



## Minutes of Volleyball England Board Meeting at 10am on 28 January 2023 online via Teams.

Directors Present	Titles
Adam Walker [AW]	Independent Chair
Andres Hernandez [AH]	Independent Director
Clare Francis [CF]	Independent Director
David Reeve [DR]	Elected Director
Jess Plumridge [JP]	Elected Director
Richard Harrison [RH]	Independent Director
Staff Present	
Charlie Ford [CFo]	Chief Executive Officer
Guin Batten [GB]	Deputy Chief Executive
In attendance	
Simone Turner [ST]	Volleyball England Foundation
Agata Sromecka [AS]	Secretariat

### EB/22-23/34 Welcome from the Chair and apologies

AW welcomed all to the meeting in particular GB who had joined the organisation as Deputy Chief Executive late last year.

Apologies had been submitted by Brandan Fogarty, Freda Bussey, Phil French, Jake Sheaf and Simon Griffiths.

### 34.1 Directors Conflict of Interest & Disclosures

Conflict of interest was submitted by AW with regards to the reference of Oaks in the Executive Report distributed as part of the Board pack.

### 34.2 Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved by all present.

### 34.3 Previous minutes

Minutes of the 26 November 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

### 34.4 Matters Arising/Actions List

There were no matters arising that would not be covered by the agenda.

Actions of the previous meeting had been completed.

### **34.5 AGM planning**

The Board discussed and agreed the AGM date as 22 July 2023. The programme of events would be agreed nearer the time. CFo informed that four Board members would be subject to re-appointment: CF, AH, PF as independents and one elected, BF.

AW and CF would conduct Board appraisals and would discuss continuation with the Board members up for the re-appointment.

A skills form would be sent to Board members for completion. Afterwards, CFo would discuss Board skills matrix with CF. The nominations Committee would then meet to consider the matrix and any gaps for board member recruitment purposes.

Board vacancies would be advertised by the end of April.

#### **Actions:**

##### **EB/22-23/34.5**

- AW and CF would conduct Board appraisals and would discuss continuation with the Board members up for re-appointment.
- Skills form to be sent to Board members for completion. Afterwards, CFo would discuss Board skills matrix with CF. Nominations Committee would meet to consider the matrix any confirm vacancies following this.
- Board vacancies would be advertised by the end of April 2023.

##### **EB/22-23/35 Exec Report including Risk Register**

The report was taken as read. Board discussed:

- CF asked about the CIMSPA MoU. CFo explained the role of CIMSPA in the sports sector and how they could help VE in the redevelopment and repositioning of coaching qualifications ensuring occupational standards are met.
- RH asked about the reporting requirement by strategic leads. There seemed to be a duplication of reporting by the strategic leads which was parallel to the work of the subgroups. RH suggested creating one report through the strategic leads with the involvement of the subgroups. AW agreed and stated that the question was where the report would go. RH added that his preference would be to agree a joint report with the subgroup lead or the strategic lead to have a common report sent through to the Executive Report. AW preference was to have it as a subgroup report. CF observed that the two reports needed to be split from a governance perspective. Also, there needed to be clarity around the value the subgroups brought and how they differed from task and finish groups. However, the Board also needed an operational update for the purposes of oversight. CFo added that going forward there was a plan to introduce a dashboard which would incorporate strategic and operational level reporting.
- AW raised the issue of increased number of referees as part of the latest membership figures and how this related to the officiating crisis. RH responded that this number related to the specific level of referees. CFo stated that the dashboard would feature a commentary against each of the figures in the Get Keep Grow to present more context for board meetings.
- AW added he had enjoyed seeing the Performance Report. Board noted the successes of the national teams.
- AW reported on the meeting with Mike Chamberlain, the CEO of Sport Birmingham, regarding coordinating activities post Commonwealth Games. Further communication from Mike is expected shortly.
- AH asked about Jon Moore who had been seconded to focus on a major event delivery

plan. VE was putting together a 5-year event plan to be presented to the FIVB/Volleyball World and other partners. Low risk options are being explored with a potential to host international beach events from this year onwards. More discussions related to this with FSR, and Board in April would follow. There is also an opportunity to support the BVF with a PVE silver event in Nottingham in May, further conversations are taking place before VE support is confirmed

- In relation to this, AW reported that Sport Birmingham were among a major events group within Birmingham City Council looking at the 5-year city event plan. Further, Birmingham City Council would commission a new sport strategy and it would be important for VE to be a part of this from the legacy perspective.
- DR asked whether there was a plan to ensure a level of continuity among the current staff team considering the number of staff changes in recent past. CFo believed that the team seemed to be engaging with the organisation's growth and development. CFo highlighted that the organisational culture is increasingly positive. GB confirmed that Rob Payne had been a great team member and team leader since GB had taken over as Deputy Chief Executive. GB was now Rob's line manager. The staff development day that had been undertaken earlier in January was a hugely positive occasion that is a testament to how engaged and energetic the VE hub team is. A book called "Belonging" had been gifted to all staff as well. CFo confirmed that the emerging Strategic framing iteration included a people plan. Also, there had been positive feedback from the volleyball community around the recent performance of the hub team.

#### **EB/22-23/36 Sub-group reports**

- **ACE service**  
As Simon Griffiths was absent from the Board meeting, CFo pointed out that the report on the officiating crisis would see a discussion related to the work of ACE service group.
- **Volleyball for Life:**  
RH referenced the Respect programme being built currently, which also linked to what was discussed earlier in the meeting around belonging and creating a strong and resilient voluntary workforce.
- **Get Keep Grow (JP)**  
JP reported that Laura Allcoat was on board and working as part of the subgroup. Laura had put forward a membership structure and benefits business case which JP had been reviewing. JP and Laura have an upcoming meeting with the subgroup to discuss the business case.
- **Volleyball England Foundation**  
A strategic retreat for the Foundation is being planned. A venue was yet to be found, AW and CFo offered venues in Birmingham and Loughborough as options for the Foundation to explore. The Aston Villa project is being evaluated and looking at how it can be replicated across other football clubs. In terms of the LGBTQ+ project, year 1 of the project is ongoing, data and insight will be analysed shortly ahead of the next phase of the project.
- **FSR**  
AH highlighted that the next Board meeting would see a more thorough update on the risk register review.

In terms of the current year to date financial position, we anticipate making a surplus. The budget's actuals presented themselves better than originally estimated. CFo

believed that the underestimation was part of previous organisational culture of under estimating income, the intention moving forward is to be as close to the mark as possible. AW pointed out that reservedness around spending had been a consequence of historical financial challenges. CF reported that a zero budget would necessitate a scrupulous consideration however a happy medium could be struck between two approaches. CFo also reported that a commercial and income diversification plan is in development to help with grow our revenue and re-investment opportunities back into the sport to drive strategic progression.

### **EB/22-23/37 Digital Transformation Project updates**

CFO reported the following in relation to this:

- CFo showed two mock-ups of the website,
- The April Board meeting would feature a walkthrough of the system,
- The full project plan was presented to the Board,
- A steering group had been established. The first meeting had taken place already. A number of smaller sub-groups would also be established to help with this work. CF had been asked to sit on one of them due to CF being integral to the contract negotiation with Seven League as well as being a Vice Chair and on FSR.
- Overall, good progress has been made on the project.
- The announcement about the project had been made to the volleyball community and this had been well received. Positive conversations with regions and counties had been had as a result of this work. A number of them had come forward to come on board as part of this work.

Board discussed:

- CF asked what the impact of this project on the hub staff capacity was. CFo responded that the staff were regularly engaged in this work, but it did not seem to be burdensome for those engaged. All hub staff are clear that this project is their number one priority. The meetings related to this project were scheduled in advance with the relevant people involved allowing everyone to plan well.
- CFo reported that the community engagement in this piece of work was paramount to the success of the project. There would be drop-in sessions organised for the community to maintain consistency of communication.
- RH commented on the positivity of this work, and it seemed that regions were engaging well.
- AW thanked CFo on behalf of the Board for his work with the regions and the counties. GB observed that Laura Allcoat had carried out some significant work in relation to connecting with the regional chairs and representatives. This had also helped with updating of contact lists.
- AH asked when the system would go live. CFo responded that this was planned for June with the membership portal completed earlier and competition afterwards. Full exit from the old system was anticipated to take place in August. CFo added that data cleansing was proving to be one of the most time-consuming tasks as part of the initial work.
- Full scope of the project planning would be sent to the FSR group by CFo.
- AW commented on the thoroughness of the update report. AW would like to see a dashboard type of information regarding this project. Also, an early warning system related to this would be welcome. CFo responded that for those reasons it was important for CF to sit on the steering group.
- GB commented that the system did not have a name yet. Board suggested that the membership could be called to action on this with a social media campaign designed around this. This is to be actioned.

## Action

### EB/22-23/37

- Full scope of the project planning would be sent to the FSR group by CFo.
- A scaled back project plan to be included in future update reports.
- A media campaign about the name of the new system to be created by Stewart Thorpe.

### EB/22-23/38 Officiating plans.

The report has been taken as read. Board discussed:

- AH had qualified recently as a referee and would like to see what had been done around understanding the data on referee journey, where the problem points were, why referees were leaving the sport and whether the barriers had been mapped out. CFo answered that there was no data and insight role at VE at the minute. Neither was their customer experience mapping currently undertaken for roles within volleyball community. The experience of the referee therefore was not fully understood yet. CFo envisaged that a project could be undertaken to work with an organisation to perform critical review of those areas of the organisation.

GB reported the following regarding the meeting that had mainly focused on the officiating crisis:

- Nick Heckford had attended the meeting. Simon Griffiths stressed that action was needed. There was a desperate need to engage beyond Nick Heckford.
- CF relayed two questions from Simon Griffiths:
  - Simon required the Board's steer on where the officiating crisis sat amongst organisational priorities and whether there was resource to tackle this.
  - Would the Board want to reposition and bring more resource in to build strategic expertise?

Board discussed:

- Board discussed the questions posed by Simon Griffiths.
- AW summarised that Board recognised that the right people were required to perform roles to achieve the best outcome in this situation. To be able to do this, the Board would have conversations with appropriate people to secure the best expertise for those roles.
- AW confirmed that the officiating crisis was a top organisational priority. CFo added that the digital transformation would benefit the referees amongst other groups of the volleyball community.
- GB reported that organisations across the sports sector had been experiencing officiating difficulties.
- AW reflected further on the presented Officiating Crisis Plans paper and posed the following questions related to the proposals contained in the paper:
  - what problems each proposal solved
  - what the timeframe of the actions as a result of proposals would be
  - what the criteria were for whether the proposals should be taken forward.
  - should tutoring have been considered as part of the paper
  - the proposal did not include consideration of the speed of the progression through the pathway.
- CFo responded that the feasibility of the proposals are being investigated. The people plan that is currently in development and a Sports Governance Code requirement would start to tackle a number of those areas.

## **EB/22-23/39 2023-2028 – Strategic Framing**

CFo talked the Board through the presentation “Game Plan – Phase 2” distributed as part of the Board pack.

Board discussed:

- AW pointed out that the 10-year Game Plan Strategy had been published with a clear vision and a mission and CFo’s proposal included some fundamental changes to the document.
- DR asked whether the purpose of this piece of work was to rewrite the parts of Strategy or whether a delivery framework was being constructed. CFo responded that it was both and the proposal was an evolution to the Game Plan which would need to evolve due to the context of the different environment in which the organisation and the sport sector now operates. DR pointed out that the volleyball community could interpret the evolution as a new strategy. CFo observed that all the original strategic principles and strands existed but would be evolved. However, CFo commented that changes were needed to allow the organisation to grow and develop.
- CF believed that the messaging of this iteration of the Strategy could be altered to changing the emphasis rather than the mission or vision. In terms of the alignment to the Sport England strategy, CF believed that VE should not backtrack on this and retain the original principle of what was best for the volleyball community.
- RH commented positively on the presentation. RH added that he felt the emphasis in the iteration presented had embraced the feedback from the community. VE would want to stay ahead of the game as well as stay close to the community by implementing proposed changes.
- ST asked about some terms on slide 3 used as part of the presentation. CFo explained why the terms had been used and the data breakdown they signified. CFo confirm the data related to the whole of UK.
- DR asked whether this approach had been communicated to the community before it was agreed by the Board. CFo reported that the approach had been tentatively presented externally to gauge the memberships initial reflections ahead of the Board meeting to ensure that what was being presented was in line with the memberships needs. The plan moving forward would be to move into a wider consultation period subject to Board’s agreement. There would be a form that would aid collating of feedback from members, stakeholders and partners. This would be finalised in March ahead of April implementation.2.
- AW commented that fundamentally it was within Board’s role to set the Strategy and it was important that the whole Board’s buy in would be secured. AW suggested that Board should have a separate discussion on the strategic direction first. Board agreed that:
  - AW, CFo and GB would review the presentation to answer the questions around the purpose of the proposed changes.
  - AW and CF would consider the structure of the Board meeting that would see a discussion around Game Plan phase 2 and what questions would need to be answered. This would happen in time for the April deadline, as set out by CFo.

## **EB/22-23/40 AOB**

- DR reflected positively on the launch of the new junior competition framework.
- Board thanked Rob Payne for his excellent contributions as Interim Deputy Chief Executive. Board also recognised how well the hub team had dealt with a number of changes within the organisation.

## EB/22-23/41 Meeting finalisation

### 41.1 Review of Actions

Actions were agreed.

### 42.2 Meeting Close

Meeting closed at 12.35.

Actions	Who
<p><b>Actions:</b> <b>EB/22-23/34.5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AW and CF would conduct Board appraisals and would discuss continuation with the Board members up for re-appointment.</li><li>• Skills form to be sent to Board members for completion. Afterwards, CFo would discuss Board skills matrix with CF. Nominations Committee would meet to consider the matrix any confirm vacancies following this.</li><li>• Board vacancies would be advertised by the end of April.</li></ul>	<p>AW CF</p> <p>CFo CF Noms Group</p>
<p><b>Action</b> <b>EB/22-23/37</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full scope of the project planning would be sent to the FSR group by CFo.</li><li>• A scaled back project plan to be included in future update reports.</li><li>• A media campaign about the name of the system to be created by Stewart Thorpe.</li></ul>	<p>CFo</p> <p>GB ST</p>
<p><b>Action</b> <b>EB/22-23/39</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AW, CFo and GB would review the presentation to answer the questions around the purpose of the proposed changes.</li><li>• AW and CF would consider the structure of the Board meeting that would see a discussion around Game Plan phase 2 and what questions would need to be answered. This would happen in time for the April deadline, as set out by CFo.</li></ul>	<p>AW CFo GB</p> <p>AW CF</p>

