



Minutes of Volleyball England Board Meeting 26 November 2022 at 10am, online via Teams

Directors Present	Titles
Adam Walker [AW]	Independent Chair
Andres Hernandez [AH]	Independent Director
Brendan Fogarty [BF]	Elected Director
David Reeve [DR]	Elected Director
Freda Bussey [FB]	Elected Director
Jake Sheaf [JS]	Elected Director
Jess Plumridge [JP]	Elected Director
Richard Harrison [RH]	Independent Director
Simon Griffiths [SG]	Independent Director
Staff Present	
Charlie Ford [CFo]	Chief Executive Officer
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/21-22/28 Welcome from the Chair and apologies

AW welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies had been submitted by Clare Francis and Phil French.

28.1 Directors Conflict of Interest & Disclosures

An ongoing conflict of interest was related to JS appointed by VE as a consultant leading on Legacy from Birmingham 2022 work.

28.2 Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved by all present.

28.3 Previous minutes

Minutes of the 29 October 2022 were approved as true and accurate records subject to the following change:

EB/22-23/20: RH commented that diversity and inclusion were not part of Volleyball for Life subgroups work and therefore should be moved to appropriate place within the minutes of that meeting

28.4 Matters Arising/Actions List

There were no matters arising that would not be covered on the agenda.

EB/22-23/29 Updated Digital Transformation Business Case

ST highlighted the following in relation to the business case:

- During the 29 October board meeting, the board approved the Digital Transformation business case in principle, subject to further due diligence and investigation into inserting an opt-out clause and addressing a list of questions related to digital transformation supplied by the board. ST noted that Clare Francis had been extremely helpful in collating the questions and contractual due diligence.
- In terms of required development work, SG commented that Sport Lomo's solution would be configured for us in the most appropriate way for VE to be able to use it as opposed to developing anything new.
- In terms of the digital transformation support, 7League were more expensive but came with a great reputation within the sector. Alternative solutions have been explored including Rewrite Digital and they were significantly cheaper. However, development of membership and competition databases was not their specific area of expertise, but they were keen to learn and support where possible. Further, they said that should they feel that they would not be able to help us, they would make sure that they could recommend someone else. With this in mind, it was recommended to the board that VE partner with 7League subject to them leading on the project completely. Further, a number of members of the volleyball community with a background in digital projects had been approached to see whether they were interested in project manage the transformation. All approached declined this opportunity due to the lack of time or appropriate skills to project manage this work. They, however, offered to help in a consultative capacity going forward.

Board discussed:

- FB commented that there was an additional consideration concerning payments for the services related to the digital transformation. VE would need a Stripe Connect Account and would have to meet the associated charges or pass these onto members. ST confirmed that it was factored into the business case under the Transaction Fees.
- ST confirmed that Sport Lomo had been keen to develop the system and grow the sport. Sport Lomo were keen to explore the idea of regions coming on board and being part of the system.
- DR was pleased to see that the system was a configuration system rather than a development system. However, DR commented that the roadmap included within the board pack was not as detailed as he expected in terms of the level of detail around the forward look. Further, DR asked whether 7League had sufficient knowledge of Volleyball England to be able to support that process. If they did not, this meant a significant additional drain on the hub team especially ST. DR asked about the set-up of 7League's roles and responsibilities and what they would be paid for that the hub team could not achieve. ST answered that the success of the project would rely on both parties working together. However, it was the 7League's knowledge on how to drive the transformation that would be crucial to the success of the project. CFo added it was an important consideration. Discussion on terms of engagement/roles and responsibilities would be held with both Sport Lomo and 7Leagues.
- SG thought that the added cost due to using Stripe for payments was worth paying as it meant having an effective and efficient platform that would bring more members, regions, and counties on board. Secondly, 7League project management expertise was crucial to make the project successful as VE lacked the technical knowledge to ensure

the project would be successful. Also, it would be crucial for CFo and the hub team to spend sufficient time with Sport Lomo and 7League to clearly articulate what was needed from them. This meant that the Board would need to take account of the fact that some business as usual might have to be put on hold due to the digital transformation being a priority.

- DR commented that tennis used Stripe as a payment mechanism that had developed into a sport-wide payment system helping clubs to sell their own products and memberships adding to the revenue of the governing body.
- ST added that Sport Lomo had agreed to a break-out clause.
- AW asked for the progress of the project to become a standing agenda item at Board meetings going forward. CFo and ST were asked to communicate any urgent changes and developments in between the meetings if needed.
- BF asked whether the membership should be kept informed of the progress of the digital transformation project. CF responded that this was a part of the next phase of the project. CFo would bring people on board as early and frequently as possible. CFo planned to form a community of practice groups in the New Year which would be a good time to release communication around the project. DR stressed it was important for the membership to feel they were on a journey with VE regarding this. The board agreed that the external communications around the project should be frequent. It was also important for advocates of this work to participate in this communication including region and county representatives.
- KF reported that money put aside for this project in the previous year had been agreed by Sport England to be carried forward.

Board approved the recommendation to

- Appoint Sport Lomo as our preferred platform partner and progress to the contracting phase of the project (and Board is asked to give feedback on Clare discussion points below to feed into this).
- Appoint 7League as our Digital Project support partner.

ST left the meeting.

Action EB/22-23/29

Reporting on digital transformation progress to become a standing agenda item at Board meetings going forward. CFo and ST were asked to communicate any urgent changes and developments in between the meetings if needed.

EB/22-23/30 Transgender Policy – Proposed changes

RH reported the following in relation to the proposed changes to the policy:

- A meeting had been held between RH, AW, CFo, and a number of managers to discuss the proposed changes to the original version of the policy. Those were presented and highlighted in the two papers distributed as part of the Board pack
- the key replacements were:
 - the word “individual” had been replaced with a term “player”
 - the wording related to competitions had been changed from the original “if the rules of competition permit transgender players can play” to a more inclusive statement for transgender players to participate in mixed volleyball.

Board discussed:

- CFo explained the context around the key changes introduced to the policy. Those changes were a result of an ongoing commitment to best practice. This commitment also meant that a feedback form had been set up for anyone wishing to comment on the

policy. So far, over 180 responses have been received. Volleyball community members had mostly been supportive of the policy.

- JI commented that a number of sports had published their transgender policies and received mixed feedback.
- The board agreed that the policy would be reviewed every three months.
- AW thanked RH for his ongoing work on the policy. RH added that this work was a joint effort with the hub team.

The proposed changes were **approved** by the Board.

Action: EB/22-23/31

The Transgender Policy would be reviewed by the Board every three months.

EB/22-23/31 Officiating Crisis – Update

SG reported the following in relation to the officiating crisis as per the paper:

- Two key areas of concern had been identified as part of the Ace Service Sub-Group work that needed addressing: first was improving the officiating landscape and second was addressing the issues around governance and officials working groups
- To address the areas of concern, the Ace Service Sub-Group committed to hosting a series of hour-long calls to investigate data and come up with ideas for solutions. Some of the solutions included:
 - a league-wide scrapping of the rule about providing food at NVL games at the same time as increasing referees' match fees by £10 (the two measures should be cost-neutral from a club perspective but would increase our own competition costs).
 - to commence a referee long service recognition programme
 - offer a top-up expenses pot for referee's keen to travel further than might normally be expected, without inconveniencing the clubs.
 - make conflict resolution training available to all referees (at no cost to themselves).
- Some of those solutions would mean a cost to Volleyball England.

Board discussed:

- RH commented that Volleyball for Life group would take control of the courses for coaches and referees from the New Year meaning that the hub team would have an increased oversight of developing of the volleyball workforce going forward. CFo added that this meant that the operational reliance on volunteers would decrease. This would tie into thinking around future strategic direction of the organisation and putting VE in control of administering processes, freeing up the volunteer capacity.
- AH observed that the paper contained a number of solutions for existing referees, but not really tackling the problems faced by new referees, like the entry barriers for new referees or for people looking into starting their journey as referees. SG responded that the entry pathway needed to be rethought as well as products for referees/coaches at various stages of their journey. CFo commented that VE lacked a clear and effective people plan. It was CFo's intention to have a number of key pledges on how VE would engage, recruit, onboard, develop and retain people in the sport both in paid and voluntary capacity as part of strategic direction.
- JI observed that the registering system for courses was challenging. This could be made simpler. JI agreed that it was important to provide a package supporting newly qualified coaches/referees to enable them transitioning through the system.
- SG agreed that observing referees and coaching in person was a challenge due to the lack of workforce to engage in observing. Remote observation was an ongoing

discussion point. BF discussed challenges connected to remote observation. SG commented that there needed to be a minimum standard in relation to such observation to help with this issue.

- SG reported that solutions would be discussed with the group before Christmas and a further update on the recommendations and progress will be made in January 2023...

EB/22-23/32 AOB

KF reported the following in relation to the audit:

- The audit had resulted in five management questions that had been replied to. Following this the auditors had been invited to come to SportPark to sign off the accounts. This would take place before the end of the year. AW would be informed of that date.

AH reported the following in relation to the work of the FSR committee:

- The credit card limit for Volleyball England had been increased for everyday expenses. Most of these expenses were pre-approved and well controlled.
- A card for Volleyball England Federation had been issued. This was based on the agreement of it being used for UK Sport funded activity that Volleyball England is in receipt of. This would be reviewed by the finance team on a regular basis.

EB/22-23/33 Meeting Finalisation

33.1 Review of Actions

Actions were agreed.

33.2 Meeting Close

Meeting closed at 11.15am

Actions	Who
EB/22-23/20: October board minutes to be updated, moving the transgender policy update out of the Volleyball for Life sub-group section.	CFo
EB/22-23/29 Reporting on the progress of the digital transformation to be a standing agenda point	CFo
EB/22-23/31 The Transgender Policy would be reviewed by the Board every three months.	Board

