



## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of the Council meeting held online via the Zoom video conference application at 10:00 on Tuesday, 14 December 2021.

### PRESENT

#### Council Members

Seamus Singh (Avon)	Andrew Wilson (Oxfordshire)
Heidi Leseur (Buckinghamshire and Board)	Alec Livingstone (Suffolk)
Ali Loke (Cambridgeshire)	Patrick Fleming (Surrey)
Jo Wallis (Derbyshire)	Colin Watson (Surrey)
Chris Vine (Essex)	Paul Millman (Sussex and President)
Terry Prosser (Herefordshire)	Roger More (Warwickshire)
Bernard Gill (Lancashire)	Nick Carter (Worcestershire)
Andrew Beeston (Merseyside)	Nicky Horn (Yorkshire)
Tim Taylor (Middlesex)	

### IN ATTENDANCE

#### Board Members

Joy Carter (Chair)  
Nick Donald  
Andrew Light  
Wendy Newlove  
Mark Williams (CEO)

#### Vice President

Barbara Sanderson

#### Guests

Jo Lavene (Wycombe Squash Club)

#### England Squash

Paul Barrett (Director of Membership & Customer Experience)  
Neil Edgar (Finance Director)  
Steve Jones (Operations Officer, Minute Taker)  
Chris Peach (National Education & Pathways Manager)  
Jo Rowbottom (Head of Partnerships & Communities)  
Paul Walters (Commercial & Competitions Strategic Lead)

MINUTES REF.	ITEM	ACTION
M01ESC(2102)	<p><b>1. Chair's Welcome</b></p> <p>Chair, Joy Carter (JC) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to Council, noting how previous online Council meetings had been very positive experiences. 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>	
M02ESC(2102)	<p><i>Apologies for absence</i></p> <p>Apologies were received from Vice President Zena Wooldridge.</p>	
M03ESC(2102)	<p><i>Declarations of interests</i></p> <p>There were no interests declared.</p>	
M04ESC(2102)	<p><i>Minutes of the Council Meeting of 19 May 2021</i></p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read and were agreed as a true and correct record.</p> <p>There was a recommendation in relation to minute-taking, which was to avoid use of passive reporting structures that contain 'said' such as "were said to have". The minute taker was happy to oblige.</p>	<p><b>SJ</b></p>
M05ESC(2102)	<p><i>Matters arising</i></p> <p>In relation to minute reference M04ESC(2101), it was noted that a decision had not yet been taken on how best to recognise Malcolm Willstrop's outstanding contribution to the sport and that the topic remains on the agenda.</p>	<p><b>MW</b></p>
M06ESC(2102)	<p><i>Board update</i></p> <p>JC reported that the Board remains very busy, as ever, and particularly so given the challenging 20 months since the pandemic began. It is the Board's role to challenge and support the Executive team and the Board continue to oversee strategy and contribute to the numerous working groups and committees. These include: Innovation, Audit &amp; Risk, Digital, Nominations Committee, Mission 2022 (Referee Development), England Selection, Participation, Safeguarding and the Climate &amp; Ecological Emergency.</p> <p>At the most recent Board meeting earlier in December, it was noted that there had been discussion of staff resources, diversity &amp; inclusion, the Commonwealth Games, finance, participation, governance and competitions.</p>	

<p>M07ESC(2102)</p>	<p><b>2. CEO Update</b></p> <p>CEO Mark Williams (MW) had shared a written update to Council ahead of the meeting but also gave a verbal update, beginning by highlighting that recent Government changes to pandemic-related restrictions were not currently impacting squash directly.</p>	
<p>M08ESC(2102)</p>	<p>In relation to participation, it was highlighted that squash has a long-term challenge that needs to be addressed and that it must be tackled by the whole squash community working together. It was noted that plans are in place for a series of workshops in 2022 to share data/research and to discuss solutions. It was also said that participation would be on the agenda at the next Council meeting.</p>	<p>MW/SJ</p>
<p>M09ESC(2102)</p>	<p>There followed some discussion of squash court closures, which was agreed to be a fundamental issue, as is the building of new sports centres in the cases where such centres do not include squash courts as part of their facilities.</p>	
<p>M10ESC(2102)</p>	<p><b>3. Regional Forums - A New Format</b></p> <p>JC and MW handed over to Jo Rowbottom (JR), Head of Partnerships and Communities, to introduce this item. It is recognised that working together as a community is fundamental in order to tackle the challenges faced by the sport and to deliver the objectives laid out in the strategy.</p>	
<p>M11ESC(2102)</p>	<p>JR's paper, written for the meeting, proposed a new format for Regional Forums and engagement between the county associations and the NGB. This proposal was the basis for a discussion in groups, which included some analysis of the proposal as follows:</p>	
<p>M12ESC(2102)</p>	<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counties can learn from each other</li> <li>• Regional Forums work well when the geographical areas are relatively small</li> <li>• Longstanding chairs bring wisdom</li> <li>• The structure is well understood</li> </ul>	
<p>M13ESC(2102)</p>	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forums don't work for regions that cover large geographical areas</li> </ul>	
<p>M14ESC(2102)</p>	<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The right person or people driving a Regional Forum is crucial</li> <li>• Perhaps counties could be paired based on size or resources rather than by geographical location</li> <li>• Counties could potentially be grouped around a shared theme</li> </ul>	

<p>M15ESC(2102)</p>	<p>There was also discussion in groups of how England Squash might best support county associations in future, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and showcase best practice</li> <li>• Arm counties with arguments to help protect courts/facilities from closure</li> <li>• Increase dialogue with Active Partnerships (formerly County Sports Partnerships) and facilitate dialogue for county associations</li> <li>• There may be the opportunity to use a case study from management consultants to review the business case</li> </ul>	<p>JR JR JR JR</p>
<p>M16ESC(2102)</p>	<p><b>4. County Association Governance Review</b></p> <p>JC thanked the county associations for their help and engagement with this review, led by Simon Perks of Sockmonkey Consulting, which was an invaluable piece of work in further supporting the work of the counties in future.</p>	
<p>M17ESC(2102)</p>	<p>It was noted that UK Sport and Sport England have developed a new version of the Code for Sports Governance, compliance with which is mandatory for all organisations in receipt of Sport England and/or UK Sport funding.</p> <p>Details can be found on the following webpage:  <a href="https://www.sportengland.org/campaigns-and-our-work/code-sports-governance">https://www.sportengland.org/campaigns-and-our-work/code-sports-governance</a></p>	
<p>M18ESC(2102)</p>	<p>MW then led discussion around what county associations feel are the biggest challenges to meeting these governance standards and how England Squash can best support. It was agreed that presentation of the standards is important so that county committee members are not left with the impression that the standards are too onerous, leading to people not wanting to take responsibility.</p>	
<p>M19ESC(2102)</p>	<p>One suggestion was to create essentially a 'super county' consisting of a number of smaller counties that work together (see also related discussion in section 3 above).</p>	<p>MW</p>
<p>M20ESC(2102)</p>	<p>There was concern that some of the requirements are not immediately felt to be workable for all counties, such as the need for two signatories on a bank account. It was agreed that county associations need to be supported in finding solutions but without being 'micro-managed' by the NGB.</p>	<p>MW</p>
<p>M21ESC(2102)</p>	<p><b>5. Inclusion &amp; Diversity</b></p>	

	<p>JR, along with Paul Barrett (PB), Director of Membership &amp; Customer Experience, and Jo Lavene, guest speaker from Wycombe Squash Club, presented this item. It was highlighted that squash must be (and be seen to be) an open, inclusive and welcoming activity in order for the game to grow and give enjoyment to all.</p>	
M22ESC(2102)	<p>It was noted that England Squash recently took part in a customer experience project, led by Sport England, in which 'mystery shoppers' visited clubs/venues and reported on their experience before, during and after their visit.</p>	
M23ESC(2102)	<p>Overall feedback from those shoppers was positive, although one particular area that had room for improvement was the 'follow-up from clubs/venues post-visit'. This represents a missed opportunity for clubs to keep people engaged. A second notable area for improvement is to have greater visibility within clubs/venues of measures being taken to keep visitors safe during the pandemic.</p>	
M24ESC(2102)	<p>Jo Lavene discussed her experiences of getting involved with squash at her local club in Wycombe. Key to the extremely positive experience that Jo had was the warm welcome and regular, early encouragement from people running the club, especially Marion Holmes. Jo enjoyed her introduction to the game and to the club to such an extent that there was only a short period of time between her joining the club and competing in team squash and even travelling abroad on a squash camp.</p>	
M25ESC(2102)	<p>There followed some discussion of club environments and how clubs can attract new members. It was reported that some clubs had enjoyed notable success with advertising on social media and on local community websites. There was also accordance with Jo's comments about the importance, often, of one key person at a club with the skills to welcome and engage people in a way that results in new members.</p>	
M26ESC(2102)	<p><b>6. Commonwealth Games</b></p> <p>MW introduced this item, highlighting that the event is the centrepiece of 2022 for the sport. It is felt to be crucial that the squash community makes the most of the opportunity.</p>	
M27ESC(2102)	<p>MW then led discussion in groups on what clubs and counties can do between now and the Games to have the biggest impact on participation. Areas discussed included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County plans in place to work with clubs in the county to run roadshows using portable, Perspex courts</li> <li>• The need for a campaign, supported by counties, to encourage clubs to update their details on the Squash Finder tool on the England Squash website</li> </ul>	

