

– NATIONAL COUNCIL –

ESTABLISHED BY THE ARTICLES OF TABLE TENNIS ENGLAND

National Council - How it Works

Note for Guidance

Introduction

This note explains how National Council works with the Board, staff and membership of Table Tennis England (TTE) to promote and encourage the sport. It is intended mainly for new National Councillors but other Councillors, staff, directors and members may also find it useful.

The note is for guidance and does not have any formal status. The main formal documents which affect how Council works are:

- The Companies Acts (especially the Companies Act 2006) – on the gov.uk website.
- The Articles of Association – on the TTE website governance page
- A Code for Sports Governance – on the Sport England website
- The National Council Standing Orders – on the TTE website National Council

Council acts as a critical friend to the Board providing support and challenge. Councillors, directors and staff may have different views on the way forward. But we should all want the best for our sport and our members. Please treat everyone in the sport with dignity and respect. Criticism is more helpful if it is constructive rather than directed at individuals.

A brief history

Table Tennis England, as it is now known, was founded in 1921. It became a limited company subject to the Companies Acts in 2001 (with the legal name “English Table Tennis Association Ltd”). National Council became its governing body in 1964.

In recent years the Government has prescribed how sports organisations must be governed to qualify for public funding. The requirements are now set out in the Code for Sports Governance. To meet these requirements TTE adopted new Articles in 2014. These transferred responsibility for its management to the Board and gave National Council advisory status.

The Code specifies requirements for Councils, such as maximum periods of office for their members. It defines a “Council” as a body with powers or rights with respect to governance. But National Council has only advisory status, so it is not a “Council” as defined by the Code and those requirements do not apply to it.

The Articles

The Companies Acts require a company to have Articles of Association defining its constitution. The TTE Articles define National Council as follows:

36 National Council

36.1 There shall be a National Council consisting of one National Councillor appointed by each County Association.

36.2 The duties of the National Council shall be:

36.2.1 to act as a channel of communication between the Board and Affiliated Organisations and Affiliated Members

36.2.2 to consider matters referred to it by the Board, Affiliated Organisations and Affiliated Members

36.2.3 to make recommendations to the Board.

36.3 The National Council shall prescribe and regulate its own procedures.

How Council works now

After the new Articles were approved in 2014, the Board and Council agreed how to work together, and new Council Standing Orders were approved. There have been some bumps in the road since but the system that has now evolved, and is reflected in the 2025 revision of the Standing Orders, is as follows:

- Each County Association elects a National Councillor annually and may also elect a Deputy N Councillor to attend if the Councillor cannot do so.
- Council elects one of its members as the Council Chair.
- At its first meeting of the administrative year, Council elects the Council Secretary. The person appointed to this role need not be a National Councillor.
- The Council Chair and Secretary are the point of first contact between Council and the Board, and work to establish a smooth relationship between the two.
- Council meets four times a year at roughly three-month intervals.
- Meetings are scheduled well in advance and dates are chosen that are convenient for as many people as possible.
- Directors and staff are very welcome and are encouraged to attend and engage.

National Council manages its own affairs – preparing the agenda for meetings and distributing documents. National Council has its own website from where documents for meetings can be accessed. These are posted as soon as they are available. The Council Chair and Secretary work together to ensure Council's effectiveness while controlling the financial cost and management time needed to achieve it.

Council Meetings

Council meetings may be wholly on-line, hybrid or in-person as National Councillors decide. There are pros and cons of each approach. On-line meetings reduce the need for travel and reduce the amount of time involved in the meeting. They tend to maximise attendance. In-person meetings provide opportunities for networking. Hybrid meetings provide Councillors with a choice as to how they wish to participate in the meeting. But experience has been that with hybrid meetings those who attend remotely find it more

difficult to contribute to the meeting compared to those who attend in person. The current preference is for on-line meetings.

Essential expenses incurred in undertaking activities on behalf of National Council are reimbursed in accordance with TTE's approved rates.

Council Chair

The Council Chair's role is to conduct meetings in accordance with the Standing Orders and is expected to do so impartially and ensure all views are heard.

Outside the meeting, the Council Chair works to ensure that the Board and staff keep Council and the membership fully informed and give Council every opportunity to express its views on behalf of the membership before decisions are taken.

Council Secretary

The Council Secretary produces the minutes of meetings and works closely with the Chair to ensure the effectiveness of all National Council activities.

Attendance

The following are invited to attend, though only Councillors are members:

- Councillors or, in their absence, their Deputies (each receive notice)
- The Council Secretary
- The President
- The Board
- Staff authorised by the CEO
- Area Committee chairs
- Representatives of BPTT, BUCS and VETTS.

Councillors are entitled to invite a guest from their County to attend a National Council meeting. Involving other people from your County helps with succession planning for National Councillors.

Preparation for meetings

At least five weeks before each meeting the Council Chair or Secretary sends a preliminary notice to those entitled to attend. This letter invites them to submit motions, papers or topics for discussion three weeks before the meeting.

Agenda

The agenda and papers are posted on the "Papers for Meetings" part of the National Council website as soon as they are available and at least two weeks before the meeting. The Council Chair determines the agenda after consultation with the Council Secretary. The agenda includes reports from the TTE Chair and CEO, Board minutes, presentations by the staff and motions, papers, topics and questions from Councillors. The agenda includes a timing for each item which can be varied if necessary.

Minutes and reports

The TTE Chair, Board and CEO are all invited to submit a written report. These are available to the membership on the National Council website and are an important contribution to TTE's commitment to openness and transparency as required by the Code for Sports Governance. The Board's report is in the form of its own minutes and those of its committees with any confidential matters redacted. The CEO's report may include reports from the staff teams. To reduce the management time required, reports produced for the Board can often be reused for Council and items already covered on the website can be referenced via a link. Councillors can ask questions on reports either in writing beforehand, which ensures a more considered answer, or at the meeting.

Finance

We request that a finance report is presented at each meeting. TTE's finances are complex as the Government restricts some of its funding to specific purposes. The critical issues are the relative financial priority of different objectives and how to balance them against budgetary realities and the need to keep affiliation fees to a reasonable level.

Submitting agenda items

If you submit an agenda item, please include a short note (or, for a power point presentation, the slides) which can be posted on the website in advance. This helps Councillors to consider the issue and discuss it with their members before the meeting.

Please submit papers and reports in good time. Late documents can still be posted on the website, but their consideration may be postponed to allow Councillors to discuss them with the membership first.

Debate and discussion

The rules for debating motions are set out in the Council Standing Orders. The proposer speaks first. Other Councillors, directors and staff may each speak once, and the proposer may sum up at the end before the vote.

During the meeting the Board can explain its policies, staff can talk about their work and Councillors can introduce papers they have submitted. Generally, the presenter speaks first, followed by questions and comments and then the presenter responds. A Councillor may contribute several questions and comments but will normally be asked to do so in a single contribution to make the best use of the time available. The TTE Chair and CEO (or their nominees) are always invited to speak if they wish.

An important part of National Council is the frank exchange of views on matters that are important for table tennis. But as emphasized in the introduction to this note, it is important to treat everyone with dignity and respect. As TTE members we are all subject to the Table Tennis England Code of Conduct.

Voting

Votes on TTE matters are recommendations to the Board but not binding on it. Council prescribes and regulates its own procedures and can determine them by a vote if need be.

Board engagement and consultation

Although the Board and staff can communicate with the membership via the website or email, it is harder to engage or get representative feedback that way. Council meetings offer the chance to engage directly with representatives who are in touch with the opinions of their local membership. The Board consults Council before approving significant change. This is best done when it has specific proposals or options but before it commits itself to them. As Council only meets every three months the Board and Council have to coordinate their timetables.

The Board usually consults Council about possible AGM proposals to test the water before deciding to go ahead with them. Proposals generally stand a better chance of approval if Council supports them. On the other hand, if Council has reservations, the Board has the option to modify its proposals before putting them to the AGM.

The Board also usually consults Council before it decides affiliation fee changes.

Council also usually discusses the AGM agenda when it is published so that Councillors can report on the issues to their local membership, but it is too late by then to modify proposals to deal with problems the proposers did not foresee.

Breakout groups

Part of the meeting can be held in smaller groups. This enables a more detailed discussion and gives those who are less confident a better chance to be heard.

Council minutes

Council meetings are minuted by the Council Secretary and, once the draft is approved by the Council Chair, circulated to Councillors and others who were entitled to attend the meeting. If you think there is an inaccuracy in the minutes, please raise it at the time so that it can be corrected rather than waiting till the next meeting.

Select Committees

Council can establish Select Committees; the majority of whose members are Councillors. Select Committees investigate a particular topic or issue, produce a report on the current situation and make recommendations to Council. Current Select Committees include Competitions and Constitution.

Roles outside the meeting

Councillors' roles extend beyond the formal meeting. Please take every opportunity at your county's meetings and elsewhere, to find out your members views on matters you expect to be discussed at the next council meeting; and please report back to your

members on the discussions and decisions taken at Council after each meeting.

You are encouraged to raise your members concerns with staff via the help email help@tabletennisengland.co.uk when they arise rather than wait until the next meeting.

Councillors (but not Deputy National Councillors) also represent their county's membership at general meetings.

Conclusion

From 1921 to 2014 TTE was governed by its membership. Then the Government required it to change its structure as a condition of funding. But Council is still a key influence when it speaks for the membership. So please keep in close touch with the membership in your county and ensure that you represent them at Council. Good luck!

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