



COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of the Council meeting held online via the Zoom video conference application at 09:30 on Wednesday, 30 November 2022.

PRESENT

Council Members

Simon Street (Berkshire)	Nigel Pope (Kent)
Julian Holmes (Buckinghamshire)	Bernie Gill (Lancashire)
Ali Loke (Cambridgeshire)	Tim Taylor (Middlesex)
Jane Law (Cheshire)	Andrew Wilson (Oxfordshire)
Matt Harford (Cornwall)	Alec Livingstone (Suffolk)
Jo Wallis (Derbyshire)	Colin Watson (Surrey)
Bev Vatcher (Dorset)	Patrick Fleming (Surrey)
Brian Duke (Durham & Cleveland)	Paul Millman (Sussex, ES President)
David Neller (Essex)	Roger More (Warwickshire)
Geoff Went (Essex)	Nick Hartley (Wiltshire)
Arif Faizi (Hampshire)	Nick Carter (Worcestershire)

IN ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Joy Carter (Chair)	Mayuri Nigam
Yawar Abbas	Andy Steele
Mark Jeffreys	Mark Williams (CEO)
Heidi Leseur	
Andy Light	Vice-President
Wendy Newlove	Barbara Sanderson

England Squash

Neil Edgar (Finance Director)
Steve Jones (Operations Officer, Minute Taker)
Paul Makinen (Head of Digital & Insight)
Chris Peach (National Education & Pathways Manager)
Jo Rowbottom (Head of Partnerships & Communities)

MINUTES REF.	ITEM	ACTION
M01ESC(2202)	<p>1. Chair's Welcome</p> <p>Chair Joy Carter (JC) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to Council. Some housekeeping matters were then covered, including how to ask questions on Zoom and the need for attendees to have their name and county association on display.</p> <p>It was noted that Chris Peach of England Squash would be facilitating the Zoom breakout rooms and monitoring questions.</p>	
M02ESC(2202)	<p><i>Apologies for absence</i></p> <p>Apologies were received from Cumbria, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire and Northumbria, as well as from Vice-President Zena Wooldridge.</p>	
M03ESC(2202)	<p><i>Declarations of interests</i></p> <p>There were no interests declared.</p>	
M04ESC(2202)	<p><i>Minutes of the Council Meeting of 21 July 2022</i></p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read and were agreed as a true and correct record.</p>	
M05ESC(2202)	<p><i>Matters arising</i></p> <p>In relation to minute reference M11ESC(2201), it was noted that the England Squash personal accident cover insures against a range of head/face injuries, including facial scarring, fractures to the cheek or jaw and dental expenses. The eye is not mentioned specifically in the Evidence of Cover document from Bluefin Sport but would be covered so long as the affected player was following guidance on use of eyewear. England Squash continues to promote and encourage the use of protective eyewear on court and it is mandatory for juniors.</p>	
M06ESC(2202)	<p>Regarding minute reference M14ESC(2201), it was said that Martin Wren of Cheshire had met with Simon Perks to discuss membership, club affiliation and modelling for a new membership structure.</p>	
M07ESC(2202)	<p>M18ESC(2201) relates to mini courts, and it was noted that two county associations had each purchased one. County associations were invited to contact Mark Williams with expressions of interest because potentially there could be a discount to be negotiated with regard to the purchase price of the mini courts if an order was placed for several courts.</p>	<p>County associations</p>

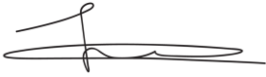
M08ESC(2202)	M24ESC(2201) prompted discussion of leisure centres, and it was agreed that their importance is significant and that leisure centres should be included on the agenda of each Council meeting.	MW / SJ
M09ESC(2202)	It was shared in relation to M25ESC(2201) that the World Squash Federation had set up a working group to focus on Squash 57.	
M10ESC(2202)	<p><i>Board Update</i></p> <p>It was noted that the Board had met once since the last Council meeting and was due to meeting again on 7 December. Recent topics of Board discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved a new model for membership and club affiliation • Identified young people as a priority area of focus for tackling the decline in participation and growing the game • In terms of the coaching pathway, approved a shift to a more individual and modular approach 	
M11ESC(2202)	<p>2. CEO Update</p> <p>CEO Mark Williams (MW) had shared a written update with Council ahead of the meeting but also gave a verbal update. Topics covered included the first full post-pandemic season, participation programmes and Sport England funding, to which county association support had been an important contributory factor.</p>	County associations
M12ESC(2202)	It was also felt the Commonwealth Games had been a particular highpoint of the year and that its impact had been significant.	
M13ESC(2202)	MW requested that county associations contact England Squash to express interest in helping to roll out current participation projects in other areas of the country.	
M14ESC(2202)	Discussion followed regarding areas of the game that are a concern at the present time, these include how the wider issue of the cost of living might have a negative impact on squash in the coming months. Safeguarding was said to be an area that is a constant challenge and priority. A third area of concern was said to be court closures, a subject that had recently been raised at a meeting with Sport England to escalate discussion and raise awareness.	
M15ESC(2202)	<p>3. Safeguarding</p> <p>National Education & Pathways Manager Chris Peach introduced the item on safeguarding by sharing some slides to give an overview of the subject. The meeting attendees then broke off into small groups to discuss the following questions:</p>	

<p>M16ESC(2202)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What support do county associations need from England Squash to ensure high quality safeguarding standards are maintained across the sport? 2. How can England Squash support county associations to develop a meaningful relationship with the club welfare officers across their county? 3. How can county associations and England Squash work together to engage young people in the design and communication of safeguarding best practice? <p>The following are the collated key points from those discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of resources and the quality of safeguarding information on the England Squash website was felt to be of a good standard. • It was felt however that it would be useful if an information pack, checklist or similar could be made available so that new county Chairs are made fully aware of what is expected with regard to safeguarding. • It was agreed that there is a challenge in terms of getting reassurance from clubs and counties that safeguarding risks are being managed, particularly given the fact that many are reliant on volunteers. There are a wide range of organisations of different scales and with different resources. • At least one county association has a paid Welfare Officer role, but there was a consensus that there is much variability across counties in terms of the level of safeguarding work that takes place. • Recruitment of safeguarding officers was also said to be challenging. • There was discussion about whether having a Welfare Officer that covered multiple clubs would be a sensible approach in order that clubs which don't have sufficient people in place to safeguard as effectively as they could. It was ultimately felt however that this approach is not adequate and that there is a need to strive for excellence at each club and venue individually. • It was agreed that creating a culture of safeguarding is crucial. One county approves its safeguarding policy each year at its AGM, and doing so raises the profile and reaffirms responsibility. 	<p>MW / CP</p>
<p>M17ESC(2202)</p>	<p>4. Young People in Squash</p> <p>England Squash has identified young people as a priority area of focus for participation and growing the game, and JC spoke of how this focus is absolutely crucial to secure a healthy future for the sport in England.</p>	

M18ESC(2202)	This item was presented by Head of Partnerships & Communities Jo Rowbottom, who had shared a paper on the subject ahead of the meeting, and by MW. One striking statistic mentioned in the paper is that the 16-34 age group accounts for around 80% of the total decline in participation.	
M19ESC(2202)	There was discussion about gaining further insight into the 16-34 age group to break it down into smaller age bands.	JR
M20ESC(2202)	<p>The meeting attendees then broke off into small groups to discuss the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What examples are there of great projects that are engaging young people in your county? 2. How can they be replicated elsewhere? 3. Which age groups should be prioritised? 4. What settings should be prioritised (school/club/university, etc.)? 	
M21ESC(2202)	<p>The following are the collated key points from those discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of projects that had been successful in the counties included bringing school children to a club by bus to use the mini court, 8-4-8 (eight sessions for eight weeks), and a squash festival organised in collaboration between the county association and Active Partnership. • Good case studies discussed and to follow up on included Manchester Northern (women and girls and university), Swavesey Squash Club (using local community facebook groups and targeting new housing estates), Abbeydale Squash Club (had success with the England Squash programmes Squash Stars and Squash from the Mosque) and Manchester Squash Academy (had success in partnership with International Mixed Ability Sport). • It was felt to be crucial for clubs to support coaches to deliver activity, funding their qualifications and giving them the opportunity to run activity. • There was discussion of the requirement for coaches to gain skills on running a business and marketing to grow their coaching opportunities. • The potential for an apprenticeship type of approach for coaches was discussed. • Catering for the competitive players amongst young people in clubs was felt to be important. A tournament series with ranking points is an example of an approach that had worked well. • It was noted that one of the previous benefits of England Squash membership many years ago was 'visitor access' that would allow members to play at other clubs around the county. 	<p>JR</p> <p>CP</p> <p>CP</p> <p>CP</p> <p>PM</p>

M22ESC(2202)	5. Cost of Living	
M23ESC(2202)	As for all of the items on the agenda, a paper had been shared before the meeting, and this item was introduced by MW. It was noted that there are essentially two sides to the cost of living issue: clubs and individuals. Clubs/venues could be affected considerably by rising energy costs through the winter, plus there is a concern that there could be a trend in the coming months of individuals de-prioritising their squash membership/participation as they focus on paying for other, more 'essential' costs such as their home energy bills.	
M24ESC(2202)	There was discussion of facilities with pools because it was noted that some had recently closed (on a temporary basis at least) due to rising costs of energy and heating the pool.	
M25ESC(2202)	It was felt that an England Squash webinar on the subject of the cost of living could be useful.	JR
M26ESC(2202)	It was noted that England Squash would continue to send out surveys to clubs and venues in order to get regular updates.	PM
M27ESC(2202)	It was agreed that communications by clubs are crucial so that their members are made aware of the issue that clubs are potentially facing and to ask members for their views and ideas.	
M28ESC(2202)	It was felt that 'Cost of Living' as a new, separate menu item on the England Squash website homepage would focus attention and raise awareness further. It was noted that there had been discussion of the topic by clubs and members on Facebook and that it would be useful to point people to that discussion from the England Squash website.	PM
M29ESC(2202)	It was highlighted that some clubs had recently had feasibility studies done with regard to steps to take to help with energy costs.	
M30ESC(2202)	There was discussion about Rackets Cubed, a charity that introduces children from disadvantaged backgrounds to local clubs and help them in three core ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Exercise ✓ Nutrition ✓ Education, e.g. maths and English <p>It was agreed that Rackets Cubed founder Michael Hill would be invited to the next Council meeting.</p>	MW / SJ
M31ESC(2202)	Discussion then took place regarding recommended minimum temperatures for squash courts, and it was noted that the World Squash Federation has some guidance on this: <p>https://www.worldsquash.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/171128_Court-Specifications.pdf</p>	

<p>M32ESC(2202)</p>	<p>6. Any Other Business</p> <p>JC highlighted that several information-only papers as follows had also been shared with Council members and thanked the writers of those papers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate & Ecological Emergency • Competitions & Events (incl. Rankings) • Digital • Membership & Affiliation • Participation & Inclusion (incl. Squash Stars) 	
<p>M33ESC(2202)</p>	<p>It was agreed that there would be a discussion item on the next Council agenda of the Climate and Ecological Emergency and Membership & Affiliation, amongst others.</p>	<p>MW / SJ</p>
<p>M34ESC(2202)</p>	<p>There was discussion of and feedback on the rankings system and the recent change of competition software. It was agreed that communications on the subject should have been better and it was noted that England Squash had taken on board the feedback in order to put changes in place that would please as many of the squash community as possible.</p>	<p>MW</p>

Signed.....  (Chair)
 Date.....09/01/2023.....