VOLLEYBALL ENGLAND

DRAFT Minutes of Volleyball England Annual General Meeting 2025

Date: Saturday 19th July 2025,
Venue: SportPark, Loughborough University
Time: 11:30am

Directors Present	Titles
Adam Walker [AW]	Independent Chair
Andres Hernandez [AH]	Senior Independent Director
Brendan Fogarty [BF]	Elected Director
Jess Keen [JK]	Elected Director
Jess Plumridge [JP]	Elected Director
Jill Osleger [JO]	Independent Director
Richard Harrison [RH]	Elected Director
Simon Griffiths [SG]	Elected Director
Tracy Newton [TN]	Elected Director
Staff Present	**Titles**
Charlie Ford [CF]	Chief Executive Officer
Guin Batten [GB]	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Matt Halfpenny [MH]	Digital & Communications Strategic Manager
Jon Cornish [JC]	Digital & Communications Project Lead
Agata Sromecka [AS]	Secretariat

AGM Attendees
Richard Callicott MBE
Anton Kornilov
Graham Arthur
Greg Brown
James Murphy
Janet Inman
Mark Kontopoulos
Mihail Stoev
Pete Whyard
Robert Blaszczak

1. Welcome and introductions
   AW welcomed all to the AGM. The format of the meeting was explained. The AGM section would be conducted first, with two votes to take. Following the AGM, time had been allocated for questions related to AGM matters. The live feed would then be closed, after which a general discussion would be held.

   It was AW's last AGM in the capacity of the Chair of the VE Board. Appreciation was extended to the Board, hub staff, Mark Kontopoulos from British Volleyball Foundation and Janet Inman and Greg Brown from Volleyball England Foundation for their dedication and hard work over the past year as well as the totality of the membership. Lastly, AW thanked AS for taking minutes of all Board and AGM meetings over the last eight years.

1. Apologies
   Apologies had been received from Ali Shipway, Phil French, Nick Shaffery, Brian Stalker, and Jake Sheaf.

2. Minutes of AGM 2024 were taken as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3. Annual report
   CF thanked AW and SG for their service to the organisation.

   A summary of the Annual report was presented by CF. CF extended thanks to partners including the British Volleyball Federation, Volleyball England Foundation, Sport England, and the FIVB. Highlights of the year were broken down into engagement and exposure, income diversification, international presence and impact, and sport professionalisation.

   CF highlighted the following in terms of the four elements of the Annual report:
   - Engagement and exposure:
     - The Heritage project whose aim was to digitalise the sport's history/assets contributing to maintaining/developing the sense of identity across the community
     - Continued increase of the community's engagement across social media
     - HEVO programme had engaged thousands of players
   - Income diversification:
     - Reliance on SE funding had continued to decrease and commercial endeavors had been positive
     - 6 international events had been delivered on budget and with a surplus achieved
   - International presence and impact:
     - Gold medal for the Bello brothers in Rio, in November 2024
     - Relationships with international partners (e.g. CV, FIVB, Volleyball Word) continued to improve and the perception of VE on the international scene had been improving leading to more opportunities for sport.
   - Sports professionalisation:
     - Indoor Beach Volleyball Centre at Birmingham City University was reported on track to open later this year
     - Learner management system had been lunched with several courses available as part of the platform and more to come. The platform was intended as a go-to platform for learning connected to sport.

   In terms of next steps:
   - Community Volleyball pilot was still in the works
   - Move of Super League streaming and broadcasting onto OTT platform
   - Head coach role for beach volleyball would be recruited for in due course
   - Development of key indoor events would be investigated

4. Finance report/Management accounts
   A pre-recorded finance report was presented by Kevin Fletcher.
   - It was noted that a budgeted investment of £34k had changed to an actual investment of £23k.
   - Revenue totaled £1.8 million, exceeding budget by nearly £10k and up 11.5% on the

previous year.
- Some costs had been withheld to offset head office expenses.
- Commercial revenue had improved towards year-end.
- The competitions area showed strong financial results.
- It was also reported that financial, governance and compliance costs had exceeded budget, partly due to a rent review and national economic factors.
- Sport England funding made up 35% of total revenue. Competitions, events and other grants contributed a significant amount towards the total revenue.
- Closing bank balance stood at approximately £400k, with the adequate reserves present and expected to be maintained in 2025-26.
- In 2025-26, 10% growth was expected. Another £20k was planned to be invested in the sport.

AGM discussed:
- Clarifications were requested by Richard Callicott regarding the rent increase at SportPark. It was explained that although initial proposals had been high, successful negotiations had been undertaken using leverage such as the organisation's role as a campus partner.
- Concerns were raised by James Murphy about the variance in finance, governance and compliance costs. It was explained that this was due to increased head office expenses including rent reviews and inflation in supplier costs.
- It was confirmed that losses had been expected in specific areas, including finance, governance, and compliance. CF and AH explained that those losses had been planned due to all staff salaries being centralised in this section rather than distributed across operational departments. The board explained that budgeting had been conducted at the organisational level rather than line-by-line profitability, with the total budget designed to account for an overall strategic investment of reserves.
- CF confirmed that staff headcount had remained broadly unchanged. While there had been changes in personnel, overall staffing levels had remained steady. An increase in the number of student project officers was expected due to a partnership with Loughborough University, but those roles would not impact payroll costs significantly.
- Janet Inman raised concerns regarding the visibility of support for grassroots and regional structures within the strategic priorities. While the online learning platform was welcomed, attendees noted a lack of tangible support for counties and regions. The board acknowledged the feedback and agreed that stronger engagement was required. It was confirmed that a consultation with regional and county chairs would be conducted as part of the work of Get Keep Grow subgroup to identify further support needs.
- Proposals such as shared accounting systems, coordinated website management, and other centralised services were being explored. The board committed to identifying practical ways of reducing operational burden at grassroots level.
- AW thanked KF and CF.

5. The reappointment of directors
   Re-appointment for a final two-year term for Phil French and Andres Hernandez as Independent Directors and re-appointment for a second term of 4-years for Jess Plumridge, and Jake Sheaf was formally confirmed. This was noted for information.

   Voting procedures were explained, and the role of tellers was assumed by two volunteers from the floor (Janet Inman and Richard Callicott). Thirteen validated proxy appointments had been recorded, with twelve eligible votes present in the room. Five votes had been submitted by the clubs and passed onto their appointed reps and 7 had been given to the Chair.

A warm-up vote was held for engagement, after which the two ordinary resolutions were put to vote:

- Resolution 1: The reappointment of Duncan and Toplis as auditors was approved by a simple majority.
- Resolution 2: The election of Anton Kornilov (10 votes) as an elected director was confirmed following a vote. Thanks were extended to both candidates, and appreciation was expressed to Jeanne Riot (2 votes) for her candidacy and commitment.

6. General questions:
    - Appreciation was expressed by James Murphy to all volunteers and staff for their contributions.
    - Clarification was requested by James Murphy regarding who had approved the Annual Report. It was confirmed by AW that the Board had approved it. A further query was raised concerning the checks undertaken to ensure the report's accuracy. AW responded that the Board had received assurance that the hub team had conducted the necessary work to ensure the Annual Report's accuracy. A fact-check relating to the number of HEVOs referenced on page 10 is to be carried out.
    - A question was raised by James Murphy regarding the number of times the Transformational Sub-Group of the Competition Working Group had met. GB responded that meetings had taken place to develop the 5-year vision, although the exact number could not be confirmed.
    - Further enquiries were made by James Murphy concerning the reception to the relegation of 25% of teams and the 60% increase in fees. CF responded that feedback had been mixed. Mark Kontopoulos commented specifically on the fee increase and noted a lack of consultation regarding the change. He added that in his opinion the general response had leaned towards negative rather than mixed.
    - Pete Whyard raised concerns regarding the perceived ongoing lack of consultation with the membership and referenced a few perceived broken promises in this regard. A response was given by AW stating that a balance must always be struck in decision-making. Mark Kontopoulos expressed concerns that there appeared to be no option or willingness to revisit decisions. AW responded that responsibility for final decisions rested with the Board. James Murphy noted that a dedicated Super League role had previously existed and served as a valuable conduit for communication; its removal was felt to be a loss. AW acknowledged that learning could be taken from this. Pete Whyard added that a clear commitment to change was required and that the membership was being let down in terms of engagement and consultation. AW noted that while consultations had taken place in the past, they may not have been sufficient and that improvements could be made going forward.
    - James Murphy raised a question about the Kukri deal, specifically whether staff had been asked to pay for their kit. CF confirmed that under the terms of the deal, and in line with industry standards, staff had received the kit free of charge as representative of the sport. James Murphy queried whether referees were considered representatives for this purpose. AW stated that the prioritisation of free kit should be considered. AW responded that operational decisions such as this fell within the remit of the Board.
    - James Murphy queried income from the VolleyStore. CF responded that although the shop was not operating at a loss, performance had been below expectations due to issues with how Mikasa balls had entered the market. It was confirmed that this issue had since been resolved and that new deals would soon be available in the store. The query regarding income is to be raised with KF.

- Pete Whyard raised a question that had been submitted via the AGM webpage regarding the recruitment and retention of officials. With only 104 officials in total, concern was expressed given the volume of games. Pete Whyard also questioned the change in shoe colour requirements, noting a lack of justification and describing the display of sample kit as misleading. A discussion on this subject was held and AW thanked for raising this point in a constructive and helpful manner. AW stated that this would be considered as a matter of urgency by the working group.

7. AGM close
   AW reflected on his tenure as Chair of Volleyball England Board. AW commented on the work he had witnessed, the work of four CEOs, and the learning that had happened for him. AW was leaving with the reflection that the sport had moved forward owing to Board, staff and membership effort. AW was proud to have been Chair and was hopeful for the new Chair to enjoy leading the talented Board. AW thanked all including SG for his contributions and the check and challenge he had provided.

   AGM concluded at 1.05pm.