

Swim England Sport Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 27 June 2023

Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting

Present:

Joan Wheeler (JW)	Swim England Board Member (Chair)
Neil Booth (NB)	Swim England Board Member
Amy Bryant (AB)	Swim England Member
Alex Harrison (AH)	Swim England Member (from Item 2.4)
Ian Mackenzie (IM)	Swim England Member
John Hidle (JHi)	Regional Chairs Representative
Ellie Conway (EC)	Young Athletes Panel
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

Staff:

Hannah Foster (HF)	Executive Operations Manager
Claire Coleman (CC)	Head of Development
Katie Towner (KT)	Head of Learn to Swim
Kerry Watkiss (KW)	Head of Insight
Mike Hawkes (MH)	Head of Diversity and Inclusion

Min No:

1. Standing Items

1.1 Chairperson's welcome

Members were welcomed to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies

Keith Munday and Lindsay Trimmings had sent apologies and Alex Harrison sent apologies for lateness.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

None.

1.4 Declarations of AOB

RC – Education papers.

JW – The Sport Development Director.

1.5 Minutes from previous meetings:

1.5.1 2 May 2023: The minutes were agreed as an accurate record with the following amendments that the committee raised;

1.5.2 Emma Griffin's job role to be changed to updated job role.

1.5.3 EC to be added to the present list, as attended the meeting.

- 1.5.4 Item 4.2 of minutes is correct, but the decision to recommend the award of the A.H. Turner Award to JD, taken by email after the meeting, was ratified.
- 1.5.5 Minutes to be altered to read July 2023 in AOB.
- 1.6 **Actions from previous meetings**
- 1.6.1 22.28 – The Leadership Group TORs: CC confirmed that this has been completed.
- 1.6.2 23.12 – Trophies and Awards National Events policy: This has not been to any Leadership Groups. Claire Coleman to replace Ekaterina Boyd on the assigned to section of the action log.
- 1.6.3 23.13 – National Events: Still in progress and is a long-term action.
- 1.6.4 23.15 - Risk Assessment Portal: GW provided the update on behalf of Emma Griffin. Confirmation needed on the operator's role for risk assessments. This is in progress and Emma Griffin is still working with Howden on this.
- 1.6.5 23.18 – Membership Working Group: EC reported that the action is in progress, and will report at the next meeting.
- 1.6.6 23.21 - Harold Fern and A.H. Turner Awards: JW confirmed that the recommendations regarding the 2023 awards were approved by the Board. As agreed at the previous meeting, JW, AH and CC will discuss the process for 2024 and it was suggested that a meeting be held in September.
- 1.7 **Leadership Group Updates**
- 1.7.1 Artistic Swimming: GW reported that the GBR team collected 3 bronze medals at the European Games - 1 in the Olympic duet category and 2 in the mixed duet category. There was also a strong showing in the team event. The committee gave their congratulations to the Artistic Swimming squad.
- 1.7.2 Clubs: AB provided an update. The Swim Mark approval process for clubs is becoming more strict on checking evidence around DBS and Safeguarding to avoid any potential issues. The current progress of the Club Health Tracker was discussed. AB noted the development of the Transgender Policy as having an implementation group meeting regularly to discuss implications ahead of the implementation of the policy in September.
- 1.7.3 Diving: Nothing to report.
- 1.7.4 Swimming: SLG minutes attached. The committee had no questions.
- 1.7.5 Water Polo: IM updated the committee. The WPLG was currently working with staff to update the strategy in order to align with the Swim England strategy. Communications are being reviewed with the support of CC and Ekaterina Boyd to inform audiences. Recently GBR Men and Women played in the LEN European Championship qualifiers for the first time in almost ten years. The Women were successful in gaining a place in the European finals. The committee noted their congratulations to the Water Polo team for their accomplishment.

A paper proposing changes to the regulations regarding the minimum ages for Water Polo competition had been circulated to the committee. IM presented the paper and explained the rationale for the proposals. The committee agreed the recommendations set out in the paper, in principle subject to comments from the

Sports Science and Medicine Manager, Diane Elliot and Lois Jarvis, Director Of Legal.

2. Items to Note

2.1 Heart of Aquatics Update

George Wood provided a verbal update of the direction of the Heart of Aquatics implementation group.

The Oversight Committee had been appointed and the first meeting will take place in early July. Members include Board Members (Neil Booth as the Safeguarding Champion and Joan Wheeler as Chair of SOC), Lois Jarvis – Director of Legal, three independent members and two athlete representatives.

GW explained that the Oversight Committee will report directly to the Board of Directors and oversee the implementation of the Heart of Aquatics plan. A full implementation plan has been drawn up for 2023, with specific actions that will be delivered through the Heart of Aquatics.

An internal working group has been formed, consisting of GW as Chair and Emma Griffin driving the group, HF for administration and time management, and Lois Jarvis as the communication between the internal working group and the Oversight Committee.

The Behavioural Architects have been appointed to carry out the Listening Exercise following a competitive tender process and interview, involving Sport England and an independent member of the Oversight Committee to ensure there was independent scrutiny.

GW reported that the listening exercise is independent. Initial communication needs to be sent out through Swim England as the most effective method of reaching the audience but following this, the process would be independent of the organisation.

Responding to a question on how the list of actions in the plan would be prioritised, it was explained that the delivery of the Heart of Aquatics plan is in itself a priority. The implementation group is a cross-organisational group and once actions are split down to individual staff level, the list of tasks is seen as manageable. Actions will be tracked through the implementation group and shared with the Oversight Committee, who will monitor progress against the plan.

2.2 Coach Compliance

The paper submitted by LT was noted by the committee.

CC provided an update in the absence of LT. It was confirmed that work is currently taking place with the digital team to change from a marketing email to service email. CC further explained that marketing option enabled members to opt out of receiving emails, therefore would result in missing out on DBS and Safeguarding expiry reminders, whereas the service email does not have the option to opt out.

Collaboration is taking place with Kevin Suckling – Head of Safeguarding and Welfare, for the timescales for reminders and grace periods. In future, service emails would be sent at 60 and again at 30 days, prior to the deadline for renewals.

RC confirmed that the Swim England Safeguarding training will be the only accepted training from January 2024, to allow for a phasing period.

Responding to a question about the scope of this change, it was clarified that presently the focus is on coaching, but that other roles, including volunteers, would be considered in due course.

2.3 **Learn to Swim Overview**

Katie Towner joined the meeting and was welcomed.

KT introduced the team of Learn to Swim, explained their specific roles and how they work with other teams and departments.

The Learn to Swim team was described as working across sports development and the commercial elements within the organisation.

The Swim England Learn to Swim Programme is the national teaching syllabus for swimming in the UK. It ensures that swimming lessons for all ages and abilities are delivered to a high and consistent standard.

KT explained the Learn to Swim progress and achievements to date.

The committee thanks KT for her time and presentation. It was agreed that this is to be circulated to SOC.

2.4 **LTS and Workforce Audit**

Kerry Watkiss joined the meeting and was welcomed.

KW outlined the research of the online survey that was distributed to all operators, private swim schools, and clubs, in order to gain further understanding as to the size of the aquatic workforce and Learn to Swim delivery in England.

KW discussed the findings and statistics of the research and highlighted that industry benchmarks were created based on the findings of this research. This research led to the understanding of the workforce shortage and the impact it has on the sector.

AH joined the meeting at this point.

RC confirmed that although Swim England is training more individuals this year than any previous year, there was a substantial loss of teachers and coaches during the Covid19 pandemic. Work was being carried out in drafting an action plan to address the shortages.

Action: KW to return with an action plan.

The committee thanks KW for her time and presentation. It was agreed that this is to be circulated to SOC.

2.5 **SOC Member Appraisals**

JW explained that, under Sport England governance requirements, as a committee reporting directly to the Board, annual appraisals were required for SOC members, to ensure Statement of Continued Compliance.

The People Development Director would circulate appraisal forms, together with possible time slots for one to one meetings with the SOC Chair. The appraisals will take place between August and September 2023.

3. Items for Discussion

3.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Mike Hawkes was welcomed to the meeting.

MH reported that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy has been updated through changes that have been observed through modernisations of EDI, and being more proactive to align with our strategy and DIAP. This update has provided better consistency in EDI aspects. Feedback was sought from SOC. EC raised a question regarding reasonable adjustments and protective characteristics given that there was no requirement to declare.

MH suggested that reasonable adjustments are provided if requested. The policy is an overarching discrimination policy and there is a separate policy relating to chaperones.

In the discussion that followed, it was suggested that hyperlinks were needed to signpost members to where the complaints procedures and documents can be accessed.

In addition, a question was posed around reviewing the offer of EDI training to our members. MH emphasised that Swim England's Inclusivity CPD signposts learners to specific resources. This CPD previously came with a cost, but as a part of EDI week it was free, and close to 1000 individuals registered for the the CPD in one week. This indicated that cost was a barrier and it had therefore been agreed that the cost will be removed. In addition to this, the inclusivity CPD will become a requirement in the club affiliation process.

The committee noted the report and thanked MH for his time.

4. Items for Decision

4.1 Decisions on medical and health and safety matters

The paper from GW was received by the committee.

GW introduced the item by reporting that, following changes to the governance structure resulting from the creation of the Oversight Committee and the revised Health and Safety Committee, clarification is needed on how to deal with medical and health and safety matters in the future.

The policy procedure was explained to the committee. It was highlighted that in some cases we may need to have the ability to agree decisions via email instead of waiting for meetings.

The committee agreed that, where appropriate, there would be a need to involve relevant Board champions.

Action: GW to amend procedures to include Board champions and recirculate to SOC members for comment.

Decision: Agreement for the procedure of medical and health and safety matters subject to the changes discussed.

4.2 U18 Volunteers at National Events

GW introduced the paper but explaining that the policy proposal applies to National events, ensuring we safeguard under 18 year old volunteers as effectively as possible.

The committee discussed and deliberated various implications of under 18 year old volunteers including costings, the differentiation of 16-18 year olds compared to under 16s and the requirement of chaperones. In addition, who has the responsibility for the individual outside of operational time, for example during breaks between competition sessions.

The Chair concluded that some policy detail needs further development. It was agreed that the policy be reviewed in the light of comments made by SOC, and re-circulated via email.

Action: GW to amend the policy and circulate a revised version to SOC.

5. AOB

5.1 Following discussions at a previous meeting, RC had circulated information on education for all disciplines. The information from the Institute of Swimming had detailed courses provided, tutor workforce and training and course plans for 2024. There were no questions from the committee and the information was noted.

5.2 This being the final meeting before GW leaves Swim England, the committee joined the Chair in thanking GW for his commitment and support to SOC over the past six years. It was noted that GW will be greatly missed as he had joined SOC from the inception of the committee. The committee wished GW all the best for the future.

6. 2023 Meeting Dates

- Tuesday 12 September 2023, 10am
- Tuesday 28 November 2023, 10am