

BOARD SYNOPSIS – February 2025

Meeting	England Hockey Board Meeting				
Venue	England Hockey Head Office				
Date	4 th February 2025	Start Time	10:00	End Time	14:00
Lead	Kath Russ, Chair (KR)				
Present:	Nick Pink (NP), Rich Beer (RB), Kuldeep Kaur (KK), Shelagh Everett (SE), Damian Smith (DS), Jacqui Barlow(JB), Simon Mantell (SMa), Anne-Marie Garner (AMG, Sheila Morrow (SMo)				
On-line:	Angela Durnin (AD)				
Invited in:	Andy Tapley (AT) – Chair of Finance and Audit, (On-line)				
Notetaker:	Michele Townsend (MT)				
Apologies	Heather Williams (HW)				
Opening Comments from the Chair and CEO KR and NP extended their thanks to SMO for her contribution as this was her last board meeting. SMO conveyed how effective the Board is and how much she has enjoyed and appreciated her time at GB Hockey. SMO extended her thanks on behalf of GB.					
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST KR – Item 3 – Chair of BUCS KR – Item 7 – Facilities Loan Scheme – appointment of law firm					
2. 2023/24 CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS – FOR INFORMATION, APPROVAL AND ACTION i. The Board were provided with the minutes of the Audit Committee for information and reference. ii. KK presented year end August figures and explained that throughout September to December, the audit Committee review takes place and any advice given is considered by the Audit Committee. This year Hockey Futures has been integrated into the accounts but no longer-term decision of the future of the charity has been agreed. iii. KK explained that this year two audits have progressed including statutory audit and system/process audit which has been challenging, however the year ends below the agreed deficit. iv. ADT added that this year has been a more challenging audit from a staffing perspective with changes in personnel, compounded with the added complication of the VAT issue with the new system. However he confirmed that the Audit Committee was satisfied with the letter of representation. He emphasised the importance of the Board being comfortable with the letter given their responsibility for sign-off. v. ACTION - The Board discussed the disproportionate time associated with Hockey Futures and agreed to find a resolution to how the charity is handled in the future as quickly as possible – CEO/KK. vi. APPROVED - The Board confirmed their understanding of the letter and approved the accounts as requested.					
2.1 BUDGET, CURRENT YEAR TO DATE, FORECAST AND MITIGATING ACTIONS – FOR INFROMATION AND ACTION Paper taken as read with the following comments.					

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- i. KK presented a paper showing the year-to-date December results. Variances to date were largely timing and unbudgeted restructuring (£78k). She also confirmed budget holders are now in receipt of reports from the new system.
- ii. The paper moved onto to highlighting the current forecasted year-end deficit which is in excess of the £150k target agreed and budget holders are considering what could be stopped, paused or delayed in order to make the necessary savings. In addition we are awaiting a response to the application to Sport England and UK Sport to invest in broadcast.
- iii. The Board were not persuaded that there was any value in reprofiling the Sport England funding as this creates increased pressure on future years without altering any cost savings.
- iv. The Board raised concerns about revenue generation, current debtors, and commercial opportunities. KR questioned where the additional income would come from and the impact of the budget savings on work programmes.
- v. KK explained that the high debtors number discussed in the Audit Committee was related primarily to Hockey Centre which was received in January and confirmed to the auditors. The finance team and relevant departments across the organisation are working together to recover the remaining debt which is high volume, low value.
- vi. NP explained that revenue generation has primarily focused on ticket sales in relation to Super6s and Pro League and decisions have now been made to make sure we hit our targeted breakeven budget. With regard to commercial partnerships the Channel 4 deal has enabled short-term conversations to take place.
- vii. KR summarised that the current picture indicates that the deficit will be higher than £150k, which reinforces the fact that a budget must be signed off at the start of the financial year to enable any adjustments to be made in advance, to mitigate any risks.
- viii. ADT assured the Board that there will be a budget before the end of the year, the timetable is outlined, and the finance committee will ensure it is presented to Board before year end.
- ix. **ACTION - NP confirmed Exec were clear on the steer from the Board and agreed to present back to Board a revised picture ASAP – NP**

3. CLUB MEMBERSHIP MODEL – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. KR thanked RB and the team for the effort expended in progressing the proposal thus far.
- ii. RB presented a slide deck highlighting progress on the consultation so far and the updates made to the website.
- iii. He explained that the first face-to-face consultation forum was held on 17th January. 716 clubs have signed up to the forums and of those signed up 30% have attended a forum or online session. The team are currently following up with clubs who have signed up but not attended and the CDMs are also following up. He added that the geographical coverage is reasonable.
- iv. The paper highlighted the current perception of the offer, but more work needs to be done to provide clubs with expected figures.
- v. It was agreed that a final decision regarding the proposal for the AGM be agreed at the meeting planned for 20th February.
- vi. RB proposed that, if we proceed, a weighted vote is called at the AGM on 18th March. The final proposal wording to be agreed on the meeting on 20th February.
- vii. The Board discussed the National Hockey Fund, to support State Schools and EDI initiatives. This was an area voted for in the original consultation survey and the proposal includes that £1 of every team and adult player creates a fund of approximately £100k.
- viii. RB explained that the project is underway, working with YST and the network of school games organisers, of which there are 450, to deliver pilots in areas where demand is high and there is little or no club provision. Delivery is planned for September to December with a view to reporting the success of the investment at next year's AGM

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- ix. **The Board were excited about the possibilities and fully supportive of the project.**
- x. RB highlighted that the topic of most debate was GMS and concerns had been raised about our ability to implement the improvements in time. There was recognition that some progress has been made on core aspects, but one specific area of concern was the ability for Club Admins to remove players from their clubs.
- xi. KK confirmed that a nominal figure had been included in the membership proposal to make the necessary changes.
- xii. NP confirmed that some changes had already been made and a plan for what is realistic has been developed.
- xiii. **ACTION - It was agreed to make the change to the Admin ability to remove players a priority. NP**
- xiv. **ACTION - It was further agreed that a paper on the future of GMS was necessary. NP**
- xv. The Board discussed whether or not Universities should continue to pay a reduced fee (one-third of the full team fee) or the same fee as other 'Saturday' Clubs. Under the new membership proposal, this would remain at one third, but University Clubs playing on a Saturday would need to play the registration fee.
- xvi. The discussion considered whether it was right to treat students differently to children in deprived areas, the pressure on University funding and the importance of retaining University players in the sport.
- xvii. **The Board approved the recommendation to leave as is.**
- xviii. As part of the paper the Board considered the wording suggested for the AGM Calling Notice. It was agreed to make a final decision at the meeting on 20th February.

4. PROCESS FOR APPOINTMENT OF NEW NEDS – **FOR INFORMATION**

- i. KR outlined the process agreed with the Nominations and Appointments Committees, adding that it is hoped that both appointments will be made by the AGM.
- ii. For clarity, she explained that all member elected candidates with the relevant skills, who have complied with the process will be put forward for election at the AGM.
- iii. The INEDs will be recruited via interviews and appointed by the Board.

5. COACHING CULTURE – **FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION**

- i. Following the recent Cycle and performance review the Board were made aware that there were some issues raised within the feedback of favouritism and potential bias. Whilst this was the view and/or perception of a very small number of players it was important that all matters relating to performance culture were taken seriously.
- ii. NP is aware of the emerging themes from the review and will share the feedback with the incoming Performance Director. He explained that there are also plans to establish a Performance Advisory Group to understand how best to review and address cultural issues and to keep Board more informed.
- iii. **ACTION - It was agreed that a further discussion should take place once the new PD is in place. NP**

6. CLUB MEMBERSHIP DATA – **FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION**

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. RB highlighted that the 2024 numbers have shown an increase and are now in line with those reported in 2019 before the pandemic, although he added that the 2019/20 numbers are distorted because of the BUCS role that we had.
- ii. In addition there are signs of better retention but still challenges from the age of 12 to end of University participation. The older age groups are looking better following the development of Masters hockey.
- iii. The Board discussed the ability to report on more accurate participation numbers via GMS. DS and NP are discussing a solution with the supplier to understand costs.
- iv. KR suggested that participation is a topic for discussion at the Strategy Day.
- v. RB highlighted the support provided to clubs, the work being done to engage with clubs and the process for sharing data, which is invaluable when committees change.

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- vi. **ACTION - It was agreed to spend more time discussing participation at the Strategy Day – KR**
- vii. **ACTION - It was agreed NP would provide a paper exploring the challenges, and proposed solutions, to the gathering of data (including ED&I data) within EH. NP**

7. FACILITIES LOAN SCHEME – **FOR INFORMATION AND APPROVAL**

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. RB presented a paper to update Board on progress. He explained that discussions are being held with Sporting Assets around the governance model which has changed from two years ago. He suggested that the Working Group work through the changes and provide an updated to Board.
- ii. The main change is how arm's length it is from England Hockey and how we retain enough control whilst still recognising the independence in SPV.
- iii. KR confirmed that the final decision will need to be made by Board but sought agreement from Board that they are comfortable with the direction of travel and willing to incur some cost in order to progress things. She added that lawyers are comfortable that legally the current direction is fine.
- iv. The Board discussed the importance of good governance, given the sums of money involved, and a balanced Board. It was agreed that it should consist of hockey representation, and independent Chair and a director of the SPV to allow for balance for recommendations to the investment body, in line with EH strategy.
- v. RB explained that the process for applications is still being worked through and with limited resource, managing expectations would need to be a consideration. Clarity of roles and responsibilities will be presented along with the final proposal and a suite of paperwork to support. He added that any investment would not show on our Balance Sheet and any risk levied at us would be ring-fenced.
- vi. RB highlighted some changes in alternative playing surfaces, along with the loan scheme, will mean a revised Facilities Strategy.
- vii. **APPROVED - The Board approved the direction of travel.**

8. CEO / EXEC REPORT – **FOR INFORMATION**

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. NP highlighted that Home Nations meetings are progressing well with regard to the hosting of Pro League in 2027. Currently talking through commercials.
- ii. With regard to playing formats he confirmed that there was good support and consensus on this and will bring back to a future Board meeting.
- iii. In addition to MENED and INED recruitment he highlighted that GB Board is currently recruiting a President.
- iv. The FIH are leading a strategic review of FIHPL following our request and are looking at commercial propositions primarily, but with consideration for the whole programme. It is hoped to be completed by end of June 2025.
- v. NP confirmed that the new Performance Director, Bobby Crutchley, will start on 24th March 2025 and that Men's Head Coach recruitment is underway.
- vi. AMG asked about plans for content strategy on the back of the Channel 4 deal and the upcoming Euros. NP confirmed that we are currently tendering for a ticketing partner, and content will be developed around this. He added that once Channel 4 have created content, we can then promote along with the timetable.
- vii. KR asked if Channel 4 were pleased with the level of engagement. NP confirmed they are and will reassess post India.

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i. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING & AOB

ii. Accuracy

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate recording.

iii. Matters arising (see action points tracker)

Updates and comments have been added against the actions in the tracker.

iv. AOB

KR confirmed that the Risk Register will be considered at the next Board, along with a more detailed look into Safeguarding.

RB reminded the Board that the EH Awards would be held on 7th June in Leicester – board to attend if possible. A follow up email will be sent regarding the selection panel.

The meeting closed at 14:08.