

## **Minutes of the Sport England Board meeting of 4 February 2020**

Sport England, 21 Bloomsbury Street, London, WC1B 3HF

**Chair:** Nick Bitel (NB)

**Members:** Natalie Ceeney (NC)  
Rashmi Becker (RB)  
Ian Cumming (IC)  
Chris Grant (CG)  
Sue James (SJ)  
Andy Long (AL)  
David Mahoney (DM)  
Tove Okunniwa (TO)  
Karen Pickering (KP)  
Azeem Akhtar (AA)

**Attendees:** Tim Hollingsworth (TH)  
Mike Diaper (MD)  
Alison Donnelly (ADo)  
Lisa O'Keefe (LOK)  
Chris Perks (CP)  
Nick Pontefract (NP)  
Phil Smith (PS)  
Jon Fox (JF) (Item 6,7,8)  
Hannah Kerly (HK) - Secretary  
Simon Macqueen (SM) (Item 6,7,8)  
Naomi Shearon (NS) (Item 6,7,8)  
Neasa Russell (NR) (Item 7,8)  
Duncan Truswell (DT) (Item 7,8)

**Guests:** Anna Deignan, DCMS (AD)

**Apologies:** Charles Johnston (CJ)

## **CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION**

1. NB welcomed Board Members to the first meeting of 2020. Apologies had been received from Charles Johnston. Board members noted that Mohamed Elsarky had resigned from the Board.

### **Interests**

2. TO declared an interest in the Early Investment Decisions paper. The Board agreed that this did not necessitate recusal from general discussion on this occasion.
3. No other declarations of interest were received further to those already registered.

### **Minutes**

4. Minutes of the Board meeting of 10 December 2019 were **APPROVED** as a correct record.

### **Matters Arising**

5. The Board noted matters arising from the Board meeting on 10 December and earlier meetings, all of which were ongoing or had been completed. The deep dive into the Women's Priority was on the agenda for the February Investment Committee. Following this discussion, a date would be timetabled to bring the discussion to the Board.

## **CEO REPORT**

6. TH addressed the Board Members, thanking them for their continued support on the 'This Girl Can' Campaign and 'Sport for all?' Conference.

### **This Girl Can – Phase 4: #MeAgain. Update on Launch**

7. TH highlighted the 'This Girl Can' #MeAgain Launch, and thanked Board members for their support. The launch had received very positive feedback. Sport England had been in early conversations with Little Simz (who had performed the soundtrack) about future collaboration. The Board agreed that she could be an ongoing asset to TGC campaign. It was noted that an activity finder directing women to opportunities for activities was being constructed and would be launched in due course.

### **“Sport for All?” Why ethnicity and culture matters in sport and physical activity**

8. Once again, TH thanked the Board for their support at the 'Sport for All?' Launch in Birmingham. Feedback and commentary from the event were being processed.
9. Board Members reflected that it had been a positive day, with many different groups and people being brought together. There had been some difficult conversations, yet equally, there had been a recognition that SE was trying to behave and act differently. It was acknowledged that improving representation in Sport and Physical Activity would be a challenging journey, and cultural change would not be immediate. Trust would develop from people actively seeing a different way of working, and Sport England would need to demonstrate it was rising to these challenges.

### **Collaboration on Place Based Working**

10. Board members discussed Sport England's collaboration on place-based working. The Board felt that although substantial knowledge and evidence had already been generated from Local Delivery Pilots, there remained much work to be done, particularly around how Sport England's new strategic approach ensured its investment was reaching the right places and people.

11. Congratulations were offered to Sport England Officers, on the work put into the 'Stronger Towns Fund', noting this would be a lot of resource, but could be very beneficial.
12. Members enquired as to whether a mapping of the money was available, as the Members would be interested in seeing how the funding was used and where it mapped geographically.

### **The Football Foundation**

13. Following the appointment of Martin Glenn as chair of the Football Foundation, Tim Hollingsworth (whose role as Trustee of the Football Foundation had previously been registered) provided the Board with an update.
14. The Foundation was currently looking at how both existing and new facilities for football across the country could be used to incorporate further community use and be more inclusive. The Partners in the Football Foundation were also continuing to look at the effectiveness of the Foundation and looking at investing in its capabilities further in the future, following the Portas Review held last year.
15. The Sport England Board **NOTED** all items under the CEO Report.

## **FINANCE**

### **Management Accounts**

16. In Serena Jacobs' absence, NP informed the Board of the highlights of the Management Accounts paper, noting that Lottery income was at the highest level it had been for some time, partly as a result of the significant number of rollovers this year.
17. While it was noted that performance against the lottery cost target had improved, NP also highlighted that there was a significant challenge to meet our lottery awards forecast. This was a reflection

more broadly on some overly optimistic planning and budget setting, which the Executive Team was addressing in the 2020/21 budget setting process.

18. [REDACTED PARAGRAPH].

### **2019–20 Annual Report and Accounts Flat Plan**

19. NP informed the Committee of the methodology behind the flat plan. Previously Sport England had focused on the ‘Disruptors’, this year the focal point would be on the Priorities.
20. For the record, it was noted that the Audit Committee would do a detailed analysis of the Annual Report and Accounts. If any Board Members did want to input, they would be able to do so offline.
21. The Members discussed whether Sport for All and Ethnicity should be incorporated into the Annual Report. It was confirmed there would be a section that would be project focused, including: We are Undefeatable, Sport for All, etc. The Board Members agreed they would want to see more prominence on these items.
22. The Sport England Board **NOTED** the 2019–20 Annual Report and Accounts Flat Plan.

### **INVESTMENT DECISIONS**

#### **Transfer of Exchequer Funds to Ecorys (For School Game Organisers)**

23. MD informed the Board that this was the mechanism used to transfer the funding to Ecorys. DCMS’s share of the funding (£4m) and £2.3 of the £7m from the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) was confirmed. Sport England awaited final confirmation of the remaining £4.7m from DHSC and were confident this would be received shortly.

24. There were some apprehensions about agreeing to transfer the full £10.7m (either as one payment or two depending on when DHSC confirmed the remaining fund) ahead of SE receiving confirmation on the £4.7m.
25. SE Officers noted the concern and explained that SE's formal commitment to SGOs was currently just £6.3m, until the remaining funding was fully confirmed. This would fund SGOs until the end of October 2020. Given the two options as set out in the paper, the Board were more comfortable on only transferring the funds that had already been confirmed. SE Officers were confident the remainder of the money would be received before April 1. DCMS confirmed they were working hard with their counterparts at DHSC and were confident the funds would be confirmed shortly.
26. The Board had a brief discussion on the unlikely case of Sport England not receiving the funding from DHSC, acknowledging that this could be a significant reputational risk if not handled appropriately.
27. The Board **AGREED** to the transfer of £6.3m to Ecorys to cover SGO awards between April 2020 and the end of October 2020. It was **AGREED** that an update would be brought back to the March Board meeting to either confirm the remaining £4.7m had been secured and request its transfer or setting out SE's plans for mitigating against the reputational risks associated with the shortfall in funding.
28. The Sport England Board **APPROVED** an award of up to £10.7million to Ecorys for the Financial 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021. This award would be made as two payments of £6.3 Million in April 2020 and £4.4million subject to the confirmation from DHSC on the final share of the funding.

*NS, JF, SM, DT & NR joined the meeting.*

## 2016–21 STRATEGY

### New Strategy Cycle – Framework Publication

29. NS presented the paper which set out a proposed outline for the 'Strategy Framework': the interim strategy publication due for publication in March/ April 2020. The paper set out the proposed format: Sport England's vision; its purpose, mission and values; the (revolutionary) How? And the (evolutionary) What?
30. It was acknowledged that Board Members would be given the opportunity to engage in the content in the March Board. At this Board, Sport England Officers were asking for approval of the direction of travel.
31. The Board Members discussed what they wanted to achieve from this, who they needed to have conversations with and the thinking of how this all related to the next set of Government strategies. Anna Deignan advised attendees the Government Strategy would be determined once new Ministers were in place. At this stage, however, DCMS foresaw no significant changes that would affect the Sport England Strategy.
32. Members reflected on the proposed framework. Feedback included:
  - a) The importance of clearly determining those with whom Sport England wanted to work and those whom they subsequently were trying to engage.
  - b) Realism about the document's audience and the need to open up discussions around common themes rather than just on Sport England itself.
  - c) The need to test further any presumptions implied in the Framework around (for example) routes to markets; key partners; relationship and trust building.
  - d) Learning from what had and hadn't gone well in the current strategy, as well as adapting to what has changed in the environment and what is needed now: Sport England was

operating in a different context to that at the start of the current strategy.

33. Board members noted proposals for developing the strategy. The important next step would be communicating back to people what we have taken from all the conversations and relaying back to them what we have heard.
34. Sport England would then lead a further six months of engagement and involvement (as opposed to a formal linear consultation process); involving further conversations with established partners, new partners and importantly some of those with whom Sport England had not yet worked. The document shared publicly in March/April would be significant but only one element of this iterative process. Sport England would not define anything or declare anything as 'set in stone' until the Autumn of 2020 when the Strategy would be published.
35. Board members broadly supported the direction of travel proposed in the framework, but felt it was important that more substantive Board level input was factored in as the strategy was developed. The Board therefore asked for further information before the formal Board meeting of March 2020 to be shared offline, to give the members adequate time for reflection, and for a substantive discussion item to be scheduled at that meeting.

### **New Strategy Cycle – Early Investment Decisions**

36. Nick Pontefract presented the paper. Sport England held a role as a 'steward' of a complex 'ecosystem' of sports sector organisations, often well-established and with long-term funding relationships with Sport England. These bodies provide significant capacity in areas important to Sport England, not least in maintaining the regular activity levels of large sections of the population - thereby generating a large proportion of participants in sport and physical activity. Many of these funding agreements run out in March 2021. This 'hard stop' posed challenges for Sport England in terms of the continuity of funding for many organisations leading into a new



strategic plan period, but also opportunities to assert and exemplify how it wanted to work differently, and to establish different relationships across the sector.

37. The Board discussed the broad funding strategy options proposed in the paper, with a range of views being expressed. Board members noted:
- a) The recurring theme of trust between Sport England and the funded partners, not least as highlighted and discussed at the Consultation session Board held with representatives of key partners at Marathon House in 2019.
  - b) The need to move conversations with Sport England's funding partners away from purely transactional matters, and instead focus on the shared mission: how an organisation could benefit Sport England and how Sport England could equally benefit them.
  - c) Extending funding for one year at a time would not give the funding partners the sense of trust or partnership they have explicitly asked for through the early consultation process. It would mean a permanent 'stop / start' element to their activity and would put restrictions on their ability effectively and strategically to plan ahead.
  - d) The risks attendant to committing to funding early on for a longer duration, recognising that alternative and better options to help achieve Sport England's targets might subsequently be identified.
  - e) The opportunities to set down examples and criteria. If early decisions were made and supported with legitimate evidence as to why they had been approved for funding, these could be used as real life examples to encourage other organisations to follow. This would be a tool to effect change, not to build in historic 'business as usual' investments.
  - f) The challenge of identifying which organisations were likely to be the most instrumental in achieving future strategic priorities and able to support the sport and physical activity 'eco-system'.
38. To help establish clarity of purpose with partners, it was suggested that Sport England considered producing an overview guide that

would set the framework for future investments and provide guidance in respect of more innovative or higher-risk investments.

39. The Chair summarised the discussion, highlighting the various views across the Board. It was **AGREED** the Board were in favour of option four as set out in the paper, whereby Sport England give a strong enough assurance of a long term relationship to allow organisations to plan for the future, recognising that for some this might look like one or two years of funding in full, with subsequent years subject to a more detailed discussion based on the full strategy once it had been developed. However, the Members did want to have more detail around this option and what it would mean going forward. It was **AGREED** the Investment Committee would have a deeper discussion around the details. In addition, all decisions would be subject to detailed scrutiny via a full business case and made in line with Sport England's Delegated Authority Policy.

#### **Talent Investment 2021 +**

40. PS introduced the paper on Talent Investment 2021+, which sought Board endorsement of work following on from the launch of the Talent Plan for England in April 2019. This aimed to create the World's best talent system, reflecting the Sport England Values of inclusion, ambition, collaboration and innovation.
41. Despite the success in the system nurturing talented athletes, inequalities in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability and affluence meant further work was needed to ensure the talent pool and its workforce were more diverse and inclusive. To achieve this demographic change while ensuring that England and GB continued to win medals and trophies with a more diverse cohort would require a system change approach. Multiple aspects of the Talent Programme would need to be examined and potentially changed.
42. Board Members recognised the substantial size of the proposed investment (just over eight percent of Sport England's projected income) and noted the investment would be supported and advised

by the Talent Inclusion Advisory Group (TIAG) and the Investment Committee, which would play its role in establishing how individual investments were made.

43. The Board discussed how Sport England would judge success? Officers noted the ultimate measure of success would be changing the demographics whilst still producing performance outcomes. The Board members reflected on the output from the Inclusion research commissioned from Sheffield Hallam Sports Industry Research Centre, which highlights some stark disparities between the demography of the nation, versus the talent pathway and versus the workforce that support them. It was highlighted that the identified priority of the TIAG is increasing representation within the talent pathways of BAME and LSEG athletes. Sport England's ultimate measure of success would be continuing to field highly successful England senior teams and supply well prepared athletes to GB high performance programmes whilst changing the demography of the pathways, decreasing these disparities and creating pathways that are truly inclusive. Each individual investment would, as presently, be governed by individual KPIs acknowledging the most prominent opportunities and priorities for each.
44. A number of Board members questioned whether, given the scale of ambition and the obvious challenge here, the level of investment was sufficient. It was acknowledged that this paper focussed principally on the pathways themselves and that complementary work will be required 'upstream' of the talent pathway in school, club and community settings as well as focussed workforce development. The executive team would reflect on this and provide further details of what else needs to happen, beyond the scope of this investment, to create the climate for success here.
45. The Board discussed how this would apply to under-represented cultures. Sport England Officers outlined they were undertaking research to identify barriers for underrepresented groups that would include such factors. They also noted there was a connection between talent and the work the rest of the organisation was doing, for example the learnings and insight from investments

in Local Delivery Pilots, School Games etc., and these connections would all affect the talent system and our understanding of inclusion and opportunity. It was noted that the talent system did not exist outside or in parallel to community sport but was in fact intertwined. This was why a whole system approach was required and being advocated.

46. The Board discussed the challenges around leadership across the sector; particularly, the lack of diversity of those in leadership positions, and reviewing the different organisations Sport England could work with to overcome these challenges. It was noted that leadership would have a big impact on developing the right people needed. It would be the leaders that would be the front runners to encouraging the different demographics to buy into the change. Officers noted that Sport England is supporting a transformational leadership training programme, to encourage more diversity and inclusion in talent system leadership.
47. The Board discussed the fact that while National Governing Bodies (NGB) were central to the development of the talent pathway they were not the only organisations that should be engaged. A significant step for the current strategy period would be to acknowledge that the talent programme is part of the overall sport ecosystem, and many other organisations and programmes should be considered and engaged. With regard to increasing diversity, Sport England needed to work with those who knew how to engage with young people and that were in the right places to attract underrepresented groups. Most notably Sport England needed to work with organisations that are onboard with and committed to change; marrying a commitment to continuing success with creating a more inclusive system.
48. To summarise the discussion, the Chair thanked the Board Members for their variety of views, noting the consensus was that the Talent Pathway and Early Investment was an important part of Sport England's role. Having a winning system was the outcome wanted and NGBs would be a vital part of achieving this outcome, although

the change Sport England was wanting to make would require a number of measures.

49. The Sport England Board **APPROVED** the mandate and budget to continue with the Early Talent Investment covering 2021-25 subject to the following conditions/actions:
- a) Establishing what success will look like from our investment, in particular, success measures for partners to drive real changes in diversity and inclusion;
  - b) Defining the 'system wide interventions' that SE will need to introduce alongside individual investments in NGB talent programmes;
  - c) Clarity on the non-talent-specific barriers in community sport that need fixing or removing to make the talent pathway more accessible.

*NS, JF, SM, DT & NR left the meeting*

#### **TERMS OF REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEES**

50. The Sport England Board **NOTED** the Terms of References of the Chairs and Remuneration Committee.

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

51. With no further business items being raised, Nick Bitel thanked attendees and closed the meeting. A short private session for Board members and CEO would follow. The Board would next meet on 24 March 2020.

The meeting closed at 2.30pm.

*These minutes were reviewed and approved by the Board at its meeting of 24 March 2020*