



## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of the Council meeting held online via the Zoom video conference application at 09:30 on Wednesday, 13 November 2024.

### PRESENT

#### Council Members

Simon Street (Berkshire)  
Julian Holmes (Buckinghamshire)  
Hannah Hodgson (Cheshire)  
Brian Duke (Durham)  
David Neller (Essex)  
Geoff Went (Essex)  
Jonathan Graham (Hampshire)  
Bernard Gill (Lancashire)

Andrew Beeston (Merseyside)  
Tim Taylor (Middlesex)  
John Thompson (Northumbria)  
Jim Reay (Oxfordshire)  
Patrick Fleming (Surrey)  
Simon Tunley (Sussex)  
Nick Carter (Worcestershire)

### IN ATTENDANCE

#### Board Members

Joy Carter (Chair)  
Heidi Leseur  
Andrew Light  
Wendy Newlove  
Mark Williams (CEO)

#### President

Paul Millman

#### Vice-Presidents

Jackie Robinson  
Barbara Sanderson

#### England Squash

Neil Edgar (Finance Director)  
David Evans (Engagement Officer)  
Steve Jones (minutes)  
Paul Makinen (Head of Digital & Insight)  
Laura Mumford (Competitions Manager)  
Jo Rowbottom (Head of Partnerships & Communities)  
Kirsten Todd (Partnerships & Communities Manager)

| MINUTES REF. | ITEM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | ACTION                     |
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| M01ESC(2402) | <b>1. Chair's Welcome</b><br><br>Joy Carter (JC), England Squash Chair, welcomed everyone to the Council meeting and covered some housekeeping matters including how to ask questions on Zoom and the need for attendees to have their name and county association on display.                                                                                                                                                                                       |                            |
| M02ESC(2402) | <i>Apologies for absence</i><br><br>Apologies were received from Herefordshire county association, as well as from World Squash Federation (WSF) President and England Squash Vice President Zena Wooldridge, who was en route to Los Angeles for squash's first inspection visit ahead of the 2028 Olympic Games.                                                                                                                                                   |                            |
| M03ESC(2402) | <i>Declarations of interests</i><br><br>There were no interests declared.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                            |
| M04ESC(2402) | <i>Minutes of the Council Meeting of 20 Jun 2024</i><br><br>The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read and were agreed as a true and correct record.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                            |
| M05ESC(2402) | <i>Matters Arising</i><br><br>M13ESC(2401) – It was agreed that a one-page document that promotes 'What England Squash Does' would be shared with Board and Council once completed. A primary use of the document is expected to be the marketing of England Squash membership.                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>MW</b>                  |
| M06ESC(2402) | M17ESC(2401) – There was consensus that mentoring must play an important role in the coach development pathway.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>JR</b>                  |
| M07ESC(2402) | M19ESC(2401) – In relation to sanctioned competitions and the talent pathway, there was agreement that county associations would share insight on formats of competition that were working particularly well locally, with a view to them potentially being adopted wider.                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>County associations</b> |
| M08ESC(2402) | <i>Board Update</i><br><br>Recent work and topics of discussion included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further development of the plans for Membership &amp; Affiliation</li> <li>• Starting to look at an England Squash strategy to follow on from the current Strategy, which ends in 2025</li> <li>• Looking at how we can build on the good progress with our commercial partners portfolio and opportunities for other non-grant income</li> </ul> |                            |

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| M09ESC(2402) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Met the new National Coach Stuart Crawford and discussed priorities</li> <li>• Listening exercise to improve inclusion and diversity</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                            |
|              | <p><b>2. CEO Update</b></p> <p>England Squash CEO Mark Williams (MW) updated Council on a wide range of topics.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                            |
| M10ESC(2402) | <p><i>Staffing</i></p> <p>It was noted that three recent appointments had been Stuart Crawford (National Coach), Sarah Ward (Safeguarding, Culture &amp; Wellbeing Manager) and Hannah Ridgard-Mason (People &amp; Education Manager).</p> <p>County associations were encouraged to ensure that their welfare officers have the opportunity to be on the mailing list for Sarah's newsletter. Sarah can be contacted at <a href="mailto:sarah.ward@englandsquash.com">sarah.ward@englandsquash.com</a></p> | <b>County associations</b> |
| M11ESC(2402) | <p><i>Board changes</i></p> <p>It was noted that three Board members including the Chair would be completing their terms by the middle of 2025. England Squash would be advertising for replacements in the new year.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                            |
| M12ESC(2402) | <p><i>Olympic Games</i></p> <p>News was expected in the near future about the specific venue that will be used for squash in Los Angeles 2028, as well as about how the qualification process for the event will work.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                            |
| M13ESC(2402) | <p><i>Competitions</i></p> <p>There was appreciation shown for the key role played by county associations in helping produce 800 new children playing competitive squash.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                            |
| M14ESC(2402) | <p><i>Roll of Honour project</i></p> <p>Big thanks to England Squash President Paul Millman, who has helped provide the data necessary to recognise every player who has ever represented England.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                            |
| M15ESC(2402) | <p><b>3. The 'Right' Ball</b></p> <p>It is widely understood that using an inappropriate ball can adversely impact the enjoyment and benefits of playing squash and can in some cases lead to players turning away from the sport.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                            |
| M16ESC(2402) | <p>There followed some discussion of Squash 57 and how it is part of the same conversation. It was agreed that Squash 57 is very much a sport for young and old alike. It was felt strongly in some quarters that the</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                            |

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| M17ESC(2402) | <p>'Squash 57' name had 'not worked' and that 'racketball' is still the term used by many players, including the growing UK Racketball community and website.</p> <p>Dunlop makes a red-dot ball that is felt to be ideal for recreational players and beginners. It was agreed that education is key because players may feel that it is not 'cool' to be seen using a 'beginner' ball when in fact strong and experienced players can also benefit from using such a ball in some circumstances.</p> | MW                  |
| M18ESC(2402) | There was discussion of posters, and it was noted that England Squash is to be adding a balls poster to the Tournament Organiser toolkit.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | MW                  |
| M19ESC(2402) | There was consensus that England Squash's role should be one of strong guidance in this area rather than mandating particular types of ball.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | MW                  |
| M20ESC(2402) | <p><b>4. Competitions</b></p> <p>Laura Mumford, Competitions Manager, introduced this item, beginning with graded competitions and moving on to the Optasia Squash Super League (SSL) and how the teams will be put together.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                     |
| M21ESC(2402) | It was noted that for the current season the SSL consists mostly of clubs from the south of the county. It is the intention to grow the SSL over the coming years and include clubs from the north for a larger geographical spread of teams. Streaming of the matches for the current season will be free of charge.                                                                                                                                                                                  |                     |
| M22ESC(2402) | It was felt that the inclusion of the 'local hero' in the SSL was a positive and exciting step.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                     |
| M23ESC(2402) | County associations were encouraged to share leads with England Squash in terms of clubs that may be interested in taking part in the SSL for its second year.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | County associations |
| M24ESC(2402) | It was agreed that England Squash would continue to share news with the community, including county associations, about the SSL.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | MW                  |
| M25ESC(2402) | <p><b>5. Coach Development</b></p> <p>The Council paper shared by Hannah Ridgard-Mason, People and Education Manager, ahead of the meeting shared plans for a new flexible coaching course format, the integration of specialist 'badges' and the proposed timeline for implementing these changes to enhance support for all coaches.</p>                                                                                                                                                             |                     |
| M26ESC(2402) | Jo Rowbottom (JR), Head of Partnerships & Communities, led the discussion as the attendees split into breakout rooms (small groups). JR shared the following question to help guide the conversations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                     |

Q: What feedback would county associations like to share on the proposed new coach education pathway, and how can England Squash help county associations boost awareness and engagement?

The following are the collated key points and ideas from those discussions.

- There is a need to do a maturity assessment and target the capabilities gaps once known where they are on a macro scale
- What is the succession plan?
- Success stories are individual coaches who have owned their own progression through the levels rather than anything programmatic. Clubs and counties need to think of this in terms of their coach succession planning
- The coaches list on the England Squash website was said to be out-of-date – updating this would help players accurately find an active coach
- There is interest in seeing the plans in due course for identifying potential coaches at all levels. This is felt to be a role for both the county and for England Squash
- To attract more coaches, perhaps develop a pathway after the squash leaders/buddy up with next-level coaches
- Support coaches in setting up a business model
- Provide case studies of successful counties in due course so that others can follow

M27ESC(2402)

## 6. Membership

Paul Makinen, Head of Digital and Insight, updated Council on the new scheme, both in relation to individual members and club affiliation. Highlights included:

- The Digital marketing campaign has been effective in raising awareness and driving conversion, generating 14,000 link clicks to date
- The digital platform has been updated to support the new membership model. Notably, new club and county dashboards are now live, giving much greater clarity and visibility of user membership statuses to administrators in clubs and county associations
- There has been excellent support from county associations, with 30 county associations telling us that they are now mandating England Squash membership and affiliation for their leagues and competitions
- A new membership benefit has been agreed which will see members access a 10% discount at Worker Bee Coffee's web shop and will be announced in the next few weeks

M28ESC(2402)

Julian Holmes, representing Buckinghamshire, shared his experiences of the new scheme. Notably things didn't start well for the new scheme in his county because the county's summer 2024 AGM showed that a

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|              | significant number of clubs had negative feelings towards the changes to some degree.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |    |
| M29ESC(2402) | It was noted by Julian that discussion at the AGM developed into one of 'what have you ever done for squash?', with clubs supportive of the new scheme challenging the less supportive clubs. By the time the summer had ended and the squash season had got underway, the reality was that clubs and players alike had just 'stepped up and did it' with their England Squash memberships and club affiliations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |    |
| M30ESC(2402) | <p><b>7. Schools Project</b></p> <p>Kirsten Todd (KT) from the Partnerships &amp; Programmes team introduced this item, explaining how England Squash is currently creating a new squash programme for schools, with the aim of raising awareness and participation in squash in primary school children.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |    |
| M31ESC(2402) | <p>It was noted that the programme will be delivered in two different ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coach-led – Trained Coaches will be given resources to help them approach schools and deliver the programme</li> <li>2. Teacher-led – England Squash will provide teachers with resources and training to deliver activities to the pupils during PE lessons</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |    |
| M32ESC(2402) | <p>KT then invited discussion in breakout rooms and shared the following questions to help guide the conversations.</p> <p>Q1: Do you know of any successful school programmes in your county, and if so what could England Squash learn from them?</p> <p>Q2: How can you promote the new programme to coaches and schools in your county, and what help do you need from England Squash?</p> <p>The following are the collated key points and ideas from those discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce a squash staff taster experience for school teachers</li> <li>• Find players in clubs who are teachers</li> <li>• Financing and coach availability are issues</li> <li>• Use a mixture of squash courts and brick walls, e.g. in the playground</li> <li>• How do we turn squash in schools into a habit?</li> <li>• Teachers and coaches should feel supported by the programme</li> <li>• There needs to be more than just one taster session for school children</li> <li>• Schools transporting kids to squash courts may be a barrier, especially due to finances</li> <li>• Mum and child sessions have had some success, providing regular attendance by school children</li> </ul> | KT |

- A county secured funding for collapsible mini squash courts, which may be preferred to rebound nets
- England Squash could work with Active Partnerships on school games
- That transition from school activity into clubs and then club membership is key
- Wednesday afternoon PE sessions are an opportunity. OFSTED are motivated to get children healthier and fitter
- Collaborate with the National School Games framework
- Increasing the number of coaches generally will play an important role so that demand can be satisfied

M33ESC(2402)

**8. Any Other Business**

JC highlighted that several information-only papers as follows had also been shared with Council members and thanked the writers of those papers:

- Environment and Sustainability
- Inclusion & Diversity
- County Association Governance Standards
- Participation
- Safeguarding
- Talent & Performance



Signed.....  
Joy Carter (Chair)