

Swim England Sport Operations Committee

Minutes of the meeting held 28 November 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 3.4)
Ian Mackenzie (IM)	Swim England Member
Keith Munday (KM)	Swim England Member
John Hidle (JH)	Regional Chairs Representative
Ellie Conway (EC)	Youth Advisory Panel Representative
Ally White (AW)	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:

Ali Sibcy-Allen (AS-A)	Operations Administration Manager
Helen Weeks (HW)	Sports Governance and Welfare Manager
Brian Havill (BWH)	Chief Financial Officer
Ekaterina Boyd (EB)	Head of Events

Min No:

1. Standing Items

1.1 Chairperson's welcome

Members were welcomed to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies

No apologies recorded. AH would join the meeting at 10.30 am.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

None recorded.

1.4 Declarations of AOB

Notification of tutor fraud issue.

1.5 Minutes from previous meetings:

12 September 2023: minutes agreed as an accurate record.

2. Ratification of decisions taken between meetings

The following decisions, agreed between meetings by email, were ratified by the Committee:

2.1 Regulation wording of Regulation 410

2.2 Revised conditions for the Harold Fern and A. H. Turner Awards

2.3 Suspension of clubs for non-compliance

3. Update from Sport Development Directorate

3.1 Initial Approach

AW introduced himself to members and detailed the approach taken since coming into role.

The focus on meeting and learning across the sports was outlined including reviewing current and ongoing priorities as well as providing stability within the Sport Development Directorate.

3.2 Sport Development Report

The report was taken as read. AW advised the purpose of the report was to keep SOC members up to date and provide detail of activity within the department.

3.3 Development areas of work

An update of the SDD Team project areas was outlined:

- Governance and Standards: Support guides are being developed for clubs. Safeguarding CPD is being reviewed, with new CPD launched from March. Plans to develop "Time to Listen" course. Good Governance workshops are popular and well attended. The County Governance Code has not been as welcomed as anticipated, engagement is ongoing with the counties.
- Club and Operators: Year two of the Club Health Tracker has launched with clubs being encouraged to complete the tracker to assess where the club is positioned (progress from year 1, comparison regionally and nationally). Finance and Club and Operator webinars are being delivered.
- Growth: Pilots for the Learn to Swim and Club Links programme have been run as well as discipline specific projects. The most notable has been the West Midlands Diving Project.
- Volunteering: Significant uptake in Team Manager training following it becoming a mandatory requirement. Feedback on the training has been received and is being reviewed to ensure it meets the requirements of all disciplines and lower level competitions. Details of the Rules and Regulations changes made by World Aquatics are being communicated to judges. The Ripple Project is continuing with opportunities being provided at the Winter Champs for volunteers with disabilities.

There was a request to have compliancy on the agenda for the next meeting.

Action: Include compliancy item on the agenda for the next meeting.

3.4 Listening Exercise update

AW provided an update on progress.

The interim report has been received by SLT, the SE Board and Oversight Committee. The final report, had been delayed as a result of complaints to the Behavioural Architects and is expected to be received early 2024. Timescales for publication will be provided in due course.

3.5 Club Affiliation process and messaging

SOC discussed negative feedback received as a result of emails sent to club members regarding club suspensions.

HW reported that a library of emails and notifications, previously agreed by regions and the Club Leadership Group, are held centrally to be circulated to applicable clubs. Following feedback these have been reviewed and approved by the CLG.

Members agreed that SOC do not need to approve the emails but having sight of the content would be beneficial.

Action: HW to provide a copy of final email and circulation schedule.

SOC Members recognised the potential reputational damage from the circulation of the email, which was also sent in error to members under 18 years of age. While the number of complaints was small the wider reach on social media was noted.

Members agreed that the CLG should have flagged the email to SOC prior to circulation for awareness. HW is to feed back to the CLG.

Action: HW to provide SOC feedback to the CLG.

The process for SwimMark approvals, and the respective roles of the regions and the national panel was outlined for clarity. The terminology used for submissions was discussed with agreement that this should be clarified.

Action: HW to look at clarifying terminology used in SwimMark submissions.

4. Governance

4.1 Appointment of the Chair of the Water Polo Leadership Group

JW reported on steps taken to recruit a Chair of the Water Polo Leadership Group since the resignation of the previous chair in December 2022. It was noted that Ian Mackenzie had taken the role on an interim basis, that he was willing to become the substantive Chair and that the Water Polo Leadership Group had agreed that proposal.

SOC members agreed unanimously that IM becomes the Chair of the Water Polo Leadership Group until December 2027. IM was thanked for the work he had done over the past year and for his willingness to continue.

4.2 Common issues arising from SOC member appraisals

JW reported that the appraisals for the volunteer members of SOC had been carried out in September and October. She thanked members for the meetings and highlighted that common issues raised by members were contained within her report, alongside potential solutions

KM asked what involvement SOC would have in the Wavepower review. JW to consider SOC involvement in conjunction with the requirements of the SE Board and update members accordingly.

Action: JW to consider SOC involvement in reviewing Wavepower and update.

4.3 Terms of Office and Leadership Groups

JW drew attention to the advice obtained from the Director of Legal regarding the two periods of four years, confirming that if they wished to serve a second term, Member Representatives would need to reapply when the post was advertised. It was highlighted that IM is coming to the end of his first term and is aware of the process.

It was noted that the same wording is used in the Terms of Reference for the Leadership Groups. A review of the Leadership Groups will be carried out in the Spring. This will include how to manage personnel changes whilst maintaining some stability within the groups.

5. National Events

5.1 Report on 2023 events and 2024 planning

EB was welcomed to the meeting.

An overview of 2023 events was provided:

- AS NAGs: income comparable to projected. Will be taken to K2 in Crawley in 2024.
- AS Champs: reduction in costs due to no live streaming. To remain at Harvey Haddon.
- WP U17/19 preliminaries: cost savings due to reducing to two weekends and using multiple venues alongside increased event fees and lower venue costs. Venues for 2024 still being considered.
- British Masters: held on biannual basis. As required profit of under £5,000 is allocated to the Home Nation Working Group. Issues with the entry process and times have been highlighted.
- Diving NAGs: Venue hire costs and volunteer expenses reduced. Will be going to Sandwell in 2024.
- Combo Cup and Masters: amalgamated into one event which, alongside moving the event out of London, resulted in an increase income and decreased venue hire. Will return to Ponds Forge in 2024.
- OW Masters and NAGs: held within one event although the master's was abandoned due to a medical emergency. Costs were reduced due to amalgamated event although Master's fees were refunded. Discussions with the insurance company are yet to be concluded. A new venue will be used for 2024.
- Summer Meet: fee increase from 2022 produced greater income although entry numbers were down. Will remain at Ponds Forge.
- National County Team Championships: all costs covered by Swim England including medical costs. Costs not yet finalised.
- Masters: costs relatively accurate although PayPal fees need to be considered.
- Water Polo NAGs: costs will differ to those budgeted as now being delivered over 2 weekends. Provisional dates have been booked for 2024 but discussions are ongoing.
- Winter Champs: competition has been extended by one day, increasing costs. The entries have closed and the schedule is being finalised. Looking to fill some officiating roles with local officials.

EB was congratulated on moving the costs to a more favourable position than that anticipated at the start of the year. Discussion considered the challenges with regards to merchandise and how this is impacted due to the contract with Speedo. EB will return to SOC to report on this issue.

Action: EB to return to SOC to discuss merchandise.

It was noted that the 2024 budget was based on the actual costs for 2023 with an uplift for inflation, together with increases in both volunteer expenses and medical costs.

5.3 **Trophies**

EB reported that, other than Artistic Swimming, all disciplines are happy to present replica trophies at events.

SOC members agreed this was acceptable and Artistic Swimming should be permitted to maintain their current presentations.

A suggestion to use the scoreboard to project imagery of the trophy and its history instead of using a representative trophy would be considered.

6. **Budget 2024 Preparation**

BWH was welcomed to the meeting.

BWH advised the numbers are difficult to compare to previous years, with 2019 being the last normal year due to Covid. A number of initiatives, such as talent camps, were not delivered during 2022 and so have increased during 2023 and are likely to continue to rise during 2024. The aim for the 2024 budget is to breakeven.

A profit is forecast for 2023 for two main reasons; significant growth in some income areas and delays in staff recruitment.

The 2024 budget has inflationary increases built into the expenditure but does not include new spend areas. SLT have reviewed and ranked new projects and programmes which will support the delivery of the strategy and Heart of Aquatics, with applications for funding to be made to the SE Board in priority order. The budget will be considered at the SE Board meeting on 12 December.

BWH informed members that SE always makes a loss and is subsidised by the profits of SE Trading and the Institute of Swimming.

Further details on the reasons for differing income for disciplines was provided.

A breakdown of talent expenditure was requested as an area which impacts members. AW advised that messaging relating to the benefits of membership is currently in development.

Action: BWH to provide further information requested.

7. **Health & Safety Forum TORs**

The first meeting of the Health and Safety Forum has been held, during which the TORs were reviewed.

The need for a regular report from the insurers on incidents, accidents and near misses was highlighted. AW to discuss the issue with Emma Griffin (Chief Operating Officer) and the H&S Forum.

The range of the TORs was thought to be narrow, with a wider approach to using trends from the SE insurers and feedback from clubs to underpin learning, guidance and policy for the sport encouraged. AW to discuss with the H&S forum.

Action: AW to discuss inclusion of incidents and accidents report with H&S Forum along with the scope of the TORs.

8. Youth Advisory Panel EDI Proposal

A proposal to include a Member with responsibility for EDI within the Youth Advisory Panel was discussed. Members approved the proposed amendments to the TOR.

9. Leadership Group updates

9.1 Artistic Swimming

The major focus is on the conference at the beginning of December. The biggest challenge currently is the incoming rules, which have taken time to implement due to the volume of coaches and officials needing to be upskilled.

9.2 Clubs

Discussions regarding SwimMark and the use of regional staff time undertaken. A review of SwimMark will be completed during 2024. It was agreed SOC members should have involvement. HW to provide the review proposal at the next SOC meeting.

Action: HW to provide SwimMark review proposal at the next SOC meeting.

9.3 Diving

The group are struggling with recruitment and are looking at non-portfolio holders to increase membership. The group is lacking direction due to the vacant position and administrative issues, which are starting to improve.

9.4 Swimming

There had been discussion about coach engagement with the Listening Exercise with confirmation provided it is for everyone within the sport.

9.5 Water Polo

Nothing further to add to the minutes.

9.6 Youth Advisory Panel

Nothing further to add to the minutes.

10. AOB

10.1 JG reported on the fraudulent delivery of teaching, coaching and poolside helper courses.

The incident has been reported as fraud, the relevant region had been made aware and the affected learners and clubs were being supported. Safeguarding processes had been implemented.

11. 2024 Meeting Dates

The dates for meetings in 2024 had been circulated. It was agreed to make a change to the first meeting to avoid a clash with a Board meeting. The revised dates were noted as:

- Tuesday 6 February, 10.30am, Zoom
- Tuesday 5 March, 10.30am, Zoom
- Tuesday 30 April, 10.30am, SportPark
- Tuesday 18 June, 10.30am, Zoom
- Tuesday 20 August, 10.30am, Zoom
- Tuesday 26 November, 10.30am, Zoom