



Bowls England Board Minutes Nov 7th, 2023

Meeting to Discuss Governance United Report

Date: Tuesday 7th November 2023 at 17.30

Venue: Virtual Meeting via Teams

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 Governance: Foster Johnson (GOV)
Director of Finance: Stephen Hemsley (FIN)
Independent Director: Dr Anna Molony (SIND)
Independent Director: Jo Doust (JD)
Chief Executive: Jon Cockcroft (CE)
Head of Business Operations: Vikki Underwood (HBO)

Visitor: Rowland Jack, Governance United (RJ)

Apologies

Independent Director: James Wurr (JW)
Director of Development: Adam Tanner (DEV)
Director of Coaching: Mal Evans (COA)

2. Presentation and Discussion: External Board Evaluation by Governance United

The Chair welcomed RJ from Governance United and invited him to provide an overview of the recommendations outlined in their Evaluation (copy attached).

RJ started by thanking the Board and BE Staff for being so cooperative and engaged through the evaluation process. He stated that there was a supportive and respectful environment and singled out a quote from the report stating that BE had "...a highly capable and committed Board supported by a small but hard-working and effective executive team."

Key Finding were:

- Solid foundations
- Strategy is supported by the Board
- Confidence in key policies and procedures
- Unanimous recognition of positive progress in recent times
- Credit due to Board, led by the Chair and to staff, led by the CEO



RJ continued to provide the following 7 recommendations:

1. Continue shift from operational to strategic input from the Board

- Review portfolio roles on the Board as terms come to an end and, unless good reasons exist to define a role by reference to a portfolio, adjust role descriptions to move to fully skills-based appointments, in line with Tier 3 of the Code for Sports Governance
- Reconsider the classification of items on the agenda, introducing a new category, "for information" with a view to adjusting the focus onto priority issues for discussion. Items listed as "for information" could then be taken as read unless a Board member wished to raise a specific query.

Board discussion: It can be challenging to keep discussions at the strategic level and not dwell on operational planning. RJ suggested keeping meetings shorter and really focus on strategic requirements. Operational issues could be discussed in another forum. JD suggested cross referencing Board meeting requirements to the relevant sections in the strategic plan.

2. Work towards increased diversity on the Board

- Ensure gender balance, age profile, disability and ethnic background are considered carefully in the approach to the Board recruitment process (including role description, person specification, time commitment, where the role is advertised, expressing a commitment to diversity in adverts, etc.) and also in the selection criteria.

Board Discussion: It is possible to canvas prospective Board members that meet specific EDI requirements and use specialist agencies to find candidates (although this can be expensive). Ensure the comms for roles is accurate and inspires applications from the right demographic – use wording such as "we would specifically welcome applications from...".

Tier 3 Governance requires a Diversity and Action Plan that will include specific targets for gender balance.

3. INED recruitment to support strategic objective of understanding target audience of potential participants.

- When putting together recruitment criteria for INED roles, consider including among them the need to understand the target audience of potential newcomers to the sport

Board Discussion: The Nominations Committee should help set out clear criteria for Board recruitment by outlining the specific skills and experiences required. These should reflect the demographic profile of the new members that we need to attract to the sport. Communicating / marketing the roles is key to reaching the right audience.

The Board reflected that it can be difficult for the membership to appreciate that Independent (non-bowling) directors bring value to the sport. Is there an education piece here?

Headhunting / canvassing is also very important, as is identifying future Board members and including them in mentoring, training sessions and workshops.



Attracting the right candidates to the sport is also an issue at *staff* and *committee* levels. However, we are not currently clear on why it is such a challenge. Other NGB's have similar issues.

The Board were given examples of BASES (British Association of Sports and Exercise Scientists) and the NOC's (National Olympic Committee's) who had both set up mentoring initiatives to support attracting more candidates and reflecting EDI.

4. Keep meeting format, length and agenda structure under review

- Keep under review the format, timing and length of meetings, including the current approach of meeting informally the night before/after meetings, as the composition of the Board evolves in order to appeal to a wide range of candidates

Board Discussion: There was consensus that the current Board meeting structure worked well with the existing members and that it contributed to how effective the Board was. However, it was generally noted that this structure may preclude new applicants due to the time commitment, overnight stays and relatively few remote meetings.

5. More active management of conflicts of interest

- Develop a conflicts of interest policy and procedure, including a conflicts of interest register
- Manage conflicts of interest more actively with Board members declaring at the start of each meeting any specific or new conflicts of interest and, if necessary and relevant to the agenda, reminding the meeting of their role(s) within the sport
- On occasion it may be necessary for one or more Board members to leave the meeting for specific agenda items

Board Discussion: These will be actioned.

6. Trial minor adjustments to Board pack

- On a trial basis, consider combining all papers in a single PDF file that is distributed to the Board
- Consider having 3-4 sets of printed copies of papers available at the meeting for Board members to refer to.

Board Discussion: This will be actioned.

7. Training and development

- Include training and development among the objectives for the Board in 2024. This would include training on the roles, responsibilities and expectations of Board members.
- Some consultation may be needed on priority topics

Board Discussion: This will be actioned.



The Chair thanked RJ on behalf of the Board and closed the meeting at 18.30.

3. Actions

1. CE and HBO to create an action plan based on the recommendation and discussion. Plan to be shared with the Board at the next Board meeting on the 24th November 2023.
2. CE and HBO to develop a communications piece to inform Bowls England stakeholders of the project and the recommendations the Board will be taking forwards.