



COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of the Council meeting held online via the Zoom video conference application at 14:30 on Monday, 7 December 2020.

PRESENT

Council Members

Sandy Burnett (Berkshire)	Andrew Beeston (Merseyside)
Dave Evans (Buckinghamshire)	Tim Taylor (Middlesex)
Ali Loke (Cambridgeshire)	Andrew Wilson (Oxfordshire)
Richard Loke (Cambridgeshire)	Alec Livingstone (Suffolk)
Martin Wren (Cheshire)	Patrick Fleming (Surrey)
Jo Wallis (Derbyshire)	Colin Watson (Surrey)
Brian Duke (Durham & Cleveland)	Simon Tunley (Sussex)
Ewen Denning (Gloucestershire)	John Jeffrey (Wiltshire)
Mark Toseland (Gloucestershire)	Nick Carter (Worcestershire)
Cindy Gill (Lancashire)	

IN ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Joy Carter (Chair)
Kate Bedwell
Nick Donald
Mark Jeffreys
Heidi Leseur
Nick Murrills
Wendy Newlove
Vickie Prow
Keir Worth (CEO)

President

Paul Millman

Vice Presidents

Barbara Sanderson
Joyce Tuomey
Zena Wooldridge

England Squash

Paul Barrett (Director of Membership & Customer Experience)
David Campion (National Coach)
Neil Edgar (Finance Director)
Steve Jones (Operations Officer, Minute Taker)
Paul Makinen (Head of Digital & Insight)
Chris Peach (National Education & Pathways Manager)
Andy Pilling (Competitions Manager)
Josh Taylor (National Performance Coach)
Linda Taylor (Head of Strategic Partnerships)
Paul Walters (Commercial & Competitions Strategic Lead)
Mark Williams (Director of Sport)

Guests

Simon Perks (Sockmonkey Consulting)

MINUTES REF.	ITEM	ACTION
	<p>1. Chair's Welcome</p>	
M01ESC(2002)	<p>Chair Joy Carter (JC) opened the meeting by asking Chris Peach of England Squash to cover some important housekeeping, such as the requirements of attendees in relation to the use of Zoom.</p>	
M02ESC(2002)	<p>JC congratulated Vice President Zena Wooldridge (ZW), who two days prior had been elected President of the World Squash Federation. ZW thanked England Squash for supporting her bid for the presidency, adding that she hopes to reposition squash whilst not underestimating the ambitious task at hand. ZW noted that she had already received lots of messages of support and offers of help from across the squash community.</p>	
M03ESC(2002)	<p>There was also some sad news in that two prominent figures in the squash community had passed away since the last meeting.</p> <p>Rosie Tutton was a high-level referee and coach and was involved with Cheshire Squash for many years. She was noted to have been extremely passionate about squash, with an infectious enthusiasm for the game that will be greatly missed by those who knew her.</p> <p>The game has also lost Charles Fernandes, who was Finance Director at England Squash for two decades. He was said to have been immensely popular with staff, thanks in part to his wicked sense of humour. He will be very much missed by those who knew him.</p>	
M04ESC(2002)	<p>Apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies were received from Board member Andrew Light.</p>	
M05ESC(2002)	<p>Declarations of interests</p> <p>There were no interests declared.</p>	
M06ESC(2002)	<p>Minutes of the Council meeting of 25 Jun 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read and were agreed as a true and correct record.</p>	
M07ESC(2002)	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>Ref. M11ESC(2001) – It was noted that the Masters Committee will be invited to attend Council once squash has returned fully from the current restrictions on play.</p>	<p>Steve Jones</p>

M08ESC(2002)	Ref. M12ESC(2001) – With regard to the England Squash app and the sharing of useful insight with county associations, it was reported that this work had been paused due to the pandemic but that the data will be available to share as soon as it is generated by squash participants.	Paul Barrett
M09ESC(2002)	Ref. M13ESC(2001) – It was noted that suggestions to the innovationideas@englandsquash.com inbox had been minimal, and it was agreed that it shall be given another push to encourage input from far and wide.	
M10ESC(2002)	Ref. M42ESC(2001) – There was discussion of Bounce Back grants, including around plans for another round of grants in the new year.	
M11ESC(2002)	<p>Board update</p> <p>The Board remains very busy, particularly given the challenging year. The Board continue to challenge and support the executive team, overseeing the strategy and contributing to the numerous working groups and committees. These include: Innovation, Audit & Risk, Digital, Nominations Committee, Innovation, Mission 2022 (Referee Development), England Selection, and the Climate & Ecological Emergency.</p>	
M12ESC(2002)	It was reported that the most recent Board meeting in September was inevitably dominated by COVID-19 and the Return to Play strategy across the organisation, including tiered guidelines, finance & risk, campaigns, and competitions & events.	
M13ESC(2002)	<p>Other activity at the most recent Board meeting included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalising and agreeing the new England Squash Strategy 2021-25. Appreciation was shown for all the Council input throughout the process in what was a thorough period of consultation to create a document in partnership. JC highlighted the related item on the day’s agenda. • Inclusion & Diversity • The Annual Report • Revisions to the Articles of Association (see AGM minutes from 7 December 2020). JC put on record her thanks to all who supported on this matter and particularly to Andrew Beeston of Merseyside. • The Board saw, and was able to comment on, a host of update papers from across the organisation, including papers on competitions, coaching, talent, participation & campaigns, marketing & communications and membership. 	
M14ESC(2002)	2. CEO Update	

England Squash CEO, Keir Worth (KW), began by acknowledging the difficult year for the whole squash community whilst expressing hope for the new year and the prospect of a successful vaccine and a return to full play. KW then went on to refer to each of the England Squash staff members on the call, briefly outlining their roles.

KW updated Council members on the considerable amount of work since June that had gone into lobbying Government, and specifically its Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, and working with Sport England as well as with other sports (including badminton, tennis and table tennis) on the return to play. It was noted that it was important that England Squash was able to ensure squash was grouped with other racket sports rather than with combat sports, which had been the case originally and would have made the return to play significantly more restricted.

KW also spoke about the work that goes into keeping the guidance on the return to play up to date, highlighting that the sports governing bodies hear news from the Government on restrictions at the same time that the general public does.

Speaking next of some of the highlights since the last Council meeting, KW picked out:

- Bounce Back grants, of which circa 120 have so far been allocated to clubs across the country
- The good work done by county associations and Regional Forums during the pandemic in communicating with their communities
- The fine work done by many clubs during this period in adapting to ensure they can open. Some clubs were said to have even managed to increase their membership to exceed pre-Covid levels
- The Laura Massaro v Nick Matthew campaign in collaboration with Squash Levels
- Starting to move coaching courses online
- The popularity of webinars for coaches, clubs, referees and players
- The recent invitational challenge for some of the senior funded players, which was said to have succeeded in generating a lot of interest across the squash community
- The Work Out Like a Pro feature on Instagram with Laura Massaro
- Retaining and gaining commercial partners during a challenging period
- The completion of the consultation for the new England Squash Strategy 2021-2025, which has been signed off by the Board. Words of thanks were expressed for the support and input from Council members.

KW summarised by speaking of how crucial it is that the community continues to work together to see the challenge of the pandemic through.

M15ESC(2002)

3. Return to Play

JC introduced Paul Barrett (PB), Director of Membership and Customer Experience, who gave Council members some insight into the process of how and when the guidance on return to play is put together and published.

M16ESC(2002)

PB then went on to speak about the various questionnaires and surveys that had been sent out during the pandemic. He had a request that county associations continue to support this work by encouraging their clubs to complete the questionnaires and surveys.

M17ESC(2002)

There was also discussion of the initiatives such as the Bounce Back grants and campaigns including the Laura v Nick campaign referred to in item 2. For the latter, PB expressed thanks to Richard Bickers of Avon for the great collaboration with Squash Levels.

M18ESC(2002)

Discussion

PB then spoke of the encouragement from Sport England for sports to “reinvent” where they can in order to recover from the pandemic.

All attendees on the video conference then broke off into small ‘breakout rooms’ to discuss what county associations and England Squash had been doing differently during this COVID-19 period. The aim is that, through sharing this insight, some useful ways to “reinvent” will come to light.

M19ESC(2002)

What follows are the collated thoughts and ideas from those breakout-room discussions.

- Communication from England Squash had been appreciated during these times.
- Early England Squash webinars saw some contradictions, but they were ironed out quickly
- Communications fine but real test will be when we return to play
- Not much squash played yet in Gloucestershire – might be different when more people are trying to play. Good feedback from clubs on the whole so far.
- The negative feedback, where it existed, seems to have been more from younger players. Volume of negativity seems to go down as age group goes up and people understand why the restrictions are in place.
- Communications to clubs take a while to disseminate to players themselves. Quicker/more comms to players directly would be advantageous, even if it's just to tell them what clubs have received.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messaging has got better, e.g. at the start it was not as clear at those times of waiting for a response from DCMS, for example. I.e. when holding messages had to be issued. • Squash tended to be later in getting guidance out than tennis, for example, which caused some frustration from squash players. • More communications direct to members would be advantageous. Some emails were felt to be overly sales-oriented. • Some county associations adapted quickly by training people to use video conferencing technology. • It was felt that the Zoom calling should remain. Doing so saves time and money and allows for greater interaction. • We need to give ourselves permission to change our mindset and perception of the game. Sides could be adopted going forward as a great way to engage those players that are less mobile/agile. • Walking squash/Squash 57 should be promoted in the same way. Both are great initiatives for getting people on court at off-peak times. • It was suggested that use of social media could be used even more effectively in relation to Return to Play. • Current focus has to be on survival and increasing the number of juniors in clubs <p>It was agreed that England Squash would report on actions resulting from the above comments at the next Council meeting.</p>	
M20ESC(2002)	<p>4. Inclusion & Diversity</p> <p>JC introduced this item by saying that we are all very aware of the need for greater diversity at all levels of the game. It was also noted that it represents a key component and goal of the new England Squash strategy to radically enhance the level of diversity within the squash community.</p> <p>JC introduced Mark Williams (MW), Director of Sport, to lead this item.</p>	KW
M21ESC(2002)	<p>MW presented a series of slides to highlight the importance of matters around inclusion and diversity before putting the following two questions to attendees:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>How can county associations and clubs help to make squash as open, welcoming and inclusive as possible?</i> 2. <i>What help would county associations and clubs need from England Squash to help ensure they offer an 'inclusive environment'?</i> 	
M22ESC(2002)	<p>All attendees on the video conference then broke off into small 'breakout rooms' to discuss. What follows are the collated thoughts and ideas from those breakout-room discussions.</p>	

- Fortunately, the demographic in London is already relatively diverse and it is easy to reach diverse groups.
- Affordability and accessibility is absolutely key.
- Accessibility is a vital but tricky issue, and we have to lower barriers to entry. This works best at a young age, before any perceptions have been built and when kids have fewer hang-ups and insecurities. Kids can then experience squash as a cool sport.
- We need to try to engage people with other challenges too (e.g. mental health) and break down the elitist perception.
- There used to be a slogan in the 80s - "Sport for All" - it should now be "Squash for All".
- Got to take into account views of people we don't speak to and get out there to talk to them. Need to build relationships with different minority groups (e.g. schools), targeting demographics.
- Need to understand how people see squash in order to then try to break perceptions down.
- Two club-based initiatives, Rackets Cubed and Squash Squared, which are school-based, include after-school lessons in maths, etc.
- Charities can be used to apply for programme funding, and this should be a model we look at expanding.
- Local authorities have access to the communities, and we should let them do the work in terms of reaching out to the right groups.
- There is a difference of traditional v lifestyle sports for kids. Could there be a link-up with RedBull, for example? Can England Squash help facilitate those kinds of links?
- There is a need to get good news stories out there, and social media is a huge tool for that.
- Greater visibility of equality is needed across the sport. There are some excellent campaigns for women, so can we apply this to other underrepresented groups within sport?
- Many clubs already have diverse communities but this is not necessarily reflected in the content produced.
- Lots of clubs are progressive and have created what they feel is a safe and welcoming environment.
- There is potential for clubs and county associations to offer more community engagement opportunities for members so as to embed the values.
- It would be of benefit to have greater engagement from counties with local communities. An example is Buckinghamshire Squash attending a local badminton initiative for women, where women from the local mosque who enjoy playing badminton have never experienced squash.
- England Squash to produce more campaigns around diversity for counties to replicate.
- Engage more with leisure facilities as these tend to be in more diverse and deprived areas.
- Can we find out more information on demographics in different areas, and is there a way that England Squash can facilitate access to information of that detail for counties?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to push the game more and change the perception of the game at national level through different sponsors. Banks, for example, only appeal to certain demographic. • Look at where we push the game and maybe consider shopping centres and sports parks, where a wider range of people go. • Engage with BAME, U3A and LGBTQ+ groups. <p>It was agreed that England Squash would produce an action plan based on the suggestions above for the next Council meeting.</p>	<p>KW</p>
<p>M23ESC(2002)</p>	<p>5. England Squash 2021 Strategy</p> <p>JC said that, as she mentioned in her introduction, the Board has approved the new England Squash strategy, which will run from April next year until 2025. Much gratitude was expressed for all the contributions of Council members, and it was felt that there should be great pride on the part of the community in terms of how it has worked together in the development of the Strategy.</p> <p>Simon Perks (SP), who assisted in the process, was introduced to lead on an item covering how county associations can best be supported in helping to deliver key aspects of the strategy.</p>	
<p>M24ESC(2002)</p>	<p>SP thanked all Council members for their feedback throughout the process of putting together the Strategy, highlighting that now is the time to start to think about how it is implemented.</p> <p>All attendees on the video conference then broke off into small ‘breakout rooms’ to discuss. What follows are the collated thoughts and ideas from those breakout-room discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on where there is the most overlap between England Squash priorities and objectives and those of county associations, e.g. increasing participation and supporting volunteers. • This overlap is mainly in promotion/participation, particularly recruitment of new players, initially focussing on juniors. Gloucestershire is supporting new players to get the information they need via smooth transitions between social media and their new county website (a big investment for them). • There is a need for smooth transitions from player to clubs to county association to England Squash. • County associations have to understand what clubs want, then align objectives between clubs and England Squash. There is also a need to understand what clubs can actually deliver, i.e. not all clubs can/want/need to get involved in every campaign or initiative. Counties can help clubs and leisure centres decide where to focus their efforts. 	


<p>M25ESC(2002)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be a challenging environment in those smaller squash counties that have a high proportion of leisure centres compared to clubs. • Gloucestershire Squash is happy to share experiences of how to deliver when there are lots of ideas but not as many people to deliver. It is all about investing in people with enthusiasm. • Coach development is currently good. There are lots of coaches who qualify, but not many actually do much and there is a high rate of attrition. Processes such as updating pre-requisites, whilst important, are not particularly exciting. • Webinars have been good for engagement, but encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own learning can be a struggle, and yet this is a key part of our coach education strategy. We should therefore get in touch with Dr. Anna Stodter (at Anglia Ruskin University), who is an expert in coaching learning. Do coaches have the self-awareness to know what/when they need to develop? • It would be really useful to have support in initiating coach development, the 'knowing what I don't know'. Particularly in coach education beyond Level 1, the technical challenges tend to frighten people off. • Coach mentoring schemes would be useful, e.g. Squash Girls Can mentoring. • Learning about the business of coaching is vital. Good coaches are successful coaches. • How is England Squash ensuring that county associations still exist? • There is a need to encourage everyone to use the media, in terms of information that already exists to produce, for example, a poster of why squash is good for health. • Greater crossover in the use of social media links, local radio, newspapers, etc. would be beneficial. • There should be more information and help on volunteering and how to engage volunteers. Perhaps some video content would be most appropriate? • It is important to consider how the Strategy is best communicated in order to maximise engagement on the ground, and the main focus must be on having people to deliver. • More case studies of clubs doing well would be good. <p>It was agreed that England Squash would comment on three key initiatives arising from the discussion at the next Council meeting.</p> <p>6. Any Other Business</p> <p>Wiltshire highlighted the situation in that county, where there is a high proportion of squash played in local authority leisure centres compared to in squash clubs. This is a problem insofar as the local authorities don't seem very interested at all in engaging with the county association, with clubs or with England Squash.</p>	<p>KW</p> <p>KW</p>
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It was said that there is a particularly urgent need at this moment in time to engage with the players based at those leisure centres given that many of the centres are closed due to the pandemic.

A paper would be written on the subject of leisure centres in order to initiate discussion at the England Squash Board meeting coming up later in the month. Several recommended actions would be created. It is agreed that England Squash needs a clear plan that influences both nationally and locally and draws together key partners including county associations, coaches and volunteers. It was agreed that a Leisure Facilities Working Group would be set up and that the subject would remain on the agenda at Board level.

**Mark
Williams**

KW

Signed.....  **..... (Chair)**

Date.....26/02/2021.....