

# Swim England Sport Operations Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held 17 January 2023

### Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting

<b>Present:</b>	Joan Wheeler (JW)	Swim England Board Member (Chair)
	Neil Booth (NB)	Swim England Board Member
	Amy Bryant	Swim England Member
	Alex Harrison (AH)	Swim England Member
	Ian Mackenzie (IM)	Swim England Member
	Keith Munday (KM)	Swim England Member
	Ellie Conway (EC)	Youth Advisory Panel
	John Hidle (JHi)	Regional Chairs Representative
	George Wood (GW)	Sport Development Director
	Jon Glenn (JG)	Learn to Swim and Workforce Director
	Rebecca Cox (RC)	Swim England Business Engagement Director & Institute of Swimming Managing Director

<b>Staff:</b>	Ali Sibcy-Allen (AS-A)	Operations Administration Manager
	Claire Coleman (CC)	Head of Development
	Kerry Watkiss (KW)	Head of Insight
	Ekaterina Boyd (EB)	Head of Events

### Min No:

#### 1. Standing Items

##### 1.1 Chairperson's welcome

JW welcomed everyone to the first face-to-face since 2020, with AH online, AB was welcomed to her first meeting.

##### 1.2 Apologies

None recorded.

##### 1.3 Declarations of Interest

AH – item 6.1 (AOB)

##### 1.4 Declarations of AOB

Observation on energy crisis and pool hire costs  
Question on decision making

##### 1.5 Minutes from previous meetings:

1.5.1 22 November 2022: The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

##### 1.6 Actions from previous meetings

1.6.1 22.22 – EG is pursuing progress of portal.

1.6.2 22.27 – Education plan pulled together starting in February including all disciplines and raised issues. More cohesive plan to be developed and will go out to clubs and team managers in first instance.

- 1.6.3 22.28 – CC and JW to catch up; timeline being discussed for publication of minutes.
- 1.6.4 22.35 – LTS and Workforce Audit moved to February agenda.
- 1.6.5 22.42 – Ongoing discussions regarding CPD and badge costs. Update to be provided at next meeting on specific points.
- 1.6.6 22.43 – Coaching and Teaching Register update to be added to February agenda.

## 1.7 Leadership Group Updates

- 1.7.1 Artistic Swimming: KM advised progress is being made by the new project manager recruited to integrate the revised FINA Rules. It was questioned whether the content from the conference had been disseminated. CC is to follow up. The entry software for NAGs is not fully compatible with the entry requirements resulting in volunteers manually having to complete elements. EB requested the update but due to the volume of work required it is not feasible for it to be implemented in time for NAGs. It is expected this will be implemented during 2023.
- 1.7.2 Clubs: The minutes were circulated with no further questions raised.
- 1.7.3 Diving: 2023 event planning has begun alongside the supporting volunteer recruitment. AH is to meet with the DLG Chair to develop a paper on the National Skills Finals transferring from being 'outsourced' to a Region to being delivered by the National Events team and would also raise the issue of High Diving. Concerns were noted regarding the lack of coaches and that the potential transfer of skills from comparable sports was being explored.

GW advised that as a result of restructuring during the pandemic the National Events team is at full capacity delivering the current events programme and that outsourcing further events may need to be considered rather than bringing more in-house. EB will be reporting on Events delivery over 2022 during the next meeting and the inclusion of AH's paper will assist with the review and so it was requested this was prioritised.

**Action: AH to submit paper on National Skills Finals in time for the issue to be considered with the paper on National Events at the next SOC meeting.**

- 1.7.4 Swimming: Discussion considered the implications of licensing meets for non-Swim England members, or organisations fronted by a club, and the requirement for them to maintain SE standards. It was confirmed that the license just enables access to the ranking system for members and that third party organisations would require their own insurance and safeguarding procedures, but that the Swimming Leadership Group be asked to consider safeguarding issues.
- 1.7.5 Water Polo: The Leadership Group Chair, Toby King, has stepped down and recruitment has commenced. Normal Leighton, has retired from his SE Talent Development Officer role, with Rose Younger and Andy McGinty continuing in their Talent Inclusion Officer roles at the current time. It was reported that there have been some communication challenges with the Regions regarding the National Academy Structure. Competition dates for 2023 have been established.

## 2. Items for Information

### 2.1 [England] Swims Insight

KW was welcomed to the meeting to provide an overview of the campaign, highlighting the aim of targeting ethnically diverse communities to understand how to make swimming more accessible and inclusive as well as helping to inform the new strategy.

Over 2000 responses were received which gives a robust sample size for the insight that has been generated. KW highlighted how an agile approach had been taken to the data gathering phase to enable as much engagement with participants as possible.

A clear disparity of swimming abilities when analysing by ethnicity was identified, which was further increased when considering by gender.

Within the younger generations, a move towards improving abilities was noted across all communities with a high importance placed on children knowing how to swim across all ethnicities regardless of the parent's own swimming ability.

KW advised that the information is available via the website for anyone to be able to download and use. She confirmed that the survey is a baseline piece to build on and inform further insight. The outcomes have been shared with operators with the Business Engagement Team supporting.

**Action: KW to forward web link for inclusion within the minutes.**

KW highlighted that during the next strategy period there will be further work undertaken to engage a more diverse audience and generate more insight that can be shared with the aquatics sector to help promote inclusion. The discussion amongst the group suggested that Swim England should share some of the key findings on social media to stimulate thinking amongst the aquatic sector.

**Action: GW to speak to Emma Griffin about highlighting some headline outcomes on social media.**

It was suggested that it would be beneficial for Beth Barrett to attend a future SOC meeting to update members on the Inspire Programme.

**Action: JG to invite Beth Barrett to a future meeting.**

## 3. Items for Discussion

### 3.1 Swim England Strategy

GW advised that the SE Board have signed off the 10-year strategy with the focus shifting to how to communicate and implement the strategy across all disciplines as well as engaging stakeholders, members and partners.

The Marcoms team are building the launch, planned for later in 2023, with Sport Development linking in clubs, regions and counties. GW asked the group to discuss the best method to engage members and clubs to support the strategy direction.

A key challenge was recognised as needing to communicate to a range of audiences and the differing language for these audiences. It was questioned whether there would be benefit in the development of a sub-strategy and plan over the next 12 months for each of the disciplines to push out to members. There was

agreement that the strategy has to be carefully communicated to members, demonstrating the specific benefits to them.

GW highlighted two key areas to address; existing members and clubs and wider stakeholders, the approaches for which will need to be different. The development of SMART objectives to track progress was recommended, alongside direct engagement member surveys, with the need for a mechanism for feedback on the strategy to be received.

A key strategy ambition is to support the growth and sustainability of clubs. There was recognition that any comms needs to include something relevant to the members and their parents with consideration to be given to their priorities.

There was agreement for the leadership groups to have aligned three-year plans to tie in to the strategy. It was agreed that these should be developed by Swim England team members in consultation with the Leadership Groups.

The Committee agreed that it would be highly desirable for Swim England Regions to have strategies that align with the Swim England strategy and which have a level of consistency in the way they are presented. GW is to liaise with AH as the Chair of Regional Chairs.

**Action: GW to review how the strategy will apply to each Leadership Group and to discuss compatibility with Regional plans with AH.**

#### **4. Items to Note**

##### **4.1 SOC Recruitment**

Following the advertising of the vacant post interviews were held and AB was appointed.

JW proposed that she move to fill the current SOC Liaison vacancy on the Swimming Leadership Group, with AB joining the Club Leadership Group. This was agreed.

##### **4.2 Meetings with Chairs of Leadership Groups**

JW and GW met with the Chairs of the Leadership Groups individually, enabling frank discussions to be held specific to each of the groups. The outcomes of these discussions are now being worked through with CC with common themes evident.

Issues over communications and project planning / delivery were highlighted as well as succession planning concerns.

CC is working on the membership of the groups and determining Terms of Office. It was noted that the recommendation of two terms of office was in line with the governance requirements for tier three NGBs.

It was noted that, whilst the minutes from the Leadership Groups are circulated to SOC members, Leadership Groups currently do not receive the SOC minutes. In future, Chairs of Leadership Groups will receive SOC minutes with the SOC Liaisons to report any relevant issues from the minutes to their groups.

#### **5. Items for decision**

##### **5.1 Volunteer accommodation**

EB was welcomed to the meeting.

A report on accommodation for event volunteers had been included with the agenda. EB advised that, as a result of continuing concerns about Covid, accommodation sharing for volunteers had not been enforced, which is contradictory to the policy developed prior to Covid. If this was reintroduced there could be a 32% saving of the budget, but there was a continuing health risk and the potential of volunteers dropping out. It was noted that the position was the same at British Swimming events.

SOC members agreed that the requirement for volunteers to room share is removed from the policy, but that this be reviewed annually in the context of budgets, public health concerns and practices at other similar events. EB would amend the policy and confirm with JW.

**Action: EB to update the policy and review annually.**

The discussion considered the implementation of the policy for those completing long days and not being provided accommodation. EB confirmed that there is a degree of flexibility to consider individual circumstances.

## 5.2 **Dress Code Policy**

The proposed updated policy was approved.

It was queried as to whether the current sponsorship agreements had any implications for Regions. GW to check with EG.

**Action: GW to check with EG whether the sponsorship agreements in place have any implications for the Regions.**

## 6. **AOB**

6.1 Energy Crisis: It was queried whether there is an expectation that operators will pass on the recent fall in energy prices, whether there is a risk that they will continue to increase prices and what influence SE can exert over pool hire costs.

The concern was noted. RC advised that many pool operators had reported a significant increase in energy bills, although this varied depending on contracts. Talking to clubs, it was clear that they understand the issues that operators are facing, not least because of the experience of domestic households.

6.2 Decision Making: The time taken for SE to make decisions and implement new processes / policies was raised.

The SLT members advised that in some areas decisions are made much more quickly however where clubs or other stakeholders are impacted, this is slower as consultation with the membership and/or partners is required.

## 7. **2023 Meeting Dates**

- Tuesday 28 February 2023, 10am
- Tuesday 2 May 2023, 10am
- Tuesday 27 June 2023, 10am
- Tuesday 12 September 2023, 10am
- Tuesday 28 November 2023, 10am