

Counties and Directly Affiliated Clubs (DACs)
Request for Information from Estyn Williams & Neil Hurford -
on behalf of the Articles and Regulations Committee (formerly the “Rules
Committee”)

Introduction

This note seeks information from Counties about their relationship with Direct Affiliated Clubs (DACs) in their county. The particular situation of interest is where the Directly Affiliated Club does not enter teams in a local league in the county.

The reason for seeking this information is because of a disagreement that has arisen between a county and a DAC as to whether the club should pay an affiliation fee to the county and if so, what the level of that fee might be.

This specific issue is particularly complicated as the DAC runs a number of Open Tournaments throughout the season. As it is required to do, the club submits the OT1 Forms to the County Association so that the Tournament Approval Panel is advised that the proposed Open Tournament doesn't clash with any local events.

The county feels that the club should be paying an affiliation fee to the county association. But this is not accepted by the club who feel that because they don't enter teams in any local league they should not be required to pay an affiliation fee to the county. The club is also of the view that as they are not asking anything from the County, they don't feel they should pay an affiliation fee.

Consultation with National Council

The terms of reference of the Articles and Regulations Committee (formerly Rules Committee) include: “To advise the Board, Committees, National Council and Heads of Departments on matters concerning the Articles and Regulations of the Company and the interpretation thereof.”

Accordingly, Jo Keay-Blyth has asked our views (as members of the Articles and Regulations Committee) on the relationship between Counties and directly affiliated clubs (DACs) and whether or not it is appropriate in the situation that has arisen for the club to pay an affiliation fee to the county. We have advised her that as part of making recommendations on how this issue should be handled, we will consult Council. Jo has agreed that this is a sensible approach to take.

To help reach a logical conclusion we thought it would be useful to set out the relationship between county associations and directly affiliated clubs (DACs). This helps to clarify whether and in what circumstances a county association should be able to charge a DAC an affiliation fee.

TTE Perspective

Table Tennis United, TTEs strategy, recognises that ‘one size does not fit all’, and it does not generally seek to dictate local organisational arrangements. Indeed, when disputes arise

between a county and affiliated organisations, TTEs preferred approach is for local issues to be resolved by discussion between those concerned rather than by TTE imposing a solution.

However, in this case the county and DAC concerned have not managed to agree. Hence the request that has been made to us for advice on how to handle the issue. We have been clear with TTE that there is unlikely to be a perfect answer to the issue that has arisen. TTEs local structure is complex and could not easily be simplified. Whatever is decided, it will be possible to point to anomalies.

As the national organisation, TTE is not really affected one way or the other. The objective is to find a logical solution which everyone can live with. We both feel that it is useful to consult with National Council to determine whether this issue has arisen elsewhere and if so how it has been resolved.

Affiliated Organisations

The Articles define an Affiliated Organisation as a County Association, local league, a club (i.e. a DAC) or other organisation that is affiliated to TTE.

County Associations

A county association is required to have its constitution approved by TTE which provides a model for use as a template. Other affiliated organisations in the county (e.g. leagues and DACs) are members of the county association and the county has jurisdiction over them subject to the overriding authority of the Board.

County associations provide a forum for discussion between organisations in the county, they appoint national councillors, enter teams in the county championships and handle disciplinary and appeal issues which arise in clubs and leagues. Beyond this county associations vary considerably. What the county organises in one county may be provided by leagues or DACs in another.

DACs

TTEs regulations define a DAC as a club which is directly affiliated to TTE whether or not it is also affiliated to another affiliated organisation. The concept of a DAC has existed for a long time, but it is only in the last few years that DACs have become more common. Before that TTE generally treated clubs as part of the leagues they played in rather than as separate entities and had little direct relationship with them. More recently TTE has encouraged clubs to become DACs. Clubs only have to satisfy very basic requirements to become DACs as Associate Clubs. For example they must have a constitution and suitable safeguarding arrangements.

Affiliation fees

The system of affiliation fees for affiliated organisations in TTE is complex. This section explains the most usual structure, but slightly different administrative arrangements can apply in some areas.

TTE does not require Affiliated Organisations to pay a fee in order to affiliate, though they require all their individual members to join TTE directly and hence pay individual fees. DACs may choose to pay a fee of £65 and become Premier Clubs. This is for the extra services TTE provides them, not for affiliation as such. If they do not require those extra services they do not need to make a payment to affiliate as an Associate Club.

County associations, local leagues and clubs charge local affiliation fees. The costs are ultimately paid by local members. Clubs charge their members a fee which will include a portion for the league fee, and the league fee in turn will include a portion for the county fee.

As with most voluntary organisations, fees for county associations, local leagues and DACs are determined at their AGMs so, if they wish to raise the fees, they will need to persuade the members. In general the arrangement has worked amicably for many years. More recently the transfer of sports facilities from local authorities to the private sector has led to an increase in venue costs and put pressure on local costs and hence on fee levels.

The Recent Case

A county association has recently attempted to charge a fee to a DAC which does not enter teams in a league. They feel this is justified because other clubs in the county pay an affiliation to finance the underlying governance infrastructure provided by the county association. In addition, they are having to return the OT1 Forms to the Tournaments Approval Panel to enable the club to run Open Tournaments on specific dates.

The DACs view is that as it doesn't enter teams in any Local League in the county it has no connection with the county association. As it receives no benefit from the County Association, it believes it should not be required to pay an affiliation fees to the County. If TTE allows county associations to charge DACs a separate affiliation fee this will be a disincentive to them affiliating directly to TTE. Any implied charge for processing OT1 Forms will simply increase the cost of running Open Tournaments which is contrary to what TTE would like to happen.

For the reasons explained above, the constitutional position on this is not clear-cut so there is a need to determine the way forward.

Information from National Council

It will be helpful to us in making recommendations to TTE on how to resolve this issue if members of National Council can advise us as to whether this or a similar issue has arisen in their county. If so, please let us know how the issue was resolved.

More generally, if Councillors want to offer their views on how this issue could be handled, we will interested to hear such views.

Estyn Williams & Neil Hurford

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