



**Sitting Volleyball Working Group Meeting**

**Thursday 29 July 2021**

**Video Conference**

**MEETING MINUTES**

<b>Minutes prepared by:</b>	Janet Inman
<b>Circulation:</b>	Sitting Volleyball Working Group, Working Group Leads, Hub Team
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<b>Members present and apologies for absence</b>	
<b>Present</b>	
Steve Smith (SSm)	Sitting Bucks SVC
Ian Legrand (IL)	London Lynx SVC and GB Women Head Coach
Sue Storey (SSt)	CEO, Volleyball England
Richard Osborne (RO)	Sitting Volleyball Lead and South Hants SVC
James Murphy (JM)	Competitions Lead and National Cup Lead
Rob Payne (RP)	Competitions and Events Co-ordinator
Janet Inman (JI)	Volleyball England Foundation
Herman Prada (HP)	Sitting Volleyball Competitions Lead
John Worrall (JW)	Project Lead – Competitions
<b>Apologies</b>	
Dave Williamson	Sitting Bucks SVC
Stewart Thorpe	Digital and Communications Manager

The meeting commenced at 1900 and closed at 2050.

Agenda Item	Notes	Action/Owner
1. Introduction	RO outlined the purpose of the meeting, which was convened to discuss the singular issue of Sitting Volleyball (SV) Competitions following feedback from Working Group (WG) members on a strawman paper that had been circulated out of committee and the views of club members, whose views had been canvassed <i>via</i> an online survey. Pleasingly, 47 respondents had taken the opportunity to voice their views, for which the WH is extremely grateful.  The totality of feedback was distilled into a discussion paper that WG members had considered out of committee and on which decisions would be made in committee on the future direction of SV competitions.	
2. Grand Prix	Introducing feedback to the club survey questions regarding the Grand Prix (GP), RO indicated there was a preference to maintain the Grand Prix as it had been in	

previous years, although most respondents wish to add another meeting date to the diary, increasing the number of GPs per season from 5 to 6. The majority also want to retain the periodicity of meeting i.e., one a month and to remain at the NVC in Kettering. 19 respondents would like to see a third tier introduced, while 16 want to keep things as they are with two tiers. Sunday is the preferred day to compete. The cost of the Grand Prix needs to be reviewed, with a view to reducing the significant subsidy provided by Volleyball England (VE) so that it is ultimately cost neutral on the VE budget.

JW stated that to operate a 2-Tier competition the venue must be capable of hosting 4 courts. The NVC can accommodate that and represents good value for money for the size of the venue. He added that the number of teams entering each Grand Prix varies, which needed to be taken into consideration.

SSm suggested that it may prove difficult to identify alternative venues around the country that can host 4 courts but that it is something to scope for the future.

RP mentioned that Dan Ward at VE will be able to carry out analysis of any future surveys. In terms of the GP, he asked what was its purpose e.g., performance or participation? If it is performance focused, can it be used to elevate the profile of SV by, for example, adding a livestream facility?

RO opined that the GP is both performance and participation oriented, with teams in Tier 1 focused more on performance than participation while teams in Tier 2 are focussed on both. The ambition to add a livestream facility to the GP is included in the 7 Point Plan that the WG is taking forward and is considered to be an essential next step in further promoting the sport across the country.

HP felt there was no need to add a third tier and added that to host competitions away from the NVC would require those other venues to have the correct equipment, court marking and fixtures and fittings. He agreed that livestreaming will raise the profile and encourage others to join SV clubs.

SSt confirmed that costs need to be considered, although the Board has decided not to increase fees this. In addition, livestreaming might attract sponsors.

After discussion of all the feedback and issues identified, the following decisions were made:

- **The GP will increase from 5 to 6 meetings per season** – to take effect from the 2021/22 season, with the semi-final converted to a further GP. The final will be determined by the two teams finishing 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in Tier 1;
- **There will be one GP per month;**
- **The GP will remain at the NVC, Kettering** - alternative venues will be scoped for use from the 2022/23 season onwards;
- **The GP will retain 2 tiers** – the WG did not think new teams will struggle in Tier 2 and thought will be given to hosting a one-off competition that new clubs only may participate in;
- **Sunday is the preferred day for each GP;**
- **The costs to enter each GP will increase slightly for the 2021/22 season, to £75 per team** – the cost in 2022/23 will be £88 per GP in a further effort to move towards making the competition cost neutral overall.

<p>3. SV Cup</p>	<p>RO stated that the club survey revealed that 32 respondents (68%) wished to retain the SV Cup in its current format. There was a suggestion from one respondent that the format be changed to comprise a central draw, with clubs drawn against each other arranging the fixture. This led to a discussion within the WG, with some members favouring that approach while others uttered caution that teams drawn long distances from each other might not fulfil the fixture which would degrade the competition overall. Another concern, which arose from feedback in the club survey, was that some clubs do not currently have competition standard nets systems at their venue.</p> <p>JM was sympathetic to the organisers of the SV Cup, which entails significant effort, and suggested that a system be devised where the draw is regionalised in the preliminary rounds, reducing the need for teams to travel disproportionate distance. The quality of competition facilities in the early round should not create an impediment, but they would need to improve as the competition advanced.</p> <p>RP advised that technical guidance exists that governs facilities, which is in place to mitigate risk for insurance purposes, adding that for SV the posts needs to be floor fixed or attached to the wall. A side discussion then followed about the need to clarify whether weighted free-standing posts will be compliant for insurance purposes.</p> <p>SSt asked whether clubs could arrange friendlies in their regions to allow them to become accustomed to the need to travel if in future the SV Cup changes format.</p> <p>Taking all of the above into consideration, the following decisions were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The SV Cup will remain in the current format for 2021/22 and 2022/23;</b></li> <li>• <b>The WG will scope potential for teams to host SC Cup fixtures from the 2023/24 season onwards.</b></li> </ul>	<p>JM/RP</p>
<p>4. New Competitions</p>	<p>RO submitted that there were multiple factors to consider about the prospects of introducing new competitions and that based on the club survey feedback there was a sense that is not the time to introduce anything new i.e., in 2021/22, but that it is highly desirable in future, possibly as early as the 2022/23 season. In addition, the GB teams need additional competition as they prepare for a return to the international arena. It was pleasing to see a high response rate from players willing to support the national teams' preparations.</p> <p>There was a general discussion about the merits of introducing a North/Central/South NVL-style competition, which included perspectives on club venues, use of officials and their availability during the NVL season, when in the year it would be held etc.</p> <p>JM said that following consultation with clubs on the NVL, there is more appetite amongst clubs to travel more locally. He asked where is SV more broadly in terms of maturity and how that would impact on costs, availability and desire from clubs for more competition. He added that a tenet of the NVL is that the designated 'home' team is supposed to provide refreshments, enhancing the social aspect of the game.</p> <p>SSm shared a spreadsheet he had devised that showed the distances SV clubs would typically travel to attend competition.</p>	

	<p>IL advised that the national squads will be hosting an invitational, potentially to include the top 4 teams in the GP and likely to take place over 2 weekends, which will add an additional competitive opportunity for some in the interim.</p> <p>Based on the feedback accrued out of committee and the discussion held in committee the following decisions were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>That the WG should consider the architecture and framework around any new competition with a view to introduction in 2022/23;</b></li> <li>• <b>That clubs should be encouraged to set up local friendlies to supplement NGB competitions.</b></li> </ul>	
<p>5. Finance</p>	<p>RO explained there is a need to keep costs to a minimum and that it was not sustainable for VE to continue subsidising the GP and SV Cup at current levels, which is £1400 per event. He asked how costs could be reduced and income generated, for example, <i>via</i> sponsorship.</p> <p>SSt emphasised the need to support disability sport and looked to the VE Foundation to consider funding options through applications for grants etc. The inclusion of livestreaming might attract sponsors. The submission to Sport England's 5-year funding cycle, which starts in from April 22, includes costs to run SV VE's costs for the 2021/22. GP season are already in the budget but for the 2022/23 season it will look at how to increase income for the GP through grants and sponsorship.</p> <p>SSm asked if the cost of player registration is included as part of the cost of the GP and SSt indicated that it is included from a full cost recovery perspective and contributes to background admin.</p> <p>There followed a discussion about the costs of officials and SSm averred that sitting referees often say they don't officiate for the money and perhaps they were willing to forgo their fees, but continue to receive travel costs.</p> <p>JM uttered caution, stating that quality officials add value to competitions. He asked how OAK's work with SV and that it would be undesirable to duplicate anything that OAKs could be considering on how to support SV. The 20,000 membership enriched data that VE holds could be used commercially to bring more income into the sport.</p> <p>Jl suggested a small WG was convened to consider options to reduce costs and generate income.</p> <p>Following discussion it was decided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A WG will be assembled to consider options to drive down on costs borne by VE and to supplement income <i>via</i> grants, sponsorship and other income generation options.</b></li> </ul>	