



COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of the Council meeting held online via the Zoom video conference application at 10:00 on Wednesday, 19 May 2021.

PRESENT

Council Members

Richard Bickers (Avon)	Bernie Gill (Lancashire)
Seamus Singh (Avon)	Tim Taylor (Middlesex)
David Evans (Buckinghamshire)	Mike Broadbent (Northamptonshire)
Ali Loke (Cambridgeshire)	Andrew Wilson (Oxfordshire)
Martin Wren (Cheshire)	Ian Dinwiddy (Shropshire)
Jo Wallis (Derbyshire)	Alec Livingstone (Suffolk)
Jonathan Gliddon (Devon)	Patrick Fleming (Surrey)
Gary Boome (Dorset)	Colin Watson (Surrey)
Brian Duke (Durham & Cleveland)	Chris Hall (Warwickshire)
David Neller (Essex)	Nick Carter (Worcestershire)
Mark Toseland (Gloucestershire)	Hugh Mannerings (Yorkshire)
Gerard L'Aimable (Kent)	

IN ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Joy Carter (Chair)
Kate Bedwell
Nick Donald
Heidi Leseur
Nick Murrills
Wendy Newlove
Vickie Prow

President

Paul Millman

Vice Presidents

Devan Kandiah
Zena Wooldridge

Guests

Stuart Hardy (England Squash Masters)
Mike Harris (Birmingham 2022)
Ed Morrison (Two Circles)
Simon Perks (Sockmonkey Consulting)
Mark Sweeney (Two Circles)

England Squash

Paul Barrett (Director of Membership & Customer Experience)
Neil Edgar (Finance Director)
Steve Jones (Operations Officer, Minute Taker)
Andy Pilling (Competitions Manager)
Jo Rowbottom (Partnerships & Communities Manager)
Josh Taylor (National Performance Coach)
Paul Walters (Commercial & Competitions Strategic Lead)
Mark Williams (Interim CEO)

MINUTES REF.	ITEM	ACTION
M01ESC(2101)	<p>1. Chair’s Welcome</p> <p>Chair Joy Carter (JC) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to Council, explaining how to ask questions during the meeting and highlighting the ‘house rules’ such as having name and county association on display.</p>	
M02ESC(2101)	<p>Apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies were received from Berkshire, Merseyside and Staffordshire county associations, as well as from Vice Presidents Barbara Sanderson and Joyce Tuomey and from Board members Yawar Abbas and Mark Jeffreys.</p>	
M03ESC(2101)	<p>Declarations of interests</p> <p>There were no interests declared.</p>	
M04ESC(2101)	<p>Malcolm Willstrop</p> <p>JC shared the very sad news about the passing of Malcolm Willstrop, one of the most respected coaches and biggest personalities in the squash world. Condolences were passed to Malcolm’s family, and it was acknowledged that his passing was a huge loss to the game. It was noted that a card had been sent to his family from England Squash and that discussions would be forthcoming about how his great contribution to the sport could best be recognised.</p>	<p>MW</p>
M05ESC(2101)	<p>Minutes of the Council Meeting of 7 Dec 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read and were agreed as a true and correct record.</p>	
M06ESC(2101)	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>It was noted that, for the benefit of future meetings, a report would be produced summarising the action points from the meeting.</p>	<p>MW/SJ</p>
M07ESC(2101)	<p>The actions recorded on each page of the previous meeting’s minutes were taken in turn, and it was noted that each had been completed or formed part of ongoing areas of work.</p>	
M08ESC(2101)	<p>Board update</p> <p>JC reported that the Board has been busy since the last meeting, particularly with Board members involved in various working groups</p>	


	<p>and committees, such as Innovation, Audit & Risk, Digital, Nominations Committee, Mission 2022 (Referee Development), England Selection, Safeguarding and the Climate & Ecological Emergency.</p>	
<p>M09ESC(2101)</p>	<p>It was also noted that the Board was recently subject to an External Board Evaluation by the Sport and Recreation Alliance. The outcome of the Evaluation was said to have been very positive, with details to be shared shortly with the Board.</p>	
<p>M10ESC(2101)</p>	<p>The two Board meetings that had taken place since the last Council meeting were said to have included discussion of topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a further extension to the freeze on membership and affiliation renewals • the 2021/22 budget • greater collaboration with partners including the PSA • exciting plans in digital project work • the adoption of the new World Squash Officiating system for grading referees • the reinstatement of an England Squash National Awards scheme in a revised format, aligned with strategic objectives and in a way that involves the squash community in the process 	
<p>M11ESC(2101)</p>	<p><i>CEO news</i></p> <p>It was noted that the appointment of a new CEO had been foremost in the thoughts of Board members in recent weeks. The Board was said to be very sorry to see Keir Worth go and extremely thankful to him for his huge contribution over so many years.</p> <p>Mark Williams (MW), previously Director of Sport and who had been acting as Interim CEO since Keir’s departure, was announced as the new permanent CEO following a rigorous recruitment process. JC reported that it was her wish to announce the news first at the Council meeting ahead of a press release to the wider community later the same day.</p> <p>Council members passed on their congratulations to MW for his appointment.</p>	
<p>M12ESC(2101)</p>	<p>2. CEO Update</p> <p>MW gave an update, highlighting the sense of positivity he felt following the Government’s easing of restrictions on 17 May, which enabled a return to full-court squash for adults and juniors.</p>	

	<p>Having provided a written update ahead of the meeting in order to allow time for greater discussion, MW wanted to highlight two key areas of work since the last Council meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The huge amount of effort that had gone into the Return to Play across the whole community, including the England Squash team (dialogue with other sports/Sport England/DCMS/etc. and the production of guidance), county associations (interpreting the guidance, supporting clubs) and clubs (implementing the guidance). The theme of working together to achieve more was said to be key. 2. The positive innovations and changes that had been driven forwards during the pandemic. For instance, the Nick v Laura campaign, Train Like a Pro, SQUASHfit, online coaching courses and online referee qualifications were all said to have been successful in keeping the squash community engaged during a challenging period for everyone. The importance of keeping this spirit of innovation and collaboration going was emphasised. 	
M13ESC(2101)	<p><i>County Association Governance</i></p>	
	<p>MW handed over to Simon Perks of Sockmonkey Consulting, who introduced himself and the briefing paper he had prepared for Council on the subject of County Association Governance.</p>	
M14ESC(2101)	<p>The question posed for consideration was:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“What is the biggest governance-related risk facing your county association? (i.e. what aspect of governance keeps you awake at night?)”</p> <p>The meeting attendees then broke off into ‘breakout rooms’ for discussion, with collated responses as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County committee retention and succession planning is particularly challenging • Safeguarding • Junior development • Maintaining relationships with clubs • Better instruction is needed • Can templated governance guidelines be promoted better? 	
M15ESC(2101)	<p>SP said he would be in touch with the county associations to take the discussions further.</p>	SP
M16ESC(2101)	<p>3. Return to Play - Reengaging the Community</p>	

	<p>JC introduced Paul Barrett (PB), Director of Membership & Customer Experience, and thanked him and the team for the hard work on producing/updating guidance and for the efforts in reengaging the squash community.</p>	
<p>M17ESC(2101)</p>	<p>PB spoke first about the government’s roadmap for the lifting of lockdown, particularly in relation to the changes that came into effect on 17 May and their impact on squash. It was noted that the updated England Squash guidance had been issued in response to those changes, following dialogue with Sport England. The most significant change to the guidance was the return to full-court squash.</p>	
<p>M18ESC(2101)</p>	<p>That said, it was made clear that the guidance contains important precautions for clubs and players to be mindful of, such as the maximum capacity of people in venues (based on 100 ft² per person) and sanitisation of hands/squash balls. It was said that the more recent government guidance puts the onus increasingly on organisers of sport, coaches, etc., and that it would be a good idea for counties to remind clubs to take this responsibility very seriously.</p>	<p>County associations</p>
<p>M19ESC(2101)</p>	<p>The fact that spectators are now permitted into venues was said to be important because it allows junior competitions, with parents accompanying/watching players, to resume.</p>	
<p>M20ESC(2101)</p>	<p>It was noted that, as per the communications issued in March, England Squash club affiliation and direct membership had been extended to September.</p>	
<p>M21ESC(2101)</p>	<p>It was said that the key focus at the current time is to kick-start the participation programmes to reengage clubs and support them in reengaging their members through the summer as they build towards the traditional squash season. County associations were encouraged to help celebrate the success of the return to play by sharing success stories with participation@englandsquash.com</p>	<p>County associations</p>
<p>M22ESC(2101)</p>	<p>A Q&A followed, with county association feedback on the return to play being particularly positive in terms of numbers of players returning, especially juniors.</p>	
<p>M23ESC(2101)</p>	<p>Vice President Zena Wooldridge shared the view that this year’s World Squash Day, on 9 October, feels a particularly significant one, in light of the pandemic, to get the world back reengaged with the game.</p>	
<p>M24ESC(2101)</p>	<p>There was a query in relation to inter-club leagues, to which the response was that those should be on hold for the time being but that England Squash would review the matter and provide guidance as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Paul Barrett</p>
<p>M25ESC(2101)</p>	<p>4. England Squash Masters Update</p>	

	<p>JC introduced the Chair of the England Squash Masters committee, Stuart Hardy (SH), to give a spoken update to supplement the paper that was shared in advance of the meeting.</p>	
M26ESC(2101)	<p>It was noted that, in relation to the British Open Masters, although it is not possible every year, the intention is always for the event to be coordinated with the PSA event. The committee also coordinates the National Championships for the Masters players.</p>	
M27ESC(2101)	<p>Sponsorship for the England Squash Masters was said to be from Karakal and iPROSPORTS at the moment.</p>	
M28ESC(2101)	<p>It was said that there are plans for the Masters to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in the next few months.</p>	
M29ESC(2101)	<p>In response to a question on plans for female participation, it was noted that plans were put in place shortly before the pandemic to establish a women’s network of county captains to encourage participation, and these plans will proceed.</p>	
M30ESC(2101)	<p>SH pointed out that all information on the Masters activities are available at www.englandsquashmasters.com and encouraged the county associations to share the link on their own websites.</p>	<p>County associations</p>
M31ESC(2101)	<p>5. Inter County Championships</p> <p>JC handed over to Paul Walters (Commercial & Competitions Strategic Lead) and Andy Pilling (Competitions Manager) to present a summary of the consultation process that has led to the current proposals for the Championships moving forwards, as well as the next steps. The proposals are covered in the paper that was shared ahead of the meeting.</p>	
M32ESC(2101)	<p>The meeting attendees then broke off into ‘breakout rooms’ for discussion of the following question:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“What support do county associations need to in order to implement the ICC changes and make them a success?”</p> <p>The collated feedback from those breakout rooms was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • England Squash should seek to take ownership of communications/updates by endeavouring to build a database of active ICC Masters players and communicate with them on a regular basis (monthly/bi-monthly) as is done with Tournament Organisers 	<p>AP</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The older age groups can be cliques and therefore some counties have dropped funding, which has meant that those groups in turn don't give anything back to the county. • The events should not happen in the summer (during the season is preferable) • Age groups should be flexible to increase the number of entries (inc. 35-65+) • If Masters squash is so popular, then why is this section of the age groups being reduced? • These competitions should either be subsidised, or the entry fees increased, because people are prepared to pay 	
M33ESC(2101)	<p>6. Findings from Strategic Insight Project - Membership and Return to Play</p> <p>Ed Morrison and Mark Sweeney from Two Circles, a sports research and marketing agency, joined the meeting. Two Circles has delivered an insight project looking at the attitudes and perceptions of squash players around membership and the return to play. Ed and Mark presented some slides showing the findings.</p>	
M34ESC(2101)	<p>Appreciation was expressed to Ed, Mark and the Two Circles team for their work on this project, work that will be returned to and built on in due course.</p>	
M35ESC(2101)	<p>7. Commonwealth Games and Innovation (Birmingham 2022)</p> <p>JC welcomed to the meeting Mike Harris (MH), a coach based at the Edgbaston Priory club. MH is part of a group from across the West Midlands that will be driving activity linked to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. MH presented some slides and talked through the ideas and progress the group has already made.</p>	
M36ESC(2101)	<p>Some key ideas of the group include a substantial schools programme, a portable court (Port-a-Court) that has been ordered, the construction of outdoor courts (under Spaghetti Junction, for example) and a Festival of Squash that clubs not only in Birmingham but around the country can get involved in.</p>	
M37ESC(2101)	<p>MH encouraged feedback and ideas from county associations. MH's email address is mikesquash1970@gmail.com</p>	County associations
M38ESC(2101)	<p>JC thanked MH and the West Midlands group for their hard work so far on some exciting ideas in the lead-up to the Games.</p>	

Signed.....  (Chair)
 Date.....05/07/2021.....