



COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of the Council meeting held in the Meeting Room, Sport & Fitness, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, B15 2TT at 1100 on Saturday, 16 November 2019.

PRESENT

Council Members

Richard Bickers (Avon)	Nigel Pope (Kent)
Sandy Burnett (Berkshire)	Andrew Beeston (Merseyside)
Heidi Leseur (Buckinghamshire / Board Member)	Jim Foggitt (Merseyside)
Martin Wren (Cheshire)	Vickie Prow (Middlesex / Board Member)
John Holt (Derbyshire)	Colin McNestrie (Northumbria)
Vic Malysz (Derbyshire)	Ian Dinwiddy (Shropshire)
Jo Wallis (Derbyshire)	Alec Livingstone (Suffolk)
Bob Hefford (Devon)	Colin Watson (Surrey)
Brian Duke (Durham & Cleveland)	Nigel Orrett (Warwickshire)
Chris Vine (Essex)	John Jeffrey (Wiltshire)
Geoff Went (Essex)	Bett Dryhurst (Worcestershire)
Devan Kandiah (Hampshire / Vice President)	Peter Keen (Yorkshire)

IN ATTENDANCE

Other Board Members

Joy Carter (Chair)
Richard Antcliff
Kate Bedwell
Nick Donald
Andrew Light
Nick Murrills
Wendy Newlove
Keir Worth (CEO)

Other England Squash Vice Presidents

Barbara Sanderson
Joyce Tuomey
Zena Wooldridge

England Squash

Paul Barrett (Director of Membership & Customer Experience)
Paul Carter (High Performance Coach)
Steve Jones (Minute Taker)
Paul Makinen (Head of Digital & Insight)
Chris Peach (National Education & Pathways Manager)
Louise Perry (Director of Finance & Operations)

Joanna Rowbottom (Partnerships & Communities Manager)
 Josh Taylor (National Performance Coach)
 Paul Walters (Commercial & Competitions Strategic Lead)
 Mark Williams (Director of Sport)

		ACTION
1.	<p>Chair’s Welcome</p> <p>Chair Joy Carter (JC) opened the meeting with the sad news that Sir Michael Edwardes passed away in September, giving a summary of Sir Michael’s eminent squash background and impact on the game both domestically and internationally.</p> <p>Heartfelt condolences were said to be with his wife Sheila and their daughters and grandchildren.</p> <p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies were received from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, Dorset, Lancashire, Northamptonshire, Northumbria and Sussex.</p> <p>Declarations of Interests</p> <p>No interests were declared.</p> <p>Minutes of the Council Meeting of 23 May 2019</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read and were agreed as a true and correct record.</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Item 3 – It was agreed that National Education & Pathways Manager Chris Peach would follow up with County Associations (CAs) that are yet to send him their referee contacts.</p> <p>Item 4 – Partnerships & Communities Manager Joanna Rowbottom said that work on a Club Engagement Day case study is in progress.</p> <p>Item 8 – The topic of ‘The Profile of Squash’ was said to be covered as part of the current agenda item ‘Preparing the Next Strategy for Squash’.</p> <p>Item 10 – A review of the Junior Inter County Championships is underway, and there will be a consultation in due course.</p> <p><i>Articles of Association</i></p> <p>It was raised that the Articles of Association were not covered during the 23 May meeting or indeed on the current day’s agenda. Board members Richard Antcliff and Nick Donald are leading on the Articles work, with the former</p>	<p>Chris Peach</p> <p>Joanna Rowbottom</p>

commenting that the current meeting came too early for the Articles to be covered and that there may be a special meeting held for that purpose.

Safeguarding

There was discussion of safeguarding, specifically the new requirement imposed by the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) of face-to-face training.

Derbyshire highlighted that there will be a course at the Duffield Squash Club on 10 December.

It was noted that Essex Council Representative and England Squash tutor Chris Vine provides face-to-face safeguarding training. His contact e-mail address is csvconsultancy ltd@gmail.com

It was stressed that England Squash has allowed a grace period until 1 February 2020 for existing Coaches Club members to undertake their new face-to-face safeguarding training. Therefore insurance is not affected until after that date.

It was requested that CAs contact England Squash for assistance, should it be required, with regard to finding a suitable safeguarding course. The CPSU and Active Partnerships (formerly known as County Sports Partnerships) would also be useful contacts.

Board Update

JC went on to speak about the good progress being made by the Board, highlighting the acknowledgement received from Sport England (SE) earlier in the week.

It was noted that the Board continues to both challenge and support the executive across a range of committees, working groups and project work including Participation, Coach Development, Membership, Digital, Refereeing, Major Events, Audit & Risk, Innovation and Talent & High Performance.

Key items the Board has covered since the last Council meeting in May include:

- Alternative ways to increase income
- Safeguarding
- World Squash Day campaign
- A review on ‘shared services’ possibilities
- A bid to host the 2021/22 World Championships
- Continued discussion on increasing collaboration with partners to deliver major events like the PSL, Nationals and British Open
- The climate emergency, including a review of England Squash’s carbon footprint

2. CEO Update

Keir Worth (KW) started with a personal reflection on the progress made since his first Council meeting as CEO five years ago. He said that he was very pleased with the progress made, which has given a solid platform on which to build during the coming years.

Great credit was given to the Membership Working Group for its contribution that has led to a significant increase in the number of affiliated clubs.

On the Performance side of things, particularly of note was said to be the crop of outstanding juniors that have recently enjoyed success at a level that hasn't been matched for a good while, something that suggests the talent pathway is working well.

County Association Financial Review

In relation to the recent financial review of CAs, it was highlighted that 34 of the 37 CAs have submitted their accounts, and it was notable from the figures that the overall financial health of CAs across the country is very good, with circa £400k held in reserves.

Discussion took place about the purpose of the financial review, with concern expressed by Wiltshire about why it is needed. It was explained that the review is to understand the position of the financial health of squash in England. Gaining insight into the financial health of the CAs had previously been mostly an unknown, and when now viewed alongside the NGB's financial position, gives a fuller picture.

It was agreed that any future request to CAs for sensitive information provide extra context and explanation to show the positive and well-meaning nature of the request.

3. Supporting County Associations

To speak about how England Squash can further support CAs, JC introduced Mark Williams (MW), Director of Sport, for what was said to be a key item on the day's agenda.

Regional Forums (RFs)

MW began by giving the background to the RFs, which were devised based on the idea of encouraging county associations to work together to share and solve challenges. The RFs have been funded by England Squash since their inception, and this will continue for the remainder of the current funding cycle and beyond, subject to performance.

It was noted that, although only six of the eight RFs are active, the CAs in the two dormant RFs would not miss out on their share of the 2019/20 funding (circa £100k), because the funding will go directly to the CAs in those two regions.

Part of the £100k is ringfenced for developing talent, with the remainder being for delivering participation programmes and recording participants on the England Squash app. The deadline for applications is 31 December 2019.

CA Case Studies

To provide some insight into programmes that have worked well within their counties and how they were funded, as well as some of the challenges faced, representatives of the following CAs were asked to speak:

- Buckinghamshire (Heidi Leseur)
- Gloucestershire (Kate Bedwell)
- Middlesex (Paul Carter)

It was reported that the investment in junior squads, development and coach strategy have been reaping rewards for those CAs in terms of results and numbers of participants. Middlesex, for example, is seeing numbers of around 80 juniors per week across three different junior programmes. Furthermore, it was said that having a clear and consistent message across all coaches, investing in parents, group outings (e.g. to watch the PSL) and continual reviews had been crucial to success.

In relation to how the programmes are funded, by and large, if initiatives do not make money they are not considered, so self-funding is seen as the way to go overall. Gloucestershire, for instance, charges £75 per player to provide access to coaches and other junior activity. Generally, any income that comes in is pumped back into junior development. Some commercialisation of events was also said to be a must in order to help fund programmes, but Buckinghamshire pointed out that it is nevertheless a balancing act to some degree because some programmes naturally have to be subsidised by others.

As for what they consider the main difficulties they have faced along the way, the challenge of providing a suitable pathway that keeps all levels of player and all age groups engaged was cited as one. Sometimes, as found by Buckinghamshire, it calls for a focus on over-16 girls, for instance, rolling out programmes for that profile of player to balance things out.

National Performance Coach Josh Taylor added that making the selection of a player to represent their county, i.e. essentially the first rung on the junior pathway, is something that he would like to become considered even more prestigious than it already is.

Group discussion

The attendees were seated at four tables, each of which then discussed the subject of support for CAs.

Specific topics covered included:

- Keeping post-GCSE and older juniors engaged to stop the drop-off in participation at those age groups
- A bulletin board for regional movers could be useful, e.g. juniors going off to university
- The challenge of getting enough volunteers to assist CAs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly graded events have worked well in Durham & Cleveland, using venues countywide to keep everyone involved • A blueprint/standard structure/example of what a good CA looks like would be useful • Merseyside has a healthy schools programme, which is helped by the fact that squash is on the curriculum • Committed players are encouraged to join local academy • An increase in coaches would help deliver a school programme • Making the schools programme more formal would be useful – Chris Vine has some good material around this • A training programme to help get first contacts is of benefit. Merseyside has produced a video that could be shared • It was said to be important for coaches to collaborate rather than compete with each other • Funding to pay for coaches would be of great benefit • Help in bringing coaches together would be useful • Sharing good practice is key <p>4. Masters Squash</p> <p>KW spoke to highlight the closer work between England Squash and Masters Squash under Jonathan Gliddon’s leadership.</p> <p>JC said that Masters squash continues to thrive across the country – 100s of players participate in the England Squash Masters circuit of competitions and England Squash is proud to support and work in partnership with them.</p> <p>JC was very much looking forward to welcoming Jonathan Gliddon to share an update on behalf of his committee. Jonathan sent his apologies for this occasion and therefore it was agreed to invite Jonathan to the next Council meeting in May 2020.</p> <p>5. World Squash Day (WSD)</p> <p>JC highlighted just how much of a success WSD on 12 October 2019 was. The day was all about engaging with the squash community and helping to get people onto court. It was said that plans are already being made for next year’s event, which it is hoped will be even bigger.</p> <p>Founder of World Squash Day, Alan Thatcher, had sent his apologies for the meeting, but Partnerships & Communities Manager Joanna Rowbottom led on this item by presenting a series of slides to summarise the events of WSD.</p> <p>The ‘World Squash Day in Numbers’ slide showed the headline figures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 157 clubs signed up • 4,826 players recorded • 1,767 likes, comments and shares (more than four times the daily engagement rate) 	<p>Keir Worth</p>
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<p>6.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 83 affiliated clubs qualified for the Karakal kit bag by recording players on the England Squash app • 20 clubs received the £250 grant • £2,400 awarded to eight county associations who met their goal <p>Next steps were stated to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing communication with clubs • Planning for next year - 10th October 2020 • Considering other possible campaigns <p>There was some discussion about the scheduling, which is thought to be tricky, however ultimately it was acknowledged that the World Squash Day date is fixed well in advance and tends to be around the same time each year. It was agreed that as much notice as possible for CAs and clubs is beneficial.</p> <p>It was noted that working more closely with leisure centres for WSD would be useful, but the key would be to identify centres that have a passionate squash person involved.</p> <p>Further to a discussion of how to get more coaches to use the app, CAs were invited to send suggestions to England Squash in due course.</p> <p>There was a request for greater visibility on the app for CAs in terms of more useful information being shared on there to provide insight into usage (i.e. a “county view” function on the app).</p> <p>It was highlighted that the individual target figures for participants in the Squash Girls Can and Squash 101 programmes are yet to be hit, even though the overall target figure of 12,000 participants has been hit.</p> <p>There was a suggestion that some information on the app could be included on Coaches Club in order to raise awareness.</p> <p>Innovation</p> <p><i>Interactive Squash demonstration</i></p> <p>All attendees had the opportunity over lunch to view a demo of Interactive Squash, the setup of which had been completed only one day prior to the meeting, as explained by Zena Wooldridge, the University of Birmingham’s Director of Sport. It is one of the first installations of Interactive Squash in the country.</p> <p>The University will be a venue for squash at the 2022 Commonwealth Games.</p> <p>Zena explained that the system had only initially been designed for a 19-inch tin, but it has since been adjusted to incorporate use of a 17-inch tin as well.</p> <p>It was noted that Interactive Squash is played only on a singles court.</p>	<p>CAs</p> <p>Joanna Rowbottom</p> <p>Paul Makinen</p>
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About the specific Interactive Squash court at the University, it was said that it will shortly also include a plaque to commemorate the financial contribution from the late Steve Hubbard's estate.

Presentation by Heidi Leseur and Wendy Newlove

JC introduced Board members and Innovation Working Group members Heidi and Wendy to present an item that has become a regular on both Board and Council agendas over recent meetings. It was said that embracing innovation and maintaining squash's relevance in a changing world must remain a top priority.

The focus of the Working Group was said to be:

- Having positive impact on squash as a sport (participation types and levels)
- Improving England Squash organisational efficiency / effectiveness
- Creating measurable impact aligned with Sport England expectations

The Group has 12 Guiding Principles:

1. Extends squash players' lifetimes (start earlier or play later in life)
2. Elevates or expands player / coach / referee / fan experience
3. Creates new revenue streams by monetising assets or data / insight
4. Attracts significant commercial partners or sponsors
5. Reduces physical, psychological, financial or cultural barriers
6. Creates or deepens existing (physical /digital) communities in new ways
7. Takes squash to untapped communities
8. Addresses widespread user-driven need
9. Creates 'first of a kind' for squash in England
10. Modernises squash by changing ways and places it is experienced
11. Progressive yet practical (via existing or emerging facilities and technologies)
12. Delivers cost-benefits at price the market values

It was suggested that if an innovation idea meets a minimum of four of the Guiding Principles, then it is likely to be worth pursuing.

Group activity

The attendees of the meeting then discussed some innovation ideas (previously proposed at Council) at their tables in the context of which of the Guiding Principles are met.

- Table 1 - Idea: "Squash simulator (similar to golf) for testing skills against pros and practicing drills" – It was thought that it is more a case for this idea of which of the Principles it doesn't meet, such is the high potential of the idea. It was agreed that this idea is essentially Interactive Squash.
- Table 2 – Idea: "Weekend hire of glass courts to showcase squash in exciting locations" – It was reported back by a representative of the table that this idea meets virtually all of the Principles as well.

- Table 3 – Idea: “Franchising squash clubs in leisure centres” – The feedback from the table was that Principles 5-8 in particular would be met by this idea.
- Table 4 – Idea: “3-team games” – The table liked this idea and thought that it especially meets Principles 2, 6, 8 and 10.

Further discussion ensued in relation to ideas of how to spend £20k in an innovation context in a way that would leave a lasting legacy:

- Pop-up courts – Feedback was mixed in the sense that there was enthusiasm in some quarters and scepticism in others. There was a suggestion that a smaller court with a lower cost would be preferable to the full-size show court installations used at major squash events.
- Larger rebound nets – It was thought that these would be a lower-cost alternative to pop-up courts.
- Development Officer – It was proposed by one table that the £20k be spent on the salary of a squash advocate for one year to help grow the game.
- Squash tuition app – It was suggested that money be spent on the development of a squash tuition app as a way to maximise engagement of current and prospective players through mobile phones.
- Virtual Reality Squash – It was commented that use of VR headsets could effectively make Interactive Squash a possibility without the need for a squash court. All it would take would be sufficient space anywhere with a flat surface.

It was announced that a dedicated Innovation e-mail address would be made available in due course so that CAs can send thoughts and ideas without having to wait for Council meetings to come around.

CAs/LP

7. Preparing the Next Strategy for Squash

JC introduced this item by saying that England Squash is now turning its attention towards the next funding cycle (2021-2025) and will need to submit a new funding proposal to Sport England based upon the new SE strategy and its own strategy.

JC added that it will be important to understand the expectations of SE to enable access to funding, and over recent weeks more has been learnt from SE on this.

What was also said to be very important is our push to increase the profile of squash across the country – driving meaningful campaigns to get more players on court or contributing to the game in other ways – whether this be refereeing, coaching or volunteering.

JC handed over to MW, who reminded all of what the funding chain consists of and presented a series of slides to provide insight on current SE thinking.

Group discussion

There was discussion around the tables in the room of how the profile of squash can be raised, both locally and nationally.

It was said that a greater push is needed in schools, although it does feature on some curriculums. It was added that there are national frameworks that can be accessed.

It was thought that it would be beneficial to strengthen relationships with Active Partnerships. Sometimes squash needs to “shout louder”.

In relation to local press, it was suggested that stories should be spoon-fed to give the greatest likelihood of good coverage for the sport.

Other suggestions included:

- PR via soap star features, YouTubers, influencers, chat shows, Federer v Murray at squash linked in with high-profile squash players on the tennis court
- Tube station advertisements
- Fundamental Movement Skills could be a way to “get through the door” as a sport
- England Squash could share a communications plan so that clubs and CAs could plan and engage in campaigns
- Business/community networking days
- Interactive Squash was said to be the way forward

8. Any Other Business

Inter County Championships (ICC)

Essex raised the subject of the ICC in terms of when feedback would be provided following the thoughts gathered over the summer by Julie Chappell. It was said in response that full feedback would be provided once there has been further ICC activity on which to form a consensus on what people like and don't like about the current structure. This will be collated by Tim Vail as an independent.

It was agreed that communications on views on the ICC should include county chairs, secretaries and Vice President Barbara Sanderson.

Andy Pilling

Five update papers had been distributed to all attendees prior to the meeting and were on the following subjects:

- Club Support Days
- Coach Education Pathway & Coaches Club
- Membership & Customer Experience
- Talent & High-Performance Hubs
- Women & Girls Programme

Signed.....



..... (Chair)

	Date.....14/01/2020.....	
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