



Minutes of Volleyball England Board Meeting at 10am on 29 October 2022 at SportPark, Loughborough.

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]	Elected Director
Freda Bussey [FB]	Elected Director
Jake Sheaf [JS]	Elected Director
Jess Plumridge [JP]	Elected Director
Phil French [PF]	Independent Director
Staff Present	
Charlie Ford [CFo]	Chief Executive Officer
Samantha Jamieson [SJ]	Interim Chief Executive
Rob Payne [RP]	Interim Deputy Chief Executive
Kevin Fletcher [KF]	Finance Consultant
Stewart Thorpe [ST]	Strategic Manager Digital and Communications
In attendance	
Janet Inman [JI]	Volleyball England Foundation
Agata Sromecka [AS]	Secretariat

EB /22-23.18 Welcome from the Chair and apologies

AW welcomed all to the meeting.

AW informed all present that the Finance, Strategy and Risk sub-group (FSR) including SJ, RP, AH, CFo, CF and KF was in-meeting discussing one of the agenda items and would join Board meeting as soon as possible.

Apologies had been submitted by Simone Turner, Richard Harrison, and Simon Griffiths.

18.1 Directors Conflict of Interest & Disclosures

Conflict of interest was submitted by JS who had been appointed by Volleyball England (VE) as a consultant that would lead on Legacy from Birmingham 2022.

18.2 Approval of Agenda

Agenda was approved by all present.

18.3 Approval of minutes

Minutes of the 18 August 2022 were approved as true and accurate records.

18.4 Matters Arising/Actions List

EB/22-23/15 Transgender policy had been launched and would be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

EB/22-23/19 Executive update

In SJ's absence, AW reported the following in relation to the Executive update:

- FIVB and CEV Congress had been attended by AW and SJ and had been a positive event. There had been a change in the voting process during the Congress, which had been welcome by the representatives. The Congress also featured some interesting discussions among representatives including the empowerment fund.

Members of FSR sub-group joined the meeting.

AW welcomed members of FSR to the meeting especially CFo for whom it was the first official, and face-to-face, Board meeting in his capacity as CEO of Volleyball England. Board expressed their sadness about the SJ's departure from VE..

SJ updated the Board on the following:

- Staff turnover was high at present and recruitment was taking a significant amount of time and attention to ensure that the organisation is adequately resourced. SJ commented that the HUB are working hard to support business critical activities while staffing levels were lower/in transition.
- Two additional work placement students from Loughborough University would join the Ace Service Team in November to enhance the administrative capacity of the competition delivery.

RP added:

- a positive trend had continued in reference to competition entries.

Board discussed:

- JI asked about forming of a joint commercial group including representatives of VE and the Foundation's Board members. AW responded that there had been no volunteers to take this up. Oaks would support the group with CFo leading it. This would be discussed further.

EB/22-23/20 Sub-Groups & Volleyball England Foundation Update

AH reported on the following in relation to the work of **FSR sub-group**:

- An external consultant had assisted the sub-group to review the risk register. Detailed results of the review would be presented at the next Board meeting.
- Staff salaries would be reviewed in April 2023 but in the meantime a proposal had been put forward for the staff to be granted a cost-of-living crisis payment that would be paid in instalments across a number of months. CF confirmed that there were no adverse contractual repercussions in relation to payment of this. The board agreed to revisit this proposal as part of the finance presentation later in the board meeting.

RP reported the following in relation to the work of **ACE service** sub-group:

- the group had two areas of focus – officiating crisis and digital transformation
- in terms of digital transformation, more would be presented by ST later on in the meeting
- in relation to officiating, a data insight package had been created by DW and presented a bank of data on the actual situation in officiating and the future direction. This had been distributed as part of the Board pack.

Board discussed:

- The board discussed the challenges around recruiting and retaining officials in the current climate. The board put forward that more could be done to clarify the entry route for people wishing to begin a journey in officiating and to welcome newcomers to the community of officials. The board commented that insufficient financial incentive was also part of the reason that many officials were no longer offering their services to the sport.
- CFo commented that this was a sector-wide issue and there were a number of factors influencing status quo including a very small number of people accessing officiating courses and then deployed to officiate. It was paramount to support those individuals and increase the figure to enable facilitation of competitions going forward.
- AW added that innovation was required in this area.

JP reported the following in relation to the work of **Get Keep Grow** sub-group:

- Development of the membership package was being considered by the sub-group
- Digital transformation project was tackling a number of issues on the group's agenda
- Connectivity between VE and its regions and areas was also under discussion and would be a topic of focus over the course of the weekend.

RP reported the following in relation to the Transgender policy and the work of **Volleyball for Life** sub-group:

- The Transgender policy had been launched and KS who is the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Lead in the HUB team is collating feedback and comments – the first quarterly review session is planned for late November to consider the feedback. Any planned changes will be presented to the board at the Functional session planned for 26th November. RP reports that there had been a handful of comments on the policy and one in particular that suggested changes for consideration.
- AW thanked RH for his work on the Transgender policy. AW stressed that VE were ahead of the curve in relation to other NGBs.
- The Player pathway was being finalised

JI reported the following in relation to the work of **Volleyball England Foundation**:

- There was £1100 left on the Sport England 'Return to Play' Official's funding used to deliver Grade 4 courses across the country
- There had been no take up for the Sitting Volleyball clubs grants
- Two grants from Bruce Wake Charitable Foundation (£2500) and Arnold Clark (£2000) had been received.

AW thanked the sub groups leads/staff for their updates and asked the sub-groups leads to propose to the Board solutions to issues faced by the sub-groups at future meetings. CF stated that she would recirculate the board sub group reporting template to help give an easier and consistent reporting format for future board meetings.

Actions:

EB/22-23/20

- Detailed results of the review would be presented at the next Board meeting.
- the Volleyball for Life sub-group would put together a recommendation for changes to the transgender policy based on feedback ahead of the next Board meeting in November.
- sub-groups leads to propose to the Board solutions to issues faced by the sub-groups going forward.
- CF to circulate reporting template.

EB/22-23/21 Nominations Committee - DCEO Recruitment

CF reported the following in relation to DCEO recruitment:

- Guin Batten had been recruited to the role of DCEO. CFo elaborated on Guin's background.
- AW thanked RP for his excellent work as Interim DCEO. Board echoed this.

EB/22-23/22 Finance Update – Quarter 2 Figures

KF reported on the following in relation to Quarter 2 figures:

- KF reported a positive position with regard to VE's performance against the budget in quarter 2 and over the first 6 months of the financial year in totality. A surplus has been generated as a result of temporary reduced staffing costs due to vacancies and a better than anticipated performance against budget in competitions and education delivery. KF also highlighted that the costs of activations and activities around Commonwealth Games had totalled less than expected.
- KF stated that VE's current bank position and cashflow is strong mainly due to the organisation being in receipt of 6 months Sport England funding in advance.

The board discussed

- the costs associated with the digital transformation and how they would be apportioned across the duration of the implementation of a platform if /when agreed.
- The board revisited the proposal to grant staff a cost of living crisis payment and reiterated that they were comfortable that the in-year surplus being reported was sufficient to support these costs.

Board discussed:

- AW asked to investigate the ways in which payment instalments could be included in the contract with Seven League.
- AW asked whether a prediction could be made in relation to the year-end surplus amount. KF responded that the cost-of-living crisis payment would decrease the projected surplus figure, but KF was optimistic that the overall trend was positive.
- **Board agreed a cost-of-living crisis payment to be made to staff in instalments in the coming months.**

EB/22-23/23 Digital Transformation Business Case

ST summarised the Digital Transformation business case for Board's approval as presented as part of the Board pack:

- Board previously had requested additional information on the digital transformation.
- VE had been working with Seven League, a sports consultancy, since January to identify challenges around the existing digital infrastructure and how they could be

addressed.

- Discovery work had been conducted around what was expected from the digital infrastructure.
- Two vendors, GameDay and SportLoMo, were believed to be best placed and therefore had been shortlisted to design and deliver the integrated digital solution for VE.

Board was asked to consider the following recommendations:

- Option 1: Do nothing, and continue to work with 4Global
- Option 2: Select GameDay as the new technology partner
- Option 3: Select SportLoMo as the new technology partner

Board discussed:

The board discussed the proposal and commended ST on a thorough piece of work to date. The board recognised the potential for enhanced service through the potential new system although there were still some reservations around the selection of vendor. The board agreed to support the proposal pending some further due diligence being carried out by the exec (board to provide questions)– specifically the inclusion of a bail-out clause in the contract. The board also asked that a comms plan be developed for any new system agreed and that there be opportunity for members of the community to be involved in the development of the any new agreed system.

Action:

EB/22-23/23

The Board would provide the Exec with questions around the digital platform by next Board meeting. A possibility of using a bail-out clause in the contract with a vendor would be investigated.

A comms plan to be developed for any new system and opportunities for members of the community to be involved in the development of the system.

EB/22-23/24 Vexatious Complainant Policy

CFo reported the following in relation to the Policy:

- The policy had been further amended as per previous Board discussions especially around CEO's authority regarding decision making around vexatious complainant
- Recommendation was that the point "2.4" was added to the policy (as per the pack).
- CFo reinforced that the policy would likely only ever be enforced in a minute number of cases.

Board discussed:

- CF commented that 4.1 did not offer sufficient safeguard for the CEO and that consultation with a board member should be added to support the CEO. This would be amended.

Subject to the amendment to 4.1, Board **approved** the Vexatious Complainant Policy.

Action:

EB/22-23/24 – 4.1 would be amended to offer a safeguard to the CEO.

EB/22-23/25 Reflections & Aspirations

SJ and RP reflected on her their respective roles as Interim CEO and Interim DCEO in the last 6 months:

- Positives included:
 - Work on Commonwealth Games 2022 in Birmingham
 - Growth in competitions and media engagement
 - Club satisfaction score had increased
 - Board's support, counsel, and knowledge had been invaluable
- Time had been spent on:
 - recruitment (appointing 18 roles)
 - governance (dealing with complaints, increased number of Board meetings, work of sub-groups)
 - strategy implementation
 - Commonwealth Games 2022 and legacy work
- Exceptional growth of the sport emerging from the pandemic had been recorded
- Takeaways included:
 - the impact was the greatest when the dedicated resources were directly aligned to a priority rather than spread across multiple areas.
 - the direction of work had often been dictated by circumstance/environment rather than the strategy itself e.g. reacting to covid, responding to exceptional growth in non-strategic areas
 - 'Business as usual' sport and business operations were the most resource-heavy areas of the work of VE leaving little resource to focus on development and innovation

Board discussed:

- JI asked about the high turnover of staff. SJ responded that this had been mostly pay-related. SJ stated that VE does not compete with bigger employers in this area.
- PF asked whether staff were asked for an exit interview. SJ confirmed that those were organised.
- Board recognised James' invaluable contribution to the sport and volleyball community and discussed volunteer welfare in connection to James' departure. Board reinforced that James would always be welcome back into volunteer workforce.

AW asked what SJ and RP enjoyed most/least. Both responded that the strength of the whole team including the board, volunteers, staff and community and how well the sport works together. In terms of areas for development, SJ stated that a greater degree of prioritisation, focus and accountability would help the organisation to move forward more effectively. RP reflected on the speed at which decisions had to be made among the challenges in his interim role and that at times things felt uncertain as to the strategic direction of travel. This was in light of reacting to exceptional circumstances such as covid and more positively the growth in the game

AW thanked SJ and RP for their excellent work especially considering challenging circumstances the organisation had found itself in.

CFo presented on his initial observations around the organisation and what his planned approach as a CEO would be:

- Hardworking hub team but working in silos
- Resilient and loyal core membership
- Education had an important place within the sport
- Wide and polarised array of opinions about VE's service

- Significant inefficiencies in the day-to-day work due to digital immaturity
- Governance weaknesses especially around decision making processes
- More reactive than proactive

CFo presented his approach:

From	To
High workload but limited capacity	Focused and smarter working
Digital immaturity	Digital transformation
A small, modest, license to practice based membership	An enticing & incentivised membership proposition
Insular delivery/support and comms	Embracing and supporting all levels of the sport
Considered the sport police by the community	A modern and collaborative NGB
Living hand to mouth	Commercial mindset around all areas of work

CFo further presented how the approach could relate to VE's strategic pillars.

Board discussed:

- It was good to see that the education was recognised as paramount to the growth of the sport and community.
- PF agreed that VE had a great potential to become a much better NGB.
- CF asked how CFo planned to make his priorities viable. CFo admitted that he was still observing, listening, and speaking to the volleyball community and was not in the position to answer the question yet. JI commented that the challenge was to move forward the goal in light of challenges of BAU.
- AW asked CFo to rerun his presentation in the New Year considering circumstances there and then.

Action:

EB/22-23/25 - CFo to rerun his presentation in the New Year considering circumstances there and then.

EB/22-23/26 AOB

JI would distribute dates when VE Board members could meet the VE foundation Board members to speak about the work of the Foundation.

Action:

EB/22-23/26 AOB

JI would distribute dates when VE Board members could meet the VE foundation Board members to speak about the work of the Foundation.

EB/22-23/27 Meeting Finalisation

Meeting finished at 2pm.

Actions	Who

<p>EB/22-23/20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed results of the review would be presented at the next Board meeting. Recommended changes to the policy based on feedback ahead of the next Board meeting in November. sub-groups leads to propose to the Board solutions to issues faced by the sub-groups going forward. 	<p>RP</p> <p>Sub-Group Leads</p>
<p>EB/22-23/24 – 4.1 would be amended to offer a safeguard to the CEO.</p>	<p>CFo</p>
<p>EB/22-23/23</p> <p>A possibility of using a bail-out clause in the contract with a vendor would be investigated. The Board would provide the Exec with questions around the digital platform by next Board meeting.</p> <p><i>A comms plan to be developed for any new system and opportunities for members of the community to be involved in the development of the system.</i></p>	<p>CFo/ST</p>
<p>EB/22-23/25 - CFo to rerun his presentation in the New Year considering circumstances there and then.</p>	<p>CFo</p>
<p>EB/22-23/26 AOB</p> <p>JI would distribute dates when VE Board members could meet the VE foundation Board members to speak about the work of the Foundation.</p>	<p>JI</p>