

BRITISH FENCING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Date of Meeting	23.11.2021
Location	By Video Link
Present	Directors: Chair (ML), PA, MC, TCJ, CO, MO, JW, JL, JC, TM, FW
In Attendance	Exec: CEO (GU), DM, KR Observers: GL, JM, MR, FG
Apologies	YH, JHoneybone

1. INTRODUCTION

Chair Opening Remarks

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including observers George Liston, Matthew Russell and Jack Magill. Also noting that we need to think through the bigger picture and support the executive team.

New Declarations of Interest: None

Conflict of Interest: None

Interim Decisions: Chair updated Board on resolutions passed by the membership at the 2021 AGM in October, including the appointment of Hilary Philbin as British Fencing's President for a term to expire at the first AGM of BF after the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. Chair also confirmed that the proposals at the EGM had been passed, allowing EGM to be run on a virtual basis and AGM to be run on a hybrid basis.

Chair had received little member feedback from the Chair update that was sent out to the membership last month.

Risk Items: None raised.

2. APPROVE PREVIOUS BOARD MINUTES

Board minutes of September 14th approved (TCJ proposed, CO seconded)

3. CEO CONTEXT

CEO briefed the Board on the following updates/information

- FIE Congress is this weekend
- Junior/U20 World Cup season is underway
- EFC Cadet/U17 circuit has started
- Changing Covid travel protocols/restrictions making it very difficult – in some cases fencers not able to attend competitions despite being selected. In some instances BF has changed selection/ranking competitions to non-nominated competitions as a result.
- The Home Nations are concentrating on the lead up to the Commonwealth Championships, regular meeting between BF & Home Nation Commonwealth leads to coordinate activity.

[REDACTED]

- BF CEO re-elected to the Board of the BOA (British Olympic Association).
- Membership and Clubs: Attention drawn to Balances Scorecard in pack. Membership numbers as of today stand at 9133, pre-covid they were around 10,700 and during the Covid peek the numbers fell to around 6,900. Loss of membership was not focussed on a specific category of membership, but was across all categories of membership. Schools are bouncing back but also having issues with equipment (being asked not to share equipment) and securing volunteers.
- In line with previous discussions, BF will recruit a membership officer to focus on closing the gap in paid memberships.
- Club Poll snapshot: around 57 of the 400 clubs have responded to the latest polls, the biggest issues clubs are experiencing with equipment and a lack of volunteers. Also some fencers have not returned to the clubs. Beginner courses are restarting at clubs which is a very important part of our pipeline.
- Domestic events: BF League roll out planned for 2022.
- [REDACTED]
- International Events: As at this moment in time there are currently 22 events being managed with an average of 12-20 people selected and going to each event. The volume of administration required from BF to support this activity has expanded hugely and further resource will be required if the situation does not improve.
- There has been a complaint about the selection policy (based on interpretation) – updated policy in Board pack, to be discussed.
- There have been no new disciplinary cases since the last Board meeting

4. COMMUNITY CULTURE DISCUSSION

Meeting documents are in the Board folder, including the planning of Luxembourg and letters to senior national athletes on behaviour towards BF staff and volunteers.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

There followed a discussion by the Board including the following:

- Anxiety is spilling over into everything after COVID, what can we do to support staff and volunteers. Should we sit down with identified people and have conversations about the issues?
- No excuse for bad manners

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5. FINANCE 21-22 Q2 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS AND FORECAST AGAINST 21-22 BUDGET

At the AGRC meeting on the 9th November Francis Wilkinson was elected as the Chair of AGRC. Management Accounts show a good result compared to budget for the unfunded [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Membership is improving.

Noted papers in Board pack - *Management Accounts to 30 September 2021, Membership Income 2021-22*

Updated Conflicts Register reviewed and no arising action.

AGRC did a deep dive into the Risk Log and reviewed the risks that are already there. Updated Risk Log in Board pack.

6. BF BOARD STRATEGIC WORK PLAN ITEM OVERVIEW

Chair took Board through the work plan.

Commercial: Chair met with commercial steering group. Commercial doing well and ahead of budget. Getting in an engagement manager to sell primary school packs to schools. Have already sold 3-4 this year and 129 individual explore fencing courses to mainly teachers. Team keen on hiring the engagement manager which can be a break-even item in around 6 months. Not a Board decision but Chair asking Board to note it. Note short paper in Board Pack on school strategy intersection and hiring.

Other financial sustainability initiatives update – Recruitment of New Membership hire will take place in early 2022.

BF Charity/Social Impact Update

Social impact: Work on autistic children within sports work has started in 3 schools. Looking to see if we can do a trial with medical charities.

Charity: The Charity welcomed Georgina Usher as a new trustee. Trustees had a meeting with Johnny Davis to discuss the structure/strategy and shape of the future Olympic cycle and how the Charity/donors could support. Elite fencing donations will more likely come from individual donors.

Environmental Policy: BF ran a consultation with members based on draft policy. Points made were BF needs to take a leadership role in encouraging community to adopt certain policies, but focus should be on supporting the community. Also, BF to define what it means by Environmental policy and focus on areas where we can have an impact. May go back to community to get feedback on how important this is to the community right now.

Regional Governance Project Update: a work in progress. Documentation of Terms of Reference between England Fencing and Regions underway and being agreed. **Action Chair:** to bring back to Board when better view of what has been decided and how it will affect BF. Noted paper in Board pack *Board Summaries - Regional Review and GB League*

IR Strategy Update: UK Sport Funded international work programme. Noting papers in Board pack - BF IR strategy paper and UK Sport funded objectives. CEO, President and Chair met to review objectives and current strategy. Document in Board pack summarise what BF are trying to achieve. Wanting to see better safeguarding, anti-doping. Getting candidates with influence into the international federations. ML joining International Relations Committee along with CEO, President, PA and UK Sport representative to monitor delivery of IR Strategy.

Governance/BDO – CEO will provide approved minutes to BDO after this meeting. By 7th December the finance side should be finalised. A new version of the Governance Code has been published, in Board pack. There are 3 new plans that NGB's will have to put into place, more information expected Jan 2022.

ADP:

Noting papers in Board pack, *Tokyo Report, Weapon Strategy v0.3, ADP Steering Group Q2 Report 20211010*

Update Selection Policy for Approval: There are minor changes to the GBR selection policy including: a date change, update to expand the reserved right in exceptional circumstances to adjust the number of athletes to also include number of teams. Changes due to lack of circumstances/costs. Closing loophole in exemption rules (ie exemption must be relevant to the most recent event, not one in prior seasons). Allow for additional exemptions to be made after the event in certain circumstances.

BDF/BF update: noting paper in Board Pack - *BF BDF Responsibility Merger Consultation Update*. Small project group being funded by Sport England. There appears to be broad consensus of the coming together of BDF and BF allowing BF to provide fencing to a wide range of athletes. Primary legal route is for BF to take on assets and liabilities of BDF which are not significant. No impediment to BF taking it on in our articles. BDF is having a consultation with their members and there is a detailed operation due diligence piece being done with BF and BDF to identify any areas of risk. Seeking clearance on how the World Class programme is managed and the associated costs with international teams and which areas lie with BDF/BF. Currently the WCP is run by the EIS. Approval will be brought back to the Board once facts are clear.

7. BREAK

8. TACKLING INEQUALITIES/SPORT ENGLAND

VMOST – To reflect the current strategic intent of BF, the Board is being asked to approve a minor change to Strategic Objective 2 to insert diverse and inclusive to become 'A stronger, empowered, diverse and inclusive community of 30,000 fencers, volunteers, coaches and supporters.

Board approved

CEO presented an overview of work on the Sport England 22+ Funding Bid. Presentation and paperwork in the Board pack. Important elements to remember:

- Uniting the Movement (UTM) which is Sport England's 10-year strategy to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity.
- 3 key objectives are 1. Advocating for movement, sport and physical activity, 2. Joining forces on five big issues and 3 Creating the catalysts for change.
- 5 big issues 1. recover and reinvent, 2 connecting communities, 3 positive experiences for children and young people, 4 connecting with health and 5 wellbeing and active environments.
- Organisations will have one or more different roles – Systemic, Governing and Delivery. And

these are funded separately

- As an NGB we are considered a 'System Partner'. Delivery role also includes talent. Governing sits alongside Systemic role.
- From a Funding perspective - Systemic is for 5 years, Governing for 5 years and Delivery for 3 years.

The process is collaborative. Sport England currently dealing with over 130 submissions and BF are in Phase 2. In Phase 1 we requested an uplift to support a) integration in disability/wheelchair fencing, b) clubs and volunteers and c) delivery of MGF. We were only invited to bid for a) and c), with no available funding to support clubs and volunteers.

CEO presented an overview of the draft Visions and Goals which sit against each of the funded roles. These have been developed, by the BF team and identified stakeholders, in the context of the current BF VMOST and in many cases continuing the work being delivered as part of the 2021-22 operational plan.

Action All: Board members to read the submission paperwork to confirm alignment with BF vision.

Action CEO: Provide Board with supporting documentation which contains more details including alignment of submission to BF strategy

CEO will put together an additional session if Board directors need it.

9. BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE ITEMS: NOMCOM

NomCom recommended Board to approve the following, as highlighted in the papers in the Board pack:

1. Change in the Bye-Laws in relation to Election Timetable: item 5. If BF is notified in writing of non-receipt by a member before the closing date BF will resend the voting papers within three working days after BF's actual receipt of the written request. (changed from voting papers by the next working day) and increasing the working days to 5 for the written notification of the names of the candidates who have been elected or deemed elected to the candidates.
2. Minor changes to underlying Terms of Reference for all BF Standing Committees
3. Updated BF Delegated Authority and Matters Reserved
4. Minor changes to Honours Committee Terms of Reference

Clare Halsted is working with the CEO to define the role of the medical sub- committee. MC will be the link director between the Board and the medical committee. Nomcom recommended that the Board approve the initial TOR of the Medical Committee

Nomcom also noted the results of the EFC selections.

As previously approved by Board, JL appointed as Independent Director on NomCom and becomes the senior independent director of the Board. MC has also joined NomCom as observer.

NomCom papers to note in Board pack.

10. BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE ITEMS: AGRC

Fully covered above in Finance item.

11. STANDING ITEM - ANTI-DOPING

Update in Board pack. BF are engaging with the Home Nations and ensuring all HN's submit on it and align with BF.

12. STANDING ITEM - SAFEGUARDING

Documents in Board pack.

At last Board it was asked 'is ADP a safe space'. Paper entitled 'not on my watch' has been produced how we create a safe space and monitor mood check in's with the athlete.

Communications regarding new safeguarding structure have gone out to Regions and Home Nations. We are also working to give Scottish Fencing access to the BF Case Management system.

Confirmation of England Fencing Board agreement to the new safeguarding structure/group in Board pack.

We are looking to bring in regional volunteers to be trained up to join this new safeguarding sub-group.

[REDACTED]

There is an external review of safeguarding policy which we will be outsourcing.

CEO asked Board for help on safeguarding review. **Action TM** to support CEO with review (after Disciplinary)

Had meeting with CPSU safeguarding in sport unit to review Safeguarding Action Plan who will report back if anything to add.

YH (in role as Safeguarding Champion) and CEO reviewed risk log which has been updated as a result.

13. STANDING ITEM - EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

BOARD MEETING MINUTES 23rd NOVEMBER 2021

Board noted end of cycle report (in Board folder) to be discussed further at the January Board away sessions.

Transgender documents also in folder.

Equality survey is about to go out and will be kept open over the Christmas period to give people time to respond to it.

The privacy policy has some minor updates with more clarity. **Action TM** to mark up and send changes to Board directors.

Board agreed it is happy with the other changes. JL proposed, TM seconded

14. AOB

Request to start Disciplinary and Grievance procedures review. **Action TM** to look at.

It was noted that we do not have a members grievance process. Do we need a separate grievance policy, or do we use the complaints procedures? Chair agreed we have to look at all across the Board.

Board agreed to start the review process.

Senior athlete panel – update delayed but due. Getting little interaction with the current panel. Hopefully a new elected panel (elections imminent) will bring renewed energy from the panel members. Board to think about additional ways to engage with the senior athlete panel, and the role/requirement of a separate youth panel.