



# Board Minutes

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 1 p.m.  
The Ashorne Hill, Royal Leamington Spa.

## 1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

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

### Apologies

None

## 2. Previous Minutes – accuracy/matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> July were approved to be signed as a true and correct record.

FIN questioned if any of the Board had comments on the Affiliation Working Party paper. No comments were forthcoming and there were no other matters arising.

## 3. Declaration of Interest

No interests 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. Further discussions took place on the following areas.

### Member Services and Development

Bowls Bash and PlayBowls were discussed at length. SIND and JD probed more into the figures and take up, and it was agreed that the progress was disappointing. It was noted that there was no Clubs and Participation Officer in post until January and there is a lack of resources and expertise at local level to support and guide clubs.



Moving forward the Board has confidence in the product and the platform, and the strategy behind providing more casual ways to play, but the implementation requires a step change. It was agreed that more development and marketing team time would be allocated to it, that the BDA relationship would be a key priority, that Coach Bowls would be engaged and that there would be a clear plan for the 2024 season, with better management and measurement of performance.

### **Competitive Events**

Feedback on the Aviva National Finals is covered elsewhere on the agenda. The additional updates included the Competition Survey, which had already seen over 2000 responses and the Champions Dinner where tickets were selling well.

### **International Success**

The World Championships had concluded in Australia, with the Women's Team coming second and the Men's team finishing fifth in the standings. The feedback from Mo Monkton, acting Performance Manager, was relatively positive and it was the best performance by an England Team at a World Championships held in Australia. The C asked as to whether a full report would be forthcoming, and the CE confirmed it would. JW and CE discussed the lack of coverage from the BBC on the Women's fours medal. The CE canvassed the Board for their views on the Live Streaming of the event. COA discussed the commentary bias alongside the difficulty of using five different venues.

### **Commercial**

The Board noted that it may have benefited Aviva to have some literature available to spectators at the National Finals. Both Aviva and Riviera had provided positive feedback on the experience which bodes well for the future.

### **Governance and Overheads**

The Board and Presidential nominations were discussed at length. The deadline for nominations within the Rules and Regulations is approaching. Following a discussion it was agreed that the dates be amended within the regulations to allow members longer to nominate. The GWP had recommended to the Board that Board appointments should be in line with the skills required at the time, rather than the existing portfolio-based model. It was resolved that this be implemented for the upcoming nominations. It was resolved that the CE and HBO amend the rules and regulations accordingly, circulating to the Board for approval first.

The HBO gave the Board a strategic overview on the safeguarding function, including the costs of legal fees relating to recent cases. The C asked the HBO to investigate that if Bowls England use the National Safeguarding Panel for any of its cases and are successful, can costs be passed to the other party.

The CE informed the Board that interviews had started for the Head of Business Operations position.

## **5. Management Accounts**



The CE and FM presented the Bowls England Management Accounts for July which were approved by the Board.

JD asked about the Aviva National Finals ticket sales, with some falling into the August accounts. The general ticket sales fell below the target, however the hospitality offering had been very successful and surpassed targets.

FIN thanked the FM for her time, and commented that the Board found the commentary useful.

## **6. Risk Register and ICC**

The risk register was presented by the CE, who noted that a few tweaks had been made to include health and safety implications at events. Stressing that an elevated approach to health and safety concerns at events in future was required.

The top six risks listed were:

1. Safeguarding
2. Facility Stock
3. Disciplinary
4. Legal Action
5. Reputation Damage
6. Event Health and Safety Compliance

JD noted that the increase across the risks, linked to staff levels and the capacity of the organisation to progress in certain areas. A discussion took place with SIND, JD and CE on co-dependent organisations that impact Bowls England such as the BDA and Coach Bowls.

JW enquired on the health and safety issues at the Aviva National Finals, which included crowd flows, smoking zones, glassware, disability facilities, broadcast equipment and trip hazards.

## **7. 2023/24 Operational Plan and Budget**

The CE and staff team had drafted the 2023/24 Operational Plan and Budget for Board approval. The Board had received a view of the key operational priorities at the July meeting. The Operational Plan included business-as-usual, concluding the four working party projects, developing a group of super volunteers and hosting the British Isles International Series.

JD queries the balance of staff capability and capacity against the delivery outcomes. With big changes over the next year, losing key personal, high performance reviews and trying to maximise BBW, ANF, Bowls Bash and PlayBowls he queried whether the operational plan was adding too much pressure. SIND asked whether Bowls England was trying to be too ambitious and were not providing the basic service levels with the additional workload. The CE explained the desire for Bowls England to continue progressing and the importance of being ambitious. He explained the way we allocate



staff members' time, the ongoing process of prioritising workload and decisions to scale back on plans when necessary. It was resolved that nothing within the operational plan could be easily removed and that it was important to continually evaluate capacity and capability.

The CE emphasised the importance on mobilising the larger workforce and getting our volunteers working better and smarter. He highlighted how brilliant it was that the County Competition Secretaries helped with the competition desk alongside the Competition Officer at the Aviva National Finals and highlighted that this was a model that the team were keen to develop. He also highlighted the importance of creating scale in the business and maximizing partnerships with the likes of BDA, Coach Bowls and others.

After a full discussion the Operational Plan was approved.

The CE and FIN presented the budget, and highlighted the challenge of achieving breakeven in 2023/24, which is part of the long-term financial plan. The CE ran through the major changes which were discussed in details by the Board. Overall, the desire was for Bowls England to ensure it is transparent with what each service costs, so that Counties and Bowlers are clear on the rationale for where money is spent and why costs have been cut in some areas.

A discussion took place on the subsidisation of Coach Bowls, and it resolved to invite the Coaching Manager to a future Board Meeting to present the Coach Bowls operational plan and budget.

JD, supported by other board members asked for a review on the ANF costs, which looked set to increase. The CE explained this was mainly around improving the safety of the event but agreed to review reducing the budget in this area and reviewing how we can ensure it is moving closer to a position of profit.

The Board were happy to approve the 2023/24 budget, on condition that the ANF budget was reconsidered and a deficit of £23k was approved.

## **8. Investment Paper**

The FM presented the board with an investment paper, which contained three options on how Bowls England could better manage its cash reserves. Discussion took place between the FIN, SIND, JD and the C, which resulted in the lower risk option being agreed in the interim position. This will see a 2% increase in the interest being accrued on almost £500k of cash reserves. The FIN was asked to explore other options for a portion of Bowls England's reserves, which did not need to be accessed from a cash flow perspective.

## **9. General ANF Feedback**

The CE informed the Board that there was no paper circulated for this item. A survey had been sent to all spectators and there had been an internal team feedback session. This part of the agenda was a opportunity for Board Members to feedback on the recent Aviva National Finals.



The Chair expressed that he had attended the National Finals for years, and his opinion was that this was the best one yet. Comments were made on the success of the programme, which enabled all five greens to be in play much more frequently. The Board commented that this made the event feel busy, and the amount of spectators had greatly improved. COA gave feedback on the branding, but commented that more thought needed to be put into where people can go if there is rain and freeing the main pathways up from congestion.

A discussion took place between SIND, JW, COM and COA in relation to whether a printed programme should remain in place next year, but to be prepared well in advance so that it could be proof read and ensure minimal mistakes.

SIND and COA asked whether a second entrance could be installed at the top of the greens, and have branding extend to the town and the train station.

SIND discussed the Clubzone events, which had been very disappointing. With most events being cancelled or suffering from poor attendance, it was agreed that they were a good idea, but needed to be executed better for next year.

The competition results system was discussed, with the QR code working well but the portal not being updated or containing incorrect scores. COM highlighted the challenges with the system and the CE confirmed this would all be addressed ahead of next year.

The success of the VIP packages were discussed by COA and the C, with the possibility of getting them on sale earlier giving people a chance to purchase them as Christmas Presents.

## **10. ANF County Consultations**

A paper had been prepared on the County Consultations that had taken place at the Aviva National Finals. The paper had been sent to both the Board and County administrators and highlighted a positive working relationship in the four key areas.

## **11. Any other business**

The Chair informed the Board that a rent review on the Worthing property was due on September 2023 and the board was happy to engage a surveyor to conduct the negotiation. The Governance United Report, reviewing board effectiveness, had been received and a date would be put in to run through the outcome with the Board virtually over the next month.

The meeting was closed at 4.10 p.m.