



Board Minutes

Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 1 p.m.
The Ashorne Hill, Leamington Spa.

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

Board Chair: David Tucker (Chair)
Director of Coaching: Mal Evans (COA)
Director of Competitive Events: Margaret Docherty (COM)
Director of Development: Adam Tanner (DEV)
Director of Governance: Foster Johnson (GOV)
Director of Finance: Stephen Hemsley (FIN)
Senior Independent Director: Dr Anna Molony (SIND)
Independent Director: Jo Doust (JD)
Independent Director: James Wurr (JW)
Chief Executive: Jon Cockcroft (CE)
Head of Business Operations: Helen Slimm (HBO)

2. Previous Minutes – accuracy/matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd March were approved as a true and correct record.

The Chair addressed the action allocated to Board Members from the previous meeting regarding the World Bowls Regional Director. No suggestions were provided.

There were no other matters arising.

3. Declaration of Interest

None declared.

4. Operational Report and RAG Status

The CE, in advance of the meeting, had circulated an operational report to all Board members. This provided an overview of the day-to-day business activity since the previous Board meeting.

The CE informed The Board that it is an exceptionally busy time of the year with National Competitions starting, the international season underway, the recent Under 18 event and Bowls' Big Weekend coming up. It was noted that the office is now fully staffed, after operating with a small number of vacancies over the winter months. The CE reflected that the progress being made is being recognized by a number of strategic partners.

During a review of the Operational Report, the following further discussions took place:



Bowls' Big Weekend

Bowls' Big Weekend was discussed at length including the number of clubs taking part, the timing, audience, links to other casual incentives, Aviva's involvement and the Board's visits to local clubs.

JD commented on the reduction of numbers this year, and passed on feedback regarding the timing of the event. The C asked for clarification on clubs being able to run open day events outside Bowls' Big Weekend. The CE confirmed that clubs can hold open days whenever they choose, but nationally one Bowls Big Weekend's ensures that national PR and marketing efforts are not diluted. FIN observed that not all clubs are set up to serve casual bowling, and that more work needs to be done to install a casual bowling culture. JD and SIND discussed linking Bowls' Big Weekend to other casual bowls incentives such as Play Bowls and Bowls Bash and educating clubs on additional income streams that do not feed into the traditional membership model. SIND asked for an analysis on the data, to help inform future plans.

CE advised that the numbers were down on the previous years. He added, in the past years, clubs have signed up for the resources and not held an event. This year a tighter process was implemented. The lower numbers could also be due to fatigue from clubs, who had taken part in previous years and a reduced sign up from Crown Green clubs. It was acknowledged that more work needs to take place on showing clubs the incremental value of running an open day as part of Bowls' Big Weekend. CE additionally commented that there were regional differences and that we needed to work hard with some Counties to engage clubs, particularly where participation is not increasing.

Member Services and Development

A discussion between FIN, SIND and the CE took place on the benefits of Easy Fundraising. It was **resolved** that case studies should be provided to clubs to help understanding on the benefits of this opportunity.

The C asked for timescales on the club mail out. The CE confirming that the mail out will take place in June and that thought had been given to the longevity of the information and resources, so that it can remain current for a longer period.

An overview was presented to JW on the current working relationship with the Bowls Development Alliance and the other bowls codes. It was acknowledged that collaboration on the major work streams needed to be improved going further and that Bowls Development Alliance needs to be more transparent in terms of their interactions with BE clubs.

The CE informed the Board that the Bowls England relationship with Sport England had improved because of the Commonwealth Games activity and governance work. The Board acknowledged the work of the staff team for giving Sport England greater confidence in our sport.

Championships and Competitions



DEV congratulated COM for the work that went into organising the under 18 event that had taken place at Oxford City and County. Feedback from the Board was positive with a view that the event should be repeated annually. Discussions took place between COM, COA, DEV, C and CE on future changes that could be made, such as moving to a regional format to encourage more entrants from other areas and a review of the gender representation. It was resolved that the event should be included in plans for 2024 and the entrance fee be increased from £5 per player.

The CE gave the Board an update on the position of the EBUA since the last meeting advising of some personnel changes.

Aviva National Finals

A discussion took place on the volunteering opportunities at the Aviva National Finals, with suggestions from DEV to make the communications clearer that the opportunity is flexible and does not require the volunteers to work the entire time. JW and CE discussed the legacy volunteer data from the Commonwealth Games. JW will investigate contacts and feed back to the team.

SIND and C discussed the new branding for the Aviva National Finals and the decision not to include the word bowls. It was resolved to continue with this branding but thought should be given to ensuring the logo appears in a bowls context and including the word bowls for marketing outside the bowls community.

JD, JW and CE discussed the VIP and influencing proposal for the Aviva National Finals, with the prospect of inviting ministers directly and also extending an invite Buckingham Palace.

COM queried the donation from the Friends of English Bowling and it was suggested that, if Friends of English Bowling becoming a charitable foundation, it would allow members to gift aid there subscriptions.

International Success

The CE informed the Board on the recent notification from UK Anti-Doping, with Bowls England gaining the assurance framework pass. Credit was give Alistair Hollis for his commitment in getting all the documents and policies up to date and ensuring compliance. It was noted that JD had completed all his UKAD training.

The Board noted that two young players had been successful in receiving a grant from Sport Aid. Jack Pullen from DBE and Nicole Rogers had been the successful applicants and an announcement would be made shortly.

The CE gave a brief update on the international trial scheduled for 20th May and DEV gave a brief update on the Under 25 and Under 18 work. It was noted that the para team for the World Championships, would be selected shortly and announced after the Bowls' Big Weekend.

Governance



GOV explained that he was unable to attend the AGM but had since read the correspondence that had been received from Worcestershire Bowls Association. He suggested that when the rules and regulation review takes place, an appendix is included which includes the procedures for companies meeting. BE should provide guidance on motions, debates and processes to aid clubs and counties gain an understanding about how companies operate.

The CE gave the Board an update on the current discussions with Warwick District Council, and the importance of the Aviva National Finals engaging with the local community. A further discussion took place between JD, SIND and GOV on the outcomes of the local elections.

The Board had received information on recent safeguarding pressures and a discussion took place between JD, C and CE on assessing the resources going into these cases. CE advised the Board of British Gymnastics' call for a safeguarding regulator to be set up to take the pressures away from National Governing Bodies. It was noted that Duncan Webster would shortly be leaving the Bowls Development Alliance and a job advert had been circulated for a dedicated safeguarding manager to fulfil the role.

FIN highlighted that it was a statutory requirement for Bowls Clubs to have a safeguarding officer. HBO explained that the requirements split between the Care Act, the Statutory Guidance on Working Together to Safeguard Children and the Duty of Care in Sport Review. It was resolved that this fact would be made clearer through future communications.

The HBO gave an update on a recent club governance concern at Egham Bowls Club, which led to a wider discussion on club compliance with regulation 2.5.2. It was resolved that we need to develop a clearer range of sanctions for clubs who breach their membership obligations.

JD, DT and CE discussed the need to have a stand-alone complaints policy, separate to the whistleblowing policy for members. It was resolved that this should be developed in line with code of conducts and volunteer policies through the Disciplinary Working Party.

5. Management Accounts

The CE presented the papers that had been prepared and circulated by the Finance Manager. The Board expressed their thanks to the Finance Manager for the report, which was much more detailed. The CE updated the Board on the monthly management meetings that have better inform the financial management process. Affiliation figures are starting to be received, with a slight increase showing so far. The FIN informed the Board that, subject to receipt of the Sport England money and achieving target on the National Finals ticket income, Bowls England look in a good position against budget.

The C queried the expenses to Coach Bowls and asked for clarification on the original agreement. A full discussion took place with C, COA, CE, FIN and SIND on the structure and sustainability of Coach Bowls, with a recommendation that Coach Bowls undergoes a full independent audit to assess the situation.

The C commented that Board Expenses were coming in over budget, this was because the budget had been prepared on a mix of virtual and in person meetings in the 2022/3



operational year. The Board confirmed that meetings going forward are more productive in person and the budget for the next financial year should be rectified accordingly.

With no other comments, the Board were content with the Management Accounts for the end of March.

6. Risk Register and ICC

The Risk Register had been provided to the Board in advance. The following five risks had been highlighted for review:

1. Sports Infrastructure – Facility Stock
2. Legal and Compliance - Disciplinary
3. Financial Management – Loss of SE
4. Legal and Compliance – Legal Action
5. Legal and Compliance – Safeguarding

The Board noted that three risks had changed in status. The miscalculation to loans identified in the last meeting had been rectified and the status downgraded accordingly. Legal and compliance in regards to legal action and safeguarding had seen the risk increase and had moved into the top five risks. All risks had been covered during the meeting at other points on the agenda.

FIN noted that the Sport England Funding figure needed to be reviewed following mitigation and an action was noted to amend before the next meeting.

7. Working Parties Review

During this section of the agenda, each Working Party Chair provided an update on the work undertaken since the last Board Meeting.

COM had nothing to add to the report already circulated to the Board. JW approved of the novice event concept, whilst JC asked for clarification on the timelines. COM identified that now the bowls season had started, it was difficult to plan meetings where the full working party could attend. The next meeting was scheduled for after Bowls' Big Weekend with the plan to extend the June County Meeting to incorporate an update to Counties. COM shared concern about the emerging scale of the work and the timescales.

FIN had circulated a report and project plan in advance of the meeting. He informed the Board that the terms of reference had included an implementation plan, which the working party had resolved not to complete until the proposals had been accepted. The next stage of the working party was to appointment a specialist to conduct a survey of the membership.

A full Board discussion took place on the logistics, viability and parameters of the market research that would need to be conducted for the various working parties. It was resolved that two separate surveys would be required - one covering affiliation with a nod to governance and disciplinary and the other covering the competitions review.



GOV updated the Board on a recent meeting of the Governance Working Party. The group considered the next steps towards securing Tier 3, recapping on the previous gap analysis alongside new documentation from Sport England in regards to the updates to Tier 3. A regular meeting schedule has been established and plans have been put in place to review an action and implementation plan. The C highlighted that Governance United had experience of drafting articles and regulations and should be kept in mind for future work. SIND asked for the views of the Board on the membership of the working party, and it was resolved that the group should use MAR to provide feedback and have regular consultation with the Counties.

DEV had prepared a brief note from the Board, which detailed the discussions from the recent Disciplinary Working Party Meeting. He gave a further update on the membership of the group, following discussions with Colin Mitchell.

The Board discussed the Counties Conference and consultations. It was resolved that the Competition Working Party should take precedence at the Conference for their proposals to be discussed. Board Members were asked to think how they could use the Aviva National Finals for County Consultations for the benefit of all working parties.

The meeting paused at 15.55 and resumed at 16.05.

8. External Board Evaluation

The C and CE presented a proposal from an external company called Governance United to conduct a Board Evaluation. This is one element of the Sport England Tier 3 review, and the results of the evaluation will help inform how the Board may improve the way it operates. The full Board indicated that they were happy to participate, and agreed for Governance United to attend the next meeting of the Board in an observational capacity.

9. Employee Reward and Recognition

The CE presented a paper that had been prepared as a discussion item. The instigation of the review of the Employee reward and recognition programme followed feedback from the 2022 Employee Satisfaction Survey, which indicated that the rewards for the staff team were not commensurate with the level of work expected to be undertaken. It was agreed the ideas needed more development, clear timescales for implementation and detailed costings before the Board can approve any changes.

The Board discussed the balance between ensuring the team feel valued, and retaining staff, whilst being a small, member organisation with limited budgets. Discussions included the results of the survey, feedback from exit interviews, equality and the option of increasing the workforce to help with the workload balance.

It was resolved that the C, SIND, CE and HBO meet to discuss further to help shape.

10. Adam Tanner's Australia Visit



DEV gave the Board a quick overview on his planned personal holiday to Australia, where he would be incorporating attendance at The Australian Open and meeting with members of the Bowls Australia Board.

11. Bowls' Big Weekend Briefing

The CE gave a briefing on the upcoming Bowls' Big Weekend, which is the only event in the Bowls England calendar where the full team (Board, Staff, Internationals and Presidential) are out and about in the Bowls Community at the same time. The Board had received locations and details for events to attend. The CE asked the Board to review the website for clubs in their areas as well. A briefing document will be circulated to support this.

With no other business, the meeting closed at 16.37 p.m.