining and threats of disaffiliation.</p>			
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	<p>MC (Worcestershire) complained that the recent website article had said the fees would be frozen for next season, it should have said that is what the Board is proposing it to the AGM who will decide.</p> <p>AR (Cleveland) raised his concern about retaining members generally and said all options considered.</p> <p>SS was offered the opportunity to reply by EW (Chair). SS explained that a full refund was considered by the Board but that the financial impact would be £223K as set out in the Finance Report. The Directors have fiduciary duties regarding the solvency of the company and as such a financial hit would not be prudent and would severely impact jobs and programmes to support the clubs, leagues and members. SG (Board) confirmed the Board looked across a range of considerations and felt CD (Shropshire) dismissed the value provided. SG (Board) felt the decision to offer a 50% discount was fair and balanced having looked at the options carefully.</p> <p>TP (Board) also supported SG (Board) and SS. He explained the loss of over £200k would have a major impact on the organisation and this needs to be considered. His own league had discussed it. TP (Board) suggested that National Council reject CD (Shropshire) proposal.</p> <p>SV (Board) understood both arguments and advised that the National Council have now had an opportunity to hear both sides fairly, and that the membership should have the opportunity to do so with accurate information.</p> <p>JKB read out the chat content:</p> <p>GP (Northumberland) asked for clarity on the auto renewal as he recalled TTE emailing members giving them the opportunity to cancel. It is not reasonable to assume that those who didn't cancel wanted to pay.</p> <p>KM (SE Regional Committee Chair) agreed with SG (Board) and TP (Board)</p> <p>DH (Avon) said we need to see the bigger picture with TTE and the sport and is amazed how people are concerned over £16. He has not heard anyone complain about this.</p> <p>EW (Chair) invited CD (Shropshire) to answer / respond to the discussion / chat box comments.</p>			
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		<p>CD (Shropshire) in response said he felt that SG's (Board) comments were very disingenuous, his focus was about fairness not value. CD (Shropshire) also asked for clarity on the £223k figure and felt this was scaremongering. SS provided detail in the chat box 13,575 paid members, £223,774 revenue.</p>			
8		<p><b>Update from Diversity Group</b></p> <p>GY provided a presentation to National Council with an update on the work of the Equality, Diversity &amp; Inclusion working group. The full report and action plan will be released later in the year.</p> <p>GP (Northumberland) commented via chat that he understood the rationale but asked if there was any data to compare against other NGBs. GY replied that Sport England is working on sector wide comparative data,</p>			
9		<p><b>Governance</b></p> <p>PC (Berkshire) advised National Council that he has put forward 5 propositions for the AGM, 4 on governance which are aimed at increasing table tennis influence on the Board &amp; 1 on performance KPIs focussed on producing winning English teams.</p> <p>Proposal from KCTTA has received a response from the Board which was sent to National Councillors.</p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed NLM (Kent) to speak about the Kent County TTA correspondence and AGM proposition. NLM (Kent) stated it was disappointing that it took 7 weeks for KCTTA to receive a full response which is now being considered. KTTCA has submitted one proposition to the AGM, the creation of a board subcommittee for talent and performance.</p> <p>EW (Chair) invited CD (Shropshire) to speak on his paper that Company member votes should be retained for up to 6 months to allow the relevant county/league representative to confirm how their company member voted. This would aid accountability and transparency at all levels.</p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed responses from the above items.</p>			

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	<p>NH (Oxford) confirmed that he agreed with CD (Shropshire) and will be asking his county to cast their vote in favour of the proposition about voting transparency.</p> <p>SV (Board) advised that she supported PC (Berkshire) and his propositions and had been open with SD and SS about working with him to ensure Code compliance in the propositions. SV (Board) also confirmed that the propositions have been discussed in depth at Board level and that the Board has been broadly sympathetic with the principles behind PC's (Berkshire) governance propositions however, the devil is in the detail.</p> <p>DP (Board) advised that the KCTTA proposal about a performance subcommittee will be supported by the Board.</p> <p>EW (Chair) welcomed AR (Cleveland) to speak on the proposed select committee for the constitution. The first meeting has been conducted already, and AR (Cleveland) welcomed questions.</p>			
10	<p><b>Reports – CEO, Dept and MAG Report</b></p> <p>EW (Chair) asked for any questions on the CEO report. None raised.</p> <p>Operations / Governance Report – no questions</p> <p>A comment from NLM (Kent) who had an observation that in the Dept Reports it was noticeable that Counties only get 3 mentions in all of the reports.</p> <p>Finance Report – MC (Worcestershire) felt there was a lot of narrative, but disappointed that Q4 figures were not available in the report.</p> <p>Marketing &amp; Comms Report – no questions</p> <p>Mass – no questions</p> <p>Performance – no questions</p>			

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		<p>Comps &amp; Events – JK (Somerset) mentioned the ITTF change in the junior category, into 2 – U17 &amp; U19, also agreed by TTE. JK(Somerset) had concerns that the U17 age group may be at a disadvantage and suggested we adopt the new structure in its entirety for competitions. SS unable to confirm for JK (Somerset) but would respond to him later. MS (Staff) advised that the Junior age category is still U19 as a whole, WTT now have a number of other age brackets for them to compete in U11, U13, U15, U17, U19, but in European Championships this will only be the U19 bracket. For World Ranking, the youth players will be ranked on their best 10 results and they can compete in two categories U17 &amp; U19.</p> <p>Development &amp; Volunteering – no questions</p> <p>EW (Chair) raised the issue that we don't receive reports from volunteer committees and asked for any reports to be sent into JKB &amp; VW</p> <p>MAG report – no questions</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> SS to respond JK (Somerset)</p>		<p>Completed</p>
11		<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>CD (Shropshire) raised the issue on use of the communication platforms with regards to the AGM. SV (Board) agreed to work with CD offline to explore further.</p> <p>CD (Shropshire) came back to his AGM proposition on free fees next season and said his door is open if the Board are willing to discuss it with him.</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> rules on use of TTE platforms for AGM communications</p>	<p>SV Board</p>	<p>3 June Board meeting</p>
		<p><b>Date of next meeting: Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June</b></p>			

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<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>When</u>
Presentation by GY to be sent out with minutes	VW	Completed 14.5.21
SS to advise JK (Somerset) on age groups	SS	Completed (Neil Rogers)
Board Member to take AGM communication issues to Board	SV	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2021