

Swim England Sport Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 14 July 2020, via Zoom

Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting

Present:

Neil Booth	Chairman
Ian Mackenzie	Swim England Member
Alex Harrison	Swim England Member
Pippa Jones	Swim England Member
Jim Boucher	Swim England Member
John Hidle	Regional Chairs Representative
Emma Griffin	Operations Director
George Wood	Sports Development Director
Jon Glenn	Learn to Swim & Workforce

Staff: Siân Breen Senior Administration Officer

Min No:

1. Standing Items

1.1 Chairman's welcome

The Chair welcomed the group.

1.2 Apologies

Damian Stevenson and Joan Wheeler

1.3 Declarations of Interest

Alex Harrison – regarding item 3.3.4 - Regional Chair

1.4 Declarations of AoB

Discipline group liaison role

Discipline group Terms of Reference (ToR)

Communication of Swim England restructure

1.5 Minutes from the meeting held 5 May 2020

The minutes were agreed.

1.6 Actions from the meeting held 5 May 2020

1.6.1 Liaise with Regional Chairs over maintenance of 2020 fees for 2021: JH stated that there was no intended increase in any county or region.

1.6.2 School pool closures as a result of the pandemic: JG confirmed the Swim England Facilities team are monitoring the situation and requested any information on potential closure of all pools be sent to them.

2. Items for Decision

2.1 Sport Operations Committee Membership

The committee recognised the position of Insight and Partnerships Director would no longer exist following the Swim England reorganisation. There was agreement that, on completion of the restructure process, discussion would be

required to ensure the right members of Swim England staff were included in the Committee.

3. Items for Discussion

3.1 COVID-19 update

3.1.1 Swim England Restructure

NB acknowledged, depending on positions held on other boards and groups, that SOC members would have differing levels of knowledge regarding the restructure. As such greater consideration would be given to ensuring all members were provided with appropriate updates. It was noted that the intention was for the new structure would be confirmed for publication by 3 August.

GW provided the context for the restructure, with income from learn to swim and Institute of Swimming training almost entirely ceasing with the closure of pools. Although membership income was largely received at the start of the year, the usual conversion of Category 1 to Category 2 memberships and in year new memberships had not taken place. Taking into accounts these factors together with prospects for the resumption of and development of activities a reduction in head count of approximately 40% across the organisation was required for the continued operation of the business.

EG joined the meeting.

GW outlined the new structure for the Sport Development directorate, highlighting the focus on providing national level support, guidance and governance, whilst influencing water access and pushing the agenda on inclusion. Throughout August and September agreement would be sought with the regions to establish best working practices.

The purpose and responsibilities of new positions were outlined, highlighting the need for partnership working and provision of a rounded service.

JG covered the changes to the Learn to Swim and Workforce directorate, where recognition of market changes provided a focus on online and webinar based learning and awards direct fulfilment. A new engagement team would operate across the organisation, providing the focus for continued partnerships.

Within the MARCOMMS and Operations directorate EG outlined the need to create a more agile team, prioritising the membership experience. A return to SportPark was not expected for the foreseeable future and there was no longer the budget for traditional marketing. Digital would be key and the website would be made more streamlined and cost effective in line with this. Learnings throughout the period around use of technology and efficient communication would be taken forward to ensure efficient ways of working.

NB endorsed the changes, recognising the difficulties for all involved and pledged SOC's support for the future. The need for increased volunteer involvement across a number of areas was apparent.

The necessity of amending ToRs to reflect the new structure was raised and it was agreed that establishing the right level of staff attendance would be important.

3.1.2 Competitions

Discussion had taken place with the discipline leadership group (DLG) chairs on competition priorities:

1. Inspire the greatest number of people to return to the water.
2. Help clubs financially recover through income generation - especially important for swimming.
3. Support Swim England membership.

Flexibility of planning was considered with an eight week training block deemed to be the minimum lead in time. There was discussion on the use of the Rankings system in a virtual leader board competition, with the potential to involve local officials if there was appetite.

The paper was agreed, with an amendment regarding the potential use of Rankings. SOC liaisons agreed to work with the DLGs to ensure 2021 competition proposals were prepared by the next SOC meeting (8 September).

3.1.3 **Talent programmes**

GW outlined the work completed during lockdown to ensure availability of online resources and provide content to support overall guidance. A new look DiSE programme will begin in September, supporting 350 athletes across the disciplines.

Face to face camps for squads had necessarily ceased for the remainder of 2020. The only exceptions related to activity contributing to a UK Sport funded programme or an imminent FINA/LEN competition. JB outlined how the decision could be seen to unfairly detriment team sports, questioning whether a membership fee increase may be required to fund such activity. GW recognised the issues, highlighting how finances had unfortunately forced the decision, and explained that the time would be used to engage with clubs more effectively to ensure they develop the required levels of skill and fitness within their athletes.

JH raised the process of approving British Swimming International permits. It was agreed permits could be issued, on the proviso all Health and FCO, home and destination country guidance and regulations were complied with. It was noted that individuals and teams seeking these permits were responsible for their own insurance.

Action: EG to review monitoring of British Swimming permits email inbox

3.2 **Sport Development Directorate Plan update**

There was agreement that the plan should be circulated to DLGs with an extended deadline – taking into account the ongoing work around competitions. Reminders would be issued as necessary to ensure development of discipline specific plans.

Action: plan to be circulated to DLGs

3.3 **Leadership Group Reports**

3.3.1 **Artistic Swimming**

Confirmation was provided that a work around had been achieved to enable the levy of a charge to attend the virtual national conference.

GW stated that, in response to the posting of an open letter on social media regarding equality within the discipline, a meeting was to be arranged to explore the issues further.

Action: SOC liaisons to be copied in to any discipline communication to ensure awareness.

3.3.2 **Club**

Prior to the meeting on 24 June a letter was issued to the regional chairs regarding the group's responsibilities and confirming membership.

There was recognition that Swim England had been the first sports NGB to put out member advice during the pandemic. Online volunteer training was proving very successful.

Given the expected loss of pools following lockdown, assistance for clubs on matter such as mergers and required levels of reserves will be crucial. The group will review its membership to ensure it is able to provide the best level of support.

It was considered that clubs were committing to Stronger Affiliation as a minimum standard, with a widespread desire to progress further to achieve SwimMark.

3.3.3 **Diving**

The vacant positions in the group are now filled and use of a digital platform had enabled maximum attendance at recent meetings. As a result the DLG requested a review of the ToR in order to minimise the requirement for face to face meetings.

Opinion was sought on the attendance of regional managers at DLG meetings.

3.3.4 **Swimming**

Major concern centred on competitions, especially county championships which normally took place at the start of the year.

There was discussion on the ability of DLGs to mandate regional action through use of the regulation relating to governance of the company's strategic direction. Although SOC maintained overall control of strategy, DLGs were expected to lead in their area and as such could instruct on this basis. It was agreed that the DLG ToRs should clearly state how they could set strategy, whilst recognising the importance of regional backing.

3.3.5 **Water Polo**

IM outlined recent activity, including successful coach forums; held for the first time in many years, the agreement of the safety regulations and the input of nutritional advice for the talent squads.

There was discussion of a paper on the introduction of mini water polo / HABAWABA, noting that Memberships had confirmed schools could be incorporated into the system. Encouraging greater numbers of younger players into a basic version of the game was considered to be a positive step, especially given the FINA support for the programme.

Principle and intent of the paper were agreed, with the requirement to further expand on any required changes to regulations and avoid negative impact on membership numbers.

4. **Items to note**

4.1 **SE Board Updates (12 & 19 May, 10 June 2020 and 8 July)**

4.2 **SE Board Meeting (23 June 2020)**

Discussions in all meetings focused on the financial situation and consequent restructure.

Post Meeting addition:

23 June – Additional Headlines:

The Board received and reflected upon an Independent Board Evaluation report carried out by the Sport and Recreation Alliance. The review reflected positively on the boards overall performance and areas to be address will be actioned.

Insight was received and a discussion held with regards to Institutional Racism which will be pursued at future meetings

The Sport England framework 'Shaping our Future' was introduced. It was concluded that the framework should be added into the Swim England long term strategy.

5. Any Other Business

5.1 Discipline group liaison role

Item requires further discussion and will consequently be included in the agenda for the meeting on 8 September.

Action: DLG liaison role descriptions and DLG ToRs to be circulated to SOC and DLGs for consensus of views to take forward.

PJ left the meeting.

5.2 Discipline Group Terms of Reference

Review process to be followed as per the group liaison role.

6.1 **Future Meeting Dates**

Tuesday 8 September 2020

Tuesday 17 November 2020