

Minutes of Transformational and Executive Board Meetings at 10am and 1.30pm on 29 January 2022 via Microsoft Teams.



Directors Present	Titles
Adam Walker [AW]	Independent Chair
Andres Hernandez [AH]	Independent Director
Brendan Fogarty [BF]	Elected Director
Clare Francis [CF]	Senior Independent Director (Vice Chair)
David Reeve [DR]	Co-Opted Director
Freda Bussey [FB]	Elected Director
Phil French [PF]	Independent Director
Richard Harrison [RH]	Elected Director
Ronu Miah [RM]	Elected Director
Simon Griffiths [SG]	Elected Director
Staff Present	
Sue Storey [SS]	Chief Executive
Samantha Jamieson [SJ]	Deputy Chief Executive
Gillian Harrison [GH]	Strategic Manager Volleyball for Life
Agata Sromecka [AS]	Secretariat
Guests Present	
James Murphy [JM]	Competitions Working Group Lead
Nick Shaffery [NS]	Children & Young People Lead
Janet Inman [JI]	Volleyball England Foundation Secretary

Welcome

Chair welcomed and thanked all for attending virtually as opposed to in-person as originally planned.

AW informed all about the new format of the Board meetings comprising the transformational part and a Board meeting.

The transformational part would see the attendees discuss two topics in breakout rooms as below.

Apologies were received from Nick Heckford, Officials Working Group Lead, Vicky Carr, Strategic Manager Get Keep Grow, Jake Sheaf, elected director, Jess Plumridge, elected director and Simone Turner, Chair of Volleyball England Foundation. Freda Bussey and Nick Shaffery were present but noted apologies for being unable to be present for the full session.

TB/21-22/01 Officials Pathway

The question around developing Officials' pathway would be in relation to indoor volleyball.

GH briefly explained the structure of the Refereeing pathway aided by a slide. The pathway started with introduction to the rules up to managing the matches at international level. Each stage was mapped to the level of competition that it supported

The attendees were asked to discuss the following in break out rooms:

How do we populate pathway?

How do we give the best customer service to new and potential officials?

How do we give teams the best customer service from officials?

Groups' feedback included:

- Data is key – more data is needed across the pathway
- How would we run the pathway should this be a business? This should include thinking around customer service, profits, and reinvestment.
- Retention (motivation, how people move through pathway, what is the customer journey for a ref, types of experience depending on the stage in the journey) and recruitment (motivation, what is the most fertile route for recruitment i.e., are the potential recruits parents, ex-players etc.) should be areas of focus.
- How we communicate with refs needs considering.
- Do we need to introduce a system with a specific number of matches to be refereed before a qualification is attained?
- What should refs be paid? Development of cost model for the purposes of retention and recruitment could be required.
- Volleyball as a business needed to be easy to buy from when it comes to referees' courses.
- Why do people choose to referee but do not follow through? What barriers do they face within the ecosystem to enter and stay on the pathway? How can we encourage young officials into the game and give them supportive environment for them to go into officiating?
- Pathway is quite long, maybe there is a need for altering it based on personal circumstances (fast-tracking).
- Giving best customer service is important depending on what the customer base and community want e.g., new technology.
- Respect for the officials within the system is important.
- We need to help officials feel part of the event and part of wanting to make the event a success. Officials need to feel good about the experience of refereeing. Means of breaking the tension for the officials around how they think they should conduct themselves according to their perception of the official persona should be considered.
- The teams also need to make sure they pay the referee on time.
- Helping clubs to have a better pregame experience is important.
- Do we know the exact issue we are trying to solve? We know that the volume of referees has been declining, but how many do we need to service the sport? This must be considered at every level of play from local to NVL.
- How do we make the initial product better?
- The sport could be more flexible around some rules (difficult to buy from)
- What are the incentives for entering and staying in the pathway?
- Technology could aid performance of assessments and advancement of referees.
- It was important to investigate the reasons for referees leaving and what can be done

to encourage them back.

- Young referees could benefit from a mentoring scheme.
- Match experience has become difficult to obtain.
- After-match hospitality is now missing due to Covid but has historically been an important part of the referee culture and experience.

AW summarised the feedback as following:

1. We need to understand what we need.
2. Plans for recruitment and retention.
3. Data.
4. Easy to buy from
5. Technology
6. Customer service built around incentives and barriers
7. Communication with officials
8. Cost model
9. Benchmarking against other sports
10. Speed of action
11. Communities of interest (added by SG)

SS stated that the feedback would be collated by hub staff to form an action plan, and this will be consulted with NH as Officials working group lead. The action plan will contain the actions with various timeframes for completion and grouped according to priority. These will be developed by the relevant subgroups, the Officials working group and the relevant VE hub staff.

TB/21-22/02 Transgender Policy

SS briefed the attendees on the background around creating a transgender policy for volleyball. The scope for agreeing the approach going forward would include transgender women, men, competition formats, self-disclosure-oriented approach, domestic competitions and environments, and national pathways.

The question for discussions in breakout rooms was:

How do we find a balance between the fairness and inclusivity in catering for transgender people without unduly compromising the integrity and safety of the person and the integrity of the competitions?

What is the preferred approach? Is it different for Juniors and Seniors?

What are the challenges and opportunities of this/these approaches?

What more do we need to do to get this right?

Group 1 feedback included:

- It is impossible to come up with conclusions that would be universally accepted
- Preferred approach was the one centred towards safety and fairness by environment was favoured by Group 1.
- There is a potential that the further up the league, the bigger potential for disadvantage and unfairness This should be guidance that's open to evolving and there should be the opportunity for that to evolve on a case-by-case basis.

Group 2 feedback:

- Safeguarding considerations - men with sexual intentions, talent camps - young

- people sharing rooms. Agreed to consider this later
- Preferred approach - inclusion first but safety close behind.
 - Football heading the ball view, monitored but didn't ban heading, concussion risk, the amend based on safety. Therefore, we monitor injuries and complaints, monitor data and information
 - Culturally - how do we deal with the negative perceptions - we as a sport live but values first and therefore protect anyone who is part of a transition process.
 - People who are scared - we should not assume we deal with this carefully and monitor figures
 - Inclusivity first
 - No deferential between which way of transitioning and or ages
 - Put monitoring systems in and review every year - culture and injury
 - Dealing with the cheats - mainly won't happen
 - Risk - environmental risk compared to human risk - monitor what happens over time and then make retrospective change

Group 3 feedback:

- the preferred approach was that of safety and fairness both in terms of juniors and seniors
- the volleyball community is used to playing mixed volleyball in appropriate spirit of fair play. VE now needs to get involved into sanctioning to regulate and codify play
- there could be a pathway that starts with consulting with the people who would want these sorts of competitive opportunities, to organise a test event, to run a one-off competition etc.
- consideration of physical differences needs to take place when discussing safety and risk. JM quoted research around transgender women retaining advantages in terms of strength of their gender at birth and there are already protections in place at a local level to ensure fair play e.g., setting the net at a men's level.
- fairness is the essential part of the way we differentiate our sport either in age or ability
- SG observed that the policy needs to be able to evolve rather than try to find a solution to every scenario.

Group 4 feedback:

- The group agreed that safety and fairness should be priority. The group considered beach and indoor volleyball as the sitting volleyball is inclusive already.
- the group agreed that safety and fairness should be the priority.
- It was important to keep the messaging simple.
- Eligibility for participation could be based on one of two things: sex at birth or should a player have gone through medical transition they could self-certify. That would apply for 18-year-olds and above. Below this wouldn't apply, for under 18s, birth sex would remain as a determining factor for the eligibility for participation. The challenges around this would involve determining what medical transition involved and how self-certification would work. This thinking was consistent with our value of inclusion and wouldn't put off those people who try to identify with another gender but don't necessarily want to go through medical transition. However, we may find people unhappy with that overly simplistic approach. The biggest issue could be around the self-certification process and understanding medical transition. The question is how you can prove your gender identification having not gone through the medical procedure of gender reassignment.

Action planning

SS observed that all groups came up with interesting thoughts, with the overall approach being one prioritising safety and fairness. This considers the Sport England/UK Sport advice that volleyball is a gender-affected sport due to the prominence of physical attributes (height/power) and therefore players cannot be categorised by self-identified gender. The sport would continue to be inclusive.

Board discussed:

- JM observed that VE current regulations stated that for both junior and senior competitions, women can only play in women's competitions and men in men's which was neither inclusive nor fair. The incoming policy would allow transgender men to play in men's competitions but not transgender women in women's competitions. To add to this, cis women should be allowed to play with cis men to make guidance inclusive and this should form a part of new regulation.
- RH added that the policy would have more relevance in beach and indoor volleyball as sitting volleyball was inclusive already.
- JI added that there were fantastic examples of inclusive play in the volleyball community already and the need for guidance of transgender policy is generational. The policy would need to evolve as people come through the system.
- DR added that the considerations have not included the transgender community voice. SS added that the policy draft would be consulted with the target community. JI spoke about the charity Think to Speak that could help with this.
- JM agreed but added that the concern would be to be careful around who the policy would be consulted with to ensure quality feedback.

In terms of mixed league, the Board discussed:

- CF stated that it may be best to start with a mixed league concept at a local/regional level initially.
- JM added that a test event could be organised, but it was important to separate policy from the performance element, which was already happening in the community.
- SG stated that it was important to communicate with the community about the mixed league. The sport should be seen as proactive in this area once the news around intentions around creating a mixed league break.
- Consideration should be given to how this would impact on beach volleyball.
- RH suggested that diversity is included in the transformational session going forward for the purposes of creation of Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan as per Sport England's requirements.

SS and SJ would coordinate the development of a draft policy based on the feedback and would report back on progress to the next Board meeting.

Minutes of Functional Board Meeting at 1:30pm to 3pm on 29 January 2022 via Microsoft Teams.

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Clare Francis [CF]	Senior Independent Director (Vice Chair)
David Reeve [DR]	Co-Opted Director
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Agata Sromecka [AS]	Secretariat
Guests Present	
Janet Inman [JI]	Volleyball England Foundation Secretary

EB/21-22/50 Apologies

Chair welcomed all. Apologies had been submitted from Jess Plumridge, Jake Sheaf, Freda Bussey, Simone Turner and Kevin Fletcher prior to the meeting.

50.1 Director Conflict of Interest Disclosures

AW declared his long-standing interest as the owner of Oaks which was a business development partner of VE.

50.2 Approval of the Agenda

Agenda was approved.

50.3 Previous minutes

The minutes of 30 October 2021 Board meeting were approved as true and accurate record of the meeting. AW would sign them off digitally.

50.4 Matters Arising

EB/21-22/37

DW to prepare a proposal of communication with the volleyball community including at the regional and county levels to obtain information on the numbers of recreational players in the country – SS reported that this would be picked up via subgroups as well as during a transformational session in near future.

It was requested that DW's research include the number of coaches regionally.

EB/21-22/51 Executive Update

The Executive Report was as presented and was taken as read.

Board discussed:

- AH asked about the progress of the work VE is doing with Oaks. SS answered that Oaks were assisting with potential sponsorship and commercial opportunities. In terms of commercial deals, monetisation of Volley 2 had been discussed. Further, a deal with providers of Mikasa balls in England had been renewed. A nutrition and supplements stream had also been considered. Two or three companies would be keen to work with us, with one of them offering to fund a PhD student to do specific research with mutual benefit. Oaks had helped to create a slide deck of our offers, and this had been pushed out to several different streams. It would then be important to prioritise which streams were worth looking at. In terms of actual money coming in, £20k had come in so far but we would have a better understanding of the final figures by the end of the financial year. SJ added that Oaks were meeting VE bi-weekly.
- RM asked about the Seven League's role in digital transformation. SS informed that there is a session organised with them the following week. RM observed that the findings of Phase 1 of the project would need to be reviewed by the Board.
- AH asked about the competition in Scotland. SJ reported the name of the trophy and competition was Carroll Russel trophy and it was a friendly match with Scotland.

EB/21-22/52 Governance – AGM Process

SJ highlighted the following:

- This referred to an informal complaint made by a member of the organisation around a possibility of a technical breach of the VE Articles during the election process of elected directors during 2021 AGM. SJ informed that an independent investigation would be carried out with the help of Graham Arthur and SJ would be leading on this. As the Board had previously been advised Sport England had been informed by VE directly and asked to review the situation SJ added that there had been no breach of the Code of Governance as per advice from Sport England. SJ would notify the Board of the result for the Board to agree action. No formal complaint had been received.
- Graham Arthur is an independent lawyer with a considerable experience in sport and regulatory environments, anti-doping governance, data protection and other classification matters. Graham's experience included conducting investigations for UK Anti-doping. VE had submitted a brief to Graham, and he had agreed to it as well as to terms of engagement. Graham would give us an outcome of his investigation by February 4. Graham would be looking into whether VE Articles require an elected director to be a member of Volleyball England, if any restrictions applied to those relevant directors and would there be any implications of an elected director being appointed who was not a member. Graham would also give his own view of whether we were Code compliant. Board would be notified of the outcome as soon as possible.

Board discussed:

- RM asked what the main issue that resulted in investigation was. SJ responded that the issue was around elected directors having to be VE members. SS stated that the process would be reviewed going forward to take account of any lessons learned. If

any changes to the Articles of Association are required these would be implemented at the next AGM. AW added that the process could improve going forward even if there had been no breach to the Articles. This would help to eradicate any ambiguity of the process in the future.

- RM stated that he had not been made aware of any eligibility criteria related to membership when applying to be appointed as a director. RM asked whether there should be a director that would work with SJ.
- RH asked about the scale of issue and whether this could lead to dissolution of the Board and commented on the uncertainty around motivations for the complainant making the complaint.
- SG asked about the cost of investigation. SJ added it would cost around £1k for the initial advice. SG also commented about the motivation of the complaint being made.
- AW stated that both him and CF felt confident that a fair and transparent process had been in place when electing directors at the 2021 AGM. The Nominations Committee had worked hard to review the skills required and run a transparent recruitment process.
- PF offered SJ his help while this was ongoing.
- AW reported that a meeting had been offered to the complainant to discuss this several times.
- SS stated that RM and DR had been made VE club members when joining the Board.
- CF highlighted that it was important for the organisation to attract Directors with a good mix of skills also from the outside of the member community.
- RM asked about the confidentiality of the advice received around this issue. SS stated that the correspondence between VE and the complainant was confidential, but VE had no power over what or who with the complainant had shared it.
- AW summed up that it was right and proper to investigate the issue using an independent advisor. Sport England had also been consulted. The outcome of this process would be used to communicate with the complainant and to amend any process as necessary.
- RH wondered whether there might be questions raised regarding this at the AGM. AW answered that we would keep this under review and respond accordingly.

Actions:

EB/21-22/52:

- ***Board would be notified of the outcome of the investigation into the potential governance breach as soon as possible.***

EB/21-22/53 The Game Plan Management Reporting

SJ reported on the key highlights in relation to this:

- iterative changes had been made to the template as per the discussion at a previous Board meeting
- discussion during the FSR meetings was held around additional tools such as adding deadlines or review dates to the template
- RAG rating would remain, but a level of priority had been added to the template
- FSR were looking to implement Microsoft Planner
- RH asked how the task prioritisation would be decided. AW answered that this would be subject to change over time.
- FSR would continue to refine the planner

EB/21-22/54 Sub-Groups & Volleyball England Foundation Update

CF highlighted the following:

- Meeting with the working group delivery leads would be held the following Tuesday.

In terms of VEF, JI highlighted:

- There were a number of things that had taken place and those included:
 - no funding had been allocated in December in terms of sitting volleyball, but the same funding stream would be run again in March
 - VEF had been approached to support a number of young people on the pathway that were experiencing financial hardship. VEF was looking for funding to support with that.
 - VEF was looking to find a way of supporting sitting volleyball next year to continue with their grand prix season. A fundraising plan could help so that they could become self-sustaining.
 - VEF was looking at sporting clubs to deliver the Queen's Jubilee funding.
 - Monday would see the DCMS launching a Children in Need project for young people and the foundation was going to have a look to see whether work could be done in and around Birmingham as part of the legacy to develop a community volleyball club in the city.

In terms of the AAS Sub-Group, SG reported:

- The subgroup had met for the first time the previous week. The work was ongoing.

In terms of the GKG Sub-Group, DR reported:

- The group discussed the membership and the concept of the club hub, i.e., how could VE best support the clubs with resources and banks of information.

In terms of the V4L Sub-Group, RH reported:

- RH had contacted all the working group leads and had introduced members of the subgroup. The purpose and objectives of the subgroup had also been communicated. Also, this was to ensure the flow of mutual communication to better work together. Some positive responses and ideas had already come through from James from competitions, Richard from sitting, and Alex from talent. In terms of the objectives, the group had had the first meeting on 17 January and had concluded that the clarity on the group's purpose was necessary. Another meeting would take place the following Monday. Finally, the group had been presented with a project and the group would scope the nature of the project, which meant providing a level two coach to every club, at every level in the country.

In terms of the FSR Sub-Group, AH reported:

- Risk matrix had been reviewed and some columns had been added to show accountability for the risk and to show mitigating controls.
- The group were awaiting a decision from Birmingham University in relation to the legacy facility scoping i.e., a competition ready venue at Birmingham City University.
- Level 2 coach awards had been delayed until September 2022. VE would

continue with the existing Level 2 Coach programme.

EB/21-22/55 Committee Reports – Disciplinary

AW reported that there is a current matter being dealt with by the DC. AW thanked DR and PF for their support.

EB/21-22/56 Finance Update – Quarter 3

AH report the following:

- In terms of Q3 resulted in £4.5k surplus due to increased NVL entries
- The financial year was likely to finish in surplus of £27k

EB/21-22/57 Staffing & Efficiencies

SS reported the following:

- at the last board meeting a discussion was held around workload and insufficient staff capacity to carry it out. Therefore, a few sessions had been had with the hub team to pick up on the areas that needed reviewing and most of them were low level operational areas e.g., processing volunteer expenses. The Exec would continue to look to find solutions to those.

EB/21-22/58 2022-23 Budget

AH presented the following in relation to 2022/23 budget:

- This was a deficit budget
- Increase of 3% in salaries had been included in the budget planning
- Expenses for Commonwealth Games had been provided for
- The budget included rolled over funding from Sport England
- Numbers had been pushed in terms of NVL competitions or income generators as far as possibly comfortable.
- SS reported on a few changes in the budget to areas that had previously been accounted for as receiving supplemented funding such as cup finals
- SS confirmed that the latest budget approval point was March but ideally this would happen sooner.
- Another Board meeting would be organised to review another iteration of the budget and to approve it.
- AW asked SS to pass on the Board thanks to Kevin Fletcher.

Action:

EB/21-22/58

Another Board meeting would be organised to review another iteration of the budget and to approve it.

EB/21-22/59 AOB

SJ reported that Jake Sheaf had taken on a role of Anti-doping Board champion. FB was a Safeguarding Champion. RH was a Diversity and Technical Champion

SS informed she had been appointed as a voluntary Board member of Trent Bridge Cricket Ground

Actions	Who
EB/21-22/52: Board would be notified of the outcome of the investigation into the	SJ/SS

potential governance breach as soon as possible.	
EB/21-22/58 Another Board meeting would be organised to review another iteration of the budget and to approve it	AW/SS
EB/21-22/48 AGM 2022 would take place in June 2022. SJ and SS would look at defining the date.	SJ/SS

Signed



Adam Walker
Independent Chairman