

Swim England Water Polo Leadership Group

Minutes of the Meeting held 11 June 2019

Wilkie, SportPark, Loughborough

Draft minutes subject to approval at the next meeting

Present: Ian Elliot - IE (Chair)
Sarah Dunsbee - SD
Eamonn O'Rourke - EoR
Neil Booth - NB (SOC Chair)

Staff: Andy Fuller - AF (Water Polo Development Manager)
George Wood - GW (Sport Development Director)
Siân Breen - SB (Senior Administration Officer)

1. **Introductions and Apologies**

Norman Leighton - NL
Ian Mackenzie - IM

2. **Chair's Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. **Minutes from meeting held 29 January 2018, including update on actions**

Updates were provided on the following actions from the previous meeting:

1) Timeline for water polo to independently seek sponsorship: AF confirmed that no definitive date could be provided. Any approach from a company would be flagged to the commercial team but teams are unable to actively seek a sponsor. Individual sponsorship was discussed and the precedent for this was noted with, for example, Adam Peaty and Tom Daley involved in deals.

ACTION 1: GW to share rules for individual athlete sponsorship.

2) Payment of per diem: AF confirmed there is no budget from British Swimming, thus any payment would have to be found from the players' budget. The group agreed they would not endorse this and as such per diem would not be paid.

3) International Player Transfer: AF confirmed that work is ongoing on the process.
ACTION 2: AF to circulate templates to the group for consideration.

4) Stage 8-10: permission to run a test course received but the planned date was cancelled due to pool closure. This will now take place as soon as possible and the revised documentation is to be submitted for approval.

5) CPDs: Courses now approved to proceed but are currently postponed until the rules are finalised – the courses will need updating to reflect the changes.

14) Manchester pool bookings: AF confirmed principal times have been agreed.
ACTION 3: NL to remind squads of timeframes for zero charge cancellation of pool time.

There was discussion around use of the High Performance Centre (HPC) and why booking of the facility had decreased. It was noted that EoR should be involved in dialogue concerning the HPC.

Exploration of potential university links for strength and conditioning coaches are ongoing.

15) Outstanding debts: it was noted that a great deal of work had taken place to obtain unsettled invoices and currently the majority of the debt was due from two individuals.

ACTION 4: GW and AF to speak to Richard Barnes (RB - Director of Legal) and Brian Havill (CFO) to confirm the most suitable method to retrieve the owing money. In order to avoid a repeat of the current situation invoicing prior to events will be pursued. A clear policy for action against players with unpaid bills would ensure the sport was not brought into disrepute whereby individuals were representing Swim England without having paid their requisite invoices to do so. There was discussion on the principles of payment plans for those with outstanding debts and it was considered that this was not a favourable course of action.

The distribution of costing information to squads was discussed, with agreement that although in principle elements had been absorbed, this had not occurred uniformly.

ACTION 5: NL and Nicola Ross to create a guide for team managers to share finance and payment information with their squads.

AF confirmed that communication with new coaches would also take place to this regard.

4. **Governance**

IE stated that he had not accepted the updated Terms of Reference (ToR). NB acknowledged the concerns raised but explained that from a corporate perspective the ToR would be employed across the leadership groups. They were created in line with the Sport England code of governance, as incorporated by the Swim England Board. NB highlighted that the ToR would not affect the ability of the leadership group to undertake the work necessary to advance the discipline and welcomed further feedback.

The ToR contain role descriptions and where positions were unfilled recruitment would need to take place.

IE stated that he would discuss the ToR further with the volunteer representatives on the group and revert back to NB with any issues.

5. **Disciplinary Regulations**

AF explained that the 'Regulations for disciplinary actions in water polo events' had originally been amended by Mike Jukes. RB requested circulation to the group for review to ensure they were wholly appropriate to the needs of the Water Polo community.

ACTION 6: Amendments to be provided to AF by the end of June.

6. **Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DiSE)**

GW explained that DiSE is a two year qualification in becoming a top athlete, delivered to 16-18 year olds undertaking full time education. 2019 was the first year it was necessary to apply for places and Water Polo were granted 26. Dudley college currently runs the aquatic courses but a strategy is being established to bring the 2020 cohort within Swim England. This would involve the development and management of a central knowledge bank and could enable allocation of funding to a

water polo squad, given that £5000 is provided for each candidate over the two year period. GW described how Handball use DiSE to help fund their u18 programme. It was noted that although there was no guarantee that the Department for Education would continue funding DiSE, there were currently no indications that it would cease. GW further outlined how, if Swim England stopped outsourcing the programme, the curriculum DiSE must be delivered against could be redesigned to ensure it met the needs of water polo as well as the candidates.

The group recognised that the project was in early stages and as such guarantees on action could not currently be provided.

ACTION 7: GW to update on progress regarding bringing DiSE within Swim England.

7. **Development Plan**

GW outlined that the paper circulated to the group was intended to start setting out proposed progress within water polo and had been composed following consultation with Jane Nickerson. It was noted that there had previously been a lack of shared vision and clarity of purpose. Roles and relationships with stakeholders needed to be clearly defined and consideration was required as to whether the club structure supports the talent pathway. The paper was framed by Swim England's six Strategic Objectives and from these a series of high level goals for Water Polo will be supported by Key Performance indicators.

There was discussion on the involvement of stakeholders in the creation of the plan and consideration was given to the desired engagement with British Swimming. It was agreed that a stakeholder forum should be set up for September, prior to which the group would need to be clear on the direction of evolution. On agreeing a plan it was noted that any additions to the proposal presented in the paper would necessitate the removal of an item given the nature of resources available.

ACTION 8: Group to feedback to GW on the paper by the end of June, points populated with figures where possible.

ACTION 9: GW to liaise with Jack Buckner to outline the intentions of the development plan and enquire as to whether British Swimming would like add an objective.

It was agreed that whilst coaching had made good progress, development of officiating was due to start with a clean slate. Competition planning was considered to require an overhaul, with organisation of NAGs to change comprehensively for later in 2020. The September stakeholder forum was considered to be a good opportunity to open dialogue on the calendar and as such a paper outlining the group's position would be required prior to the forum.

ACTION 10: AF & SD to compose paper on the future direction of competitions, with input from a working group as required.

Following their recruitment, the group's Competitions Lead would deliver the agreed structure.

There was recognition that the community should be updated on the work to take place on a future plan as well as the intended action regarding official and competition development.

ACTION 11: communication to be issued on behalf of GW and the group explaining that work is being undertaken to create a plan that will ensure development of the discipline.

Following this release stakeholders will be updated.

ACTION 12: SB to canvas for a date for the first forum, potentially in the second week of September.

8. **National Age Group Championships**

AF highlighted that a replacement pool is being sought for the NAGs that were due to take place in Liverpool in October due to the expected continued closure of this pool. A move to the first weekend in November is being explored.

9. **Workforce Update**

SD confirmed that the senior coaching pilot is due to take place on 21 September and 7 December. Following this there will be a good spread of tutors across the country to carry out assessments.

Final amendments are being made to the online workbook on Pebble Pad, with further work ongoing regarding face to face skills analysis.

ACTION 13: AF to determine whether the group can be provided with log ins to enable them to view the workbooks.

The group noted the positive progress made within this area.

SD highlighted frustration that changes to the level 2 course have not advanced in more than a year. This has caused an increase in assessment work, with tutors having to run with old material, to the point where they are unable to deliver.

ACTION 14: AF and GW to determine and resolve the issue to enable progression of the level 2 course.

Delivery of skills at the National Academy was raised as being below the level expected, with SD attending at the weekend to ensure this is carried out correctly.

GW updated the group on the Coaching and Teaching Register which currently lists over 8000 individuals. Quarterly messages will be issued to those signed up and it is intended that these will be discipline specific.

ACTION 15: SD to speak to AF regarding September's update. AF to ensure that the group are added to the distribution list for updates.

It was noted that a large number of individuals had not listed the discipline they were involved in and as such a definitive number for water polo could not be provided.

10. **Manchester Strategic Group Update**

EoR explained that the Manchester project was intended to be a test city to determine a successful model which could be used in locations across the country. The strategy group had originally been tasked with driving the LEN event and now this was up and running, further tasks were required. The potential for assignments to arise from the development plan was noted, as was the need to connect with the region. It was considered that Karen Cater (Swim North West Regional Officer) should receive an invite to the group.

ACTION 16: EoR to create a summary of the Manchester group, including its objectives and how it outreaches to other entities.

The success of the recent launch of Synchro City was discussed and it was considered that, after the September Stakeholder forum on the development plan, there could be a relaunch of Manchester as the city for Water Polo.

11. **Any Other Business**
Talent

Updates were provided on the Senior Men, who will be attending the EU Nations in the next few days, and the u17 girls who were successful in this competition.

AF outlined that recruitment of a coach for the senior and u19 girls was ongoing. The proposal for the two squads to train together under the caretaker coach, enabling the continuation of the programmes, will be considered.

The coach and management staff cycle is also coming to an end for the u17 boys so advertising will take place to source replacements.

It was noted that the National Academy had resulted in some positive engagement with parents but improvements in this area are still required. There will be a review of the structure to ensure regional places are allocated fairly.

Behaviour of the community towards those in the group

There was discussion on the potential methods of dealing with unwarranted abusive behaviour in respect of both members and non-members. It was noted that in instances of Swim England member on member incidents a complaint can be made through the Judicial process. In relation to incidents involving non-members the Swim England judicial system is not available.

ACTION 17: GW to respond to recent letters with a non-member parent with an agreed format of words.

ACTION 18: NL to make contact with a member outlining the expected behaviours from those involved in the sport.

Education of the community is also required to ensure understanding of appropriate engagement with Swim England staff, with formal conversations to take place outside of the poolside environment.

Communication

The need to constantly engage with stakeholders and the community was acknowledged, building on successes such as the Twitter video clips that were published from the women's competition in Brno.

ACTION 19: AF, Daniel Richardson (Content and Communications Assistant) and IE to draw up a communication plan at the end of July.

Commonwealth Games

It was acknowledged that a decision on whether to organise a water polo competition around the time of the Commonwealth Games was required, with consideration given as to whether it would fit into the programme structure. In taking any proposal to the Swim England Board parameters would need to be confirmed. It was noted that teams would be required to fund their own attendance.

ACTION 20: GW to distribute Commonwealth Games question to group to understand whether there is appetite to undertake the event.

12.

Dates of next meetings:

- Tuesday 6 August – apologies noted from SD
- Tuesday 22 October