



Minutes of Transformational Board Meeting at 10am on 23 April 2022 at National Volleyball Centre

Directors Present	Titles
Adam Walker [AW]	Independent Chair
Andreas Hernandez [AH]	Independent Director
Brendan Fogarty [BF]	Elected Director
Freda Bussey [FB]	Elected Director
David Reeve [DR]	Co-opted Director
Jess Plumridge [JP]	Elected Director
Richard Harrison [RH]	Elected Director
Staff Present	
Sue Storey [SS]	Chief Executive
Samantha Jamieson [SJ]	Deputy Chief Executive
Vicky Carr [VC]	Strategic Manager Get Keep Grow
Dan Ward [DW]	Data & Insight Lead
In attendance	
Simone Turner [ST]	Volleyball England Foundation Chair
Agata Sromecka [AS]	Minute taking

Apologies for absence

Clare Francis, Phil French, Simon Griffiths, Jake Sheaf.

TB/21-22/02 Update on Transgender Policy

VC reported on developments around the transgender policy. The document had been circulated for consideration as part of the Board pack.

VC thanked RH and JP for their help getting the draft ready. Following a discussion at the previous board meeting, the fairness and safety were the two principles that had formed the basis of the participation element of the policy for Volleyball England competitions. The draft had been consulted with Fairplay for Women and James Murphy. Fairplay for Women had commented that they were really pleased with the policy and its direction. The main query they had was around the wording of the statement below and especially the notion of “early stages”:

“A transgender man in the early stages of transitioning can continue to play in female competition.”

Board discussed and agreed that:

- “early stages” to be replaced by a statement similar to “until testosterone/male hormone treatment is commenced” . Board asked for the terminology/language to be tested and clarified before circulating the policy for Board’s attention. **Action SJ**

- SS asked on CF's behalf about the use of the expression "a meaningful competition" in the policy. RH answered that this term was used by the sport councils. Board discussed and agreed that this would be discussed further outside the Board meeting with the intention for it to be changed.

Further, James Murphy had been consulted around the policy draft and his feedback included a request to review the legality of asking to declare one's gender when registering. Also, JM asked for the policy to be explicit about transgender women not being able to play in women's competitions.

Board discussed:

- VC explained that as per the Sport councils' guideline: "Categorisation by sex is lawful, and hence the requirement to request information relating to birth sex is appropriate.

No individual is compelled to provide any information to a sports organisation. However, failure to provide such information would mean that person may not be able to compete in the category of their choice. Sports should provide options for those people who prefer not to advise of their sex or gender".

- In relation to a statement from the policy, SJ stated that her understanding was that should gender remain undisclosed, it would be assumed as "male" in the context of a competition. Board discussed and asked for "on the grounds of safety" to be added to this statement.
- Board agreed the policy subject to implementing discussed changes.

Next steps were discussed by the Board:

- ST suggested that the policy should not be published in isolation but real life examples should become its part to illustrate the reasoning behind the policy better.
- Board agreed that FAQ would be added based on the bank of question received after the launch of the policy.
- Board discussed the process around dealing with potential suspicion of foul play in terms of player gender self-declaration. Board agreed that in terms of self-disclosure of gender the approach must be that of trust until there is further requirement to change the approach in response to publication of the policy. Code of Conduct and its reference to dignity and respect needed to be adhered to by all volleyball community at all times.
- The policy would be reviewed annually.
- The policy would be recirculated before the next Board for the final approval. **Action SJ**

TB/22-23/03 Membership – Extending Our Reach

VC introduced Dan Ward – Data and Insight Lead

VC started off by reporting that VE were in the process of scoping a system to replace the VolleyZone. This was a great opportunity to redevelop membership structure through data insights, customer feedback, NGB mapping and other external research (Seven League).

The data already held revealed that there existed a wide group of people within the volleyball community who were playing volleyball or were engaged within the community but whose data was not captured

within the membership data system. The conclusion was that in order to grow VE membership, to support the volleyball community, and to enhance the services and products that we offered, the membership structure needed to change.

The feedback around the VolleyZone revealed that the system was overwhelming and unattractive for new members e.g. there were 22 roles and 18 membership categories currently available. Seven League had confirmed that increased membership would potentially open up new sponsorship opportunities.

Key recommendations from Seven League included:

- Review of existing benefits and simplification of packages
- Find what motivated people to take part in volleyball and what barriers were preventing them from engaging
- Streamline the process of member journey
- Consider offering different payment models
- Consider community as a driver for retention
- Build stronger relationships with the membership

Board considered the following questions:

How do we use our membership structure to extend our reach?

Sub questions:

1. Who do we want to engage with?
 2. Through what services can we engage with them?
 3. What is the long-term plan and how would we/should we monetize this?
- FB and BF asked whether it was more important to monetise the membership or bring in more members.
 - AW wondered whether the primary driver should be the user experience or business case. It was important to establish this while the new structure was being planned for.
 - ST asked whether we should establish what the value we were proposing was for our membership to be motivated enough to join us.
 - FB observed that VE should be transparent to its members about how the money would be used for in relation to sport and community.
 - AW asked what was the overarching goal. Was it about people loving volleyball and feeling a great affinity for the sport and therefore this being the purpose of membership? Was it about increasing our volume? Was it about self-generating money so that we can re-invest? This should be understood while thinking of the new structure.
 - SS noted that there was a direct correlation between the amount of data any organisation had and how much money they made as exemplified by e.g. Badminton England.
 - RH thought that it was a balance between whether it was about money or more people playing.
 - DR observed that across sporting landscape all governing bodies were trying to move away from being a b2b into being b2c and talking directly to the customer. It was about a mindset shift rather than a structural shift.
 - DR added that in his view VE membership revolved around competition participation which was different to other sports. How do you structure membership so it functions as a centralised participation programme which would drive data, customer insight and helped to develop grassroots sport.
 - FB observed that the biggest barrier was availability of facilities and coaches. It happened on a

club by club basis.

- VC noted that a number of NGBs were going down the fan/supporter route.
- AW noted a number of drivers – insight, data, commercial relevance, communication and marketing, funder relevance, reputation among customers, inability to mobilise supporters, fan engagement/fan experience – should we design the membership around the prioritised list of drivers?
- SJ asked whether we were looking at quantity or quality and what could we afford when casting the net? Also, if we knew where the user journey started, would we be better off investing in those start points?
- FB thought that members could be discouraged when charged immediately upon joining the system. Also, as soon as a player is registered, the ownership of this data changed.
- ST pondered what the role of VE was, why we existed, how would we take advantage of technology. How do we evolve to develop new volleyball community?
- RH observed that the capacity of the volunteer workforce remained a barrier to sport development.
- DR queried the role of VE as a regulator vs sport developer and how they fed into the new proposition to people. How would you start your journey?
- FB and RH observed that young players rarely came back to the same club after leaving for higher education.
- SS asked whether we should be looking into what the catch-on/incentive point was for the membership to embed in a supporter?
- SS observed that it was also important to find how to sustain growth.
- AW noted we needed stronger clubs, more qualified coaches and officials, strong governance structure and connection to clubs, as well as increased interest in the volleyball.
- ST noted that we should not over rely on one source of income, it was important to find a driver that would continue to make us relevant.
- AW observed that the problem might be that the focus was too wide with offer being too diluted and diverted from the bigger audience. Maybe the offer should apply in a regionalised/geographically specific way.
- RH stated that as part of Volleyball for life the data that was being collected included on how people start their journey and the characteristics of people engaging with volleyball. Work of strategic groups should feed into growing the membership and developing better service.
- DR noted that there needs to be a justification of why we need data from clubs.
- ST spoke of a junior football programme stats keeping technology with comms programme designed around it such as a weekly personalised email which was performance based and based on the average anonymised data of a player's competitors. This had increased membership. Could the answer to growing to membership be increased investment in technology?
- The group of fans/supporters was one that VE was not engaging with but could be a potential target group.
- AW observed that there could be three principle targets we would want to deliver on in terms of the new membership structure:
 - 1st – easy to buy from
 - 2nd – become relevant to buy from
 - 3rd - interesting to buy from
- VC agreed that those had been considered and would form part of the thinking and planning in terms of the new structure.
- When considering business case vs reaching more people, AW stated that it was important not to make less money than currently. Financial modelling should sit behind either of the routes.

TB/21-22/04 AOB

- ST distributed a leaflet on legacy and will giving to Volleyball England Foundation.
- AW congratulated SJ on being appointed an interim CEO and thanked SS for all her work while in her post as CEO of VE.

Actions	Who
TB/21-22/02 SJ to clarify wording around “early stages” and distribute another draft before next Board meeting.	SJ