

Select Committee of the Constitution
Report to National Council

Introduction

Working in accordance with the Terms of Reference agreed by National Council, the Select Committee has had a number of meetings and are pursuing several significant topics which will be reported on in due course.

We have interviewed the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and CEO of Table Tennis England and reviewing the considerable video footage recorded from those meetings, and thank you to the board members for their cooperation. We anticipate several follow up enquiries and potentially interviews with other stakeholders, over the coming months.

The purpose of this report is to bring an update on topics that we feel have run their course and where this select committee are able to provide positive recommendations.

CEO appointment

The Board are in the process of appointing a new CEO.

One common thread in many of our wider topics of discussion has been the detrimental effect that a lack of table tennis specific knowledge has had on some areas of our sport. The Committee recognise that Sport England guidelines require a mix of people with table tennis expertise, together with independent personnel on the Board. However, we feel the case can be made that a strong knowledge of our sport can only be seen as beneficial and would in no way be looked at negatively by Sport England, as such this should be deemed desirable for every appointment.

Due to the unexpected resignation of the current CEO, the select committee felt that we must bring this point forward now, as it is likely to be one of our key findings when our final report is published.

We do not intend to go into significant detail at this stage about our discussions to date or the evidence to hand given our review is not yet complete, however, there is a strong belief that our view is unlikely to change on this point. We therefore submit that; we believe it is very important to the Association that the new CEO has a strong knowledge of; and background in table tennis.

We have uncovered facts that support a view that decisions made historically were in retrospect ill-advised and that a determining factor in those failings was a lack of table tennis knowledge. This appears currently to have been a failing of no single person, but a number and the common factor between all was a lack of table tennis knowledge.

Another key reason which was actually stated by the Chair of TTE in our interview process was the need for at least one of the senior board roles of CEO or Chair, to have a very strong background in table tennis. We remind council that at some point in the near future the

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Chair of TTE will change due to the maximum term limit for the current Chair being reached. We feel that there is a strong possibility that the next Chair could come from a none table tennis background and as such the importance of our next CEO having table tennis knowledge could be critical to the future success of our sport.

A level playing field for AGM matters

Concern has been expressed to select committee members that in recent years, staff members have attended league and county meetings, with a clear intention to canvas for proposals coming from the Board or to canvas against proposals coming from other counties, where the board are against said proposal.

In previous administrations a direction was given to all staff that they must not have any involvement in political matters including proposals for AGMs, EGMs and elections.

A direct question was put to the board by the select committee on this point and whilst the board response was that they had no knowledge of such incidents happening, they were in complete agreement that staff members, at all levels, should not interfere in political matters. The only caveat to this was where staff members either play-in or hold voluntary roles within such committees, in which case there was broad agreement that to what level a staff member should influence a vote, should be at the discretion of the league or county directly affected.

A separate concern was raised around the use of the association's communication tools. At National Council meetings it has been raised that the board and SMT utilises the association's communication channel to unfairly promote its own view on AGM/EGM matters which could have potentially biased voting results.

A direct question was put to the board on this point. The board refuted the accusation that they have previously used the communications channel in an unfair way, stating that they always stick to established protocols. This point was conceded however, a second point was made that whilst protocol may be that the proposer gets to provide a rationale and the board are allowed to give their view, this was not the root cause of the concern. An example was spoken about where a proposition was made around a topic, the board gave its view, but then a few days later a totally separate article was released (via multiple methods of website, email and social media, to all members), which essentially supported the boards position and provided an unfair advantage on an up-coming vote. This point was reluctantly acknowledged by some of the board members interviewed.

There was agreement between the select committee and the board that principally AGM and EGM voting must be based on a level playing field with all facts known and that it would be appropriate for this select committee to look into this further and to provide protocols covering this.

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Recommendations

National Council commend this report to the board.

The Board panel who are responsible for the appointment of the next CEO consider expert knowledge of our sport as being a key requirement.

A policy of prohibiting staff members from involvement in AGM and EGM propositions and elections should be forthcoming by the board, prior to the next AGM.

Alan Ransome – Chairman
Alex Murdoch – Deputy Chairman
Chris Dangerfield
Peter Charters
Jos Kelly
Neil le Milliere
Richard Hudson