

Minutes of the Sport England Board meeting of 5 May 2021 (held remotely by videoconference)

Members Nick Bitel (Chair)
 Natalie Ceeney
 Azeem Akhtar
 Rashmi Becker
 Ian Cumming
 Chris Grant
 Andy Long
 David Mahoney
 Tove Okunniwa
 Karen Pickering

Officers Mike Diaper ED – Children, Young People and Tackling Inactivity
 Ali Donnelly, ED Digital, Media and Communications
 Jon Fox, Strategic Lead – Investment Design (item 12)
 Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive Officer
 Serena Jacobs, Director – Finance
 Charles Johnston, ED – Property
 Richard Mabbitt, Board Secretary
 Lisa O’Keefe, ED – Insight
 Chris Perks, ED – Local Delivery
 Nick Pontefract, Chief Operating Officer
 Adam Rigarlsford (Item 10), Strategic Lead Local Relationships (item 10)
 Phil Smith, ED – Sport
 Viveen Taylor, Director – EDI (items 8-10)
 Lynsey Tweddle Head of Corporate Governance (item 11)

Guests: Adam Conant, Head of Sport – DCMS

1. Chair’s Welcome and introductory comments

1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees. The meeting was being held remotely due to continuing COVID-19 social distancing measures. An update on Sport England’s post-restrictions ways of working office-based working was scheduled at [item 12](#).

2. Apologies for Absence

2.1 All current Board members were in attendance.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 In respect of discussion to follow at Item 7 relating to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, Ian Cumming reminded members that he was the Chair of the West Midlands Ambulance Service, which had been contracted to provide all pre-hospital care for the Games. The Board was content that this did not represent a conflict of interest in this instance.
- 3.2 No other interests were declared additional to those already registered by members.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

- 4.1 The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting of 22 March 2021 (paper MB21-24) as an accurate record of discussions.

5. Matters arising

- 5.1 The Board reviewed the log of actions and decisions (paper MB21-25) and were content with progress as reported.
- 5.2 With regard to the action at item 12.3 of the meeting of 22 March (on *Retrain to Retain*, Phil Smith noted that in order for a launch in mid-June, a stage 3 Investment Recommendation Report would be circulated for agreement by Investment Committee in mid May 2021.

6. Chair and Member Appointment and Re-appointment update

- 6.1 The Chair reported that Sue James had opted not to seek re-appointment for a further term and that she had therefore ceased to be a Board member at the end of her initial term on 29 April 2021. The Secretary of State had not yet come to a decision on the re-appointment or otherwise of other members whose terms were due to expire in 2021. Board members noted Sue James's contribution to Sport England, at Board and at Investment Committee level, and her support for Active Devon and the Exeter & Cranbrook Local Delivery Pilot and wished her well for the future. Formal valedictory messages from the Chair and the Secretary of State were in preparation.

6.3 Natalie Ceeney reported that the shortlist of appointable candidates for the role of Sport England Chair remained under consideration by the Secretary of State in consultation with No.10 and the Cabinet Office. Nick Bitel's second term as chair had expired on 20 April 2021, but his appointment had been extended for a short time pending a permanent appointment.

7. CEO's Update

7.1 Tim Hollingsworth briefed Board on a number of key topical issues

7.2 Board members noted that Sport England and UK Sport had agreed plans for the **launch of the revised Code for Sports Governance**, its dissemination and support arrangements, with an initial focus proposed on collaborative working and diversity and inclusion action plans. However, DCMS ministers had as yet been unable to meet Chairs to discuss the context for the launch, and a deferred meeting was planned for the week commencing 10 May 2021. Sport England and UK Sport were pressing for a launch by the end of May, given the commitments made by Sport England and UK Sport; the expectations from stakeholders involved in the development of the code; the importance of the Code to the 'Governance' catalyst in *Uniting the Movement*; and its centrality to improving diversity and inclusion in sport. The Board

- a) strongly supported this approach and noted the reputational risks to the code, to its sponsors, and to Government of further delay;
- b) asked that, following the Chairs' meeting, should (i) a launch by this timescale not be possible, or (ii) Government sought substantive changes to the Code or launch arrangements, the Board agree next steps as a matter of urgency, convening a special meeting if necessary.
- c) asked also for sight of communications plans as these were finalised;
- d) noted that discussions were taking place with DCMS on the coverage of governance issues by the proposed fan-led review of football, and on the potential importance of the Code to such discussions.

Action: Nick Bitel, Tim Hollingsworth, Ali Donnelly to progress in discussion with DCMS and UK Sport.

7.3 The Board had been notified of the results and analysis of the **Active Lives Adult Survey** at its publication on 29 April, and Lisa O'Keefe summarised key points. The report period included eight months of COVID-19 restrictions including the full national lockdown from March-May 2020, the partial easing

of restrictions in the summer and the start of the second national lockdown in November 2020. The impact of this on people's ability to take part in sport and physical activity had been dramatic, but within this overall picture lay some positives, including innovation and adaption from sports activity providers and participants, and early signs of increasing confidence and return to activity as COVID-19 vaccines were developed. However, it was also clear that there was a very varied picture of recovery by different groups, and that there would be no early return to pre-COVID-19 levels of demand for activity, even were the supply side ready to provide this. Board members felt that the evidence base and insight provided by Active Lives remained critical in informing Sport England's strategic direction, and the design of its and partners' interventions. They felt that the evidence vindicated Sport England's efforts to support the demand as well as supply side throughout the period of COVID 19 restrictions and beyond and backed up its focus on addressing inequalities. Board members reflected on:

- a) the vicious circle of disruption, dishabituation, lack of confidence and disengagement, particularly among those groups whose physical activity habits were newly formed or fragile;
- b) potential distrustfulness by some groups of opportunities provided by local authorities or other bodies, due to wider fears, mistrust or cynicism based on experience of other services;
- c) ongoing uncertainties about international travel, and the knock-on effects of reduced mobility on the talent system, and on major set piece community sporting events with international participants. It was noted that all National Governing Bodies for sports were making contingency plans for less travelling.

7.4 Board members noted that the **Plan for the first year of Uniting the Movement (2021/22)** agreed at the last Board meeting had been finalised and communicated internally to staff and would be communicated externally after the pre-election period restrictions had lifted. The Board noted that this included Sport England's Business transformation work.

7.5 Board Members noted that discussions on the **DCMS-Sport England Framework document** (which had benefitted from the Chair's input) were nearing completion with only some minor points on KPIs for the year still being discussed. Once finally agreed, a copy will be circulated to Board members for information. **Action: Nick Pontefract**

7.6 Board members noted the need shortly to recruit or appoint **new members** of Audit Risk and Governance Committee and to Investment Committee. In

addition, a number of vacancies would shortly be becoming available on the Board of the Sports Council Trust Company. Officers would work with Committee Chair and the Chair of the Sports Council Trust Company to progress these, bringing any necessary decisions to the Board for sign off. The Board asked for the potential value (in terms both of a challenge function, and subject knowledge) of independent members, to be factored into this process. **Action: Nick Pontefract.**

7.7 In terms of **safeguarding**, the board was updated on the progress of the Whyte review. Sport England had contributed its own contextual evidence to this. The final report remained on track for publication at the end of August or beginning of September 2021. The Board was also updated on the recommendations of the Sheldon review into Child Sexual Abuse in Football 1970 – 2005 which were of relevance to all sporting organisations as well as to football in particular. Sport England Officers would be meeting with the Football Association and the Child Protection in Sport Unit later in May to discuss taking this forward. Because of the continued media interest in safeguarding – welcomed by Sport England – a short news story had been published detailing Sport England's safeguarding work, including its coverage in the Code for Sports Governance and the work Sport England was leading (in partnership with UK Sport and CIMPSA) to improve the way coaches and the professional workforce are supported and regulated. The Board felt that a deeper board-level discussion of the implications of the Whyte Review, Sheldon review and other topical safeguarding issues (including concussion in contact sports) would be helpful and asked officers to revert after the Whyte Review had concluded. **Action: Mike Diaper**

7.8 The Board noted that Sport England was continuing to work closely with DCMS and partners in the region to consider options for how to maximise the impact of the **Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games** on its work and strategy both nationally and regionally. The Government had been clear that the Games represent a key priority for 2022 as a 'year of renewal' alongside other national events such as the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the planned Festival UK. The Board:

a) noted the alignment of this work with *Uniting the Movement* principles, and that the impacts it catalysed could potentially be amplified by Government's desire for a greater national story and recovery year narrative focussed on the Games themselves and other national milestones. Board members noted the catalytic potential of the Games and their read-across to Sport England's work supporting children and

- young people's activity; active environments; open data; and sustainability; and innovation and digital approaches.
- b) noted the opportunities for linking elite and community sport and galvanising Sport England's ambitions on inclusivity through participation and the talent system;
 - c) welcomed the efforts being made to join up with other Sports Councils, and noted the scope for further collaboration with other lottery funded bodies (for example on dance and street activity) and the potential of a broad cultural approach for engaging and connecting communities;
 - d) Noted that Investment Committee was scheduled to discuss the approach being taken in more detail at its meeting of 3 June 2021 ahead of a formal paper being submitted to Board for decision. **Action: Charles Johnston** to prepare paper.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report

- 8.1 Viveen Taylor and Rashmi Becker (as Board EDI champion) spoke to the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Report at paper [MB21-27](#)
- 8.2 Board members noted that the report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities had now been published. This had provoked widespread public discussion, and criticism related to its conclusions on systemic racism and on 'quotas'. The Board noted that concerns around the implications and interpretation of the report, both in terms of delivery of sport England activity and for staff personally, had been raised by individual staff and through Culture Crew and the EDI group.
- 8.3 The Board re-affirmed Sport England's commitment to tackling race and other inequalities. Equality remained a core element of *Uniting the Movement* and to Sport England's own approach. The Board noted that the Commission's report did not specifically address sport and physical activity and that its conclusions in relation to representative governance arrangements were couched in terms of a more general critique of quotas. The Board noted that the report's criticism of the simplistic 'BAME' acronym was in line with Sport England's own ambition for more inclusive and precise terminology, and recognition of the intersectional nature of inequality.
- 8.4 The Board noted the continuing engagement of all five Sports Councils in Tackling Racism and Racial Inequality in Sport. It felt that maintaining momentum here was vital and thanked staff for their efforts in pushing this forward in a complex policy landscape.

- 8.5 The Board would review at its next meeting draft guidance on Transgender participation in sport, that would set out the need to balance the imperatives of inclusion, fairness and safety. Board members noted that this was a complex, emotive and politically contested issue, with different approaches being adopted by NGBs.
- 8.6 The Board noted the continuing partnership working with Perrett Laver to identify and develop a network of senior, experienced candidates from a range of backgrounds to help organisations develop more diverse Boards. It felt that this work meshed well with the development and implementation of the revised Code for Sports Governance.
- 8.7 Board members noted that the review of the Equality Standard for Sport continued with constructive consultation with the sector over the winter.
- 8.8 The Board noted the breadth of work being done in partnership with Government, sports organisations and other stakeholders in respect of disability and participation and engagement in sport and physical activity, and progress across the piece.
- 8.9 Board members noted and were content with updates presented on internal diversity and inclusion including, gender pay gaps, diversity and inclusion engagement, and summary organisational diversity statistics. Board members looked forward to reviewing the Sport England's Diversity Action Plan at a future meeting. Board members welcomed the work of the terminology task group work on the inclusivity of the language used by Sport England and its partners.

9. Finance Report

- 9.1 Serena Jacobs introduced the Finance report (paper [MB21-28](#)). Board members reviewed the summaries of key financial measures (financial performance and cash management) and were content with the information presented. Board members noted
- a) the continuing strong position on Lottery income.
 - b) that the exchequer underspend was within an agreed 1% threshold.
 - c) that the Lottery bank balance was higher than projected. While the increase in lottery income partially explained this there had also been fewer commitments and lower cashflow than anticipated.

9.2 Board members discussed and noted the ongoing concerns flagged by Audit Risk and Governance Committee regarding over-optimism about amounts allocated, the pace at which funding could be effectively disbursed. The Committee had felt that improving throughput and the pipeline of projects should remain a focus area for the organisation. The Board:

- a) recognised the constraints under which officers were working and was content with immediate mitigation planning;
- b) felt that addressing this issue in the longer term was likely to require deeper cultural and systemic change
- c) reflected on Sport England's risk strategy and appetite and how this permeated through the organisation. They felt this would be a key element of financial planning in the transition year;
- d) noted that the requirements on post event assurance for NLR and SWSP had generated useful learning. Sport England had demonstrated that it was possible effectively to work at pace. While the balance of risks and benefits here was atypical, the extreme NLR and SWSP experience was suggestive of a more effective 'middle way' for many investments;
- e) discussed fraud risks, noting that in Sport England's case the highest risk likelihood tended to sit with smaller grants. The Board noted the importance of integrating learning from the COVID-19 experience into governance processes including anti-fraud measures that were risk-based and agile. Board noted the potential role of technology in antifraud, and officers would follow up offline with Azeem Akhtar on this.

Action: Serena Jacobs

9.3 The Board emphasised the importance of clear-sighted policy direction to ensure that investments were effectively advancing *Uniting the Movement* objectives underpinned by structural and process changes, and activated by cultural change.

10. COVID 19 response

Overview

10.1 Phil Smith introduced the cross cutting COVID-19 Response update (paper [MB21-29](#)). In line with the approach outlined at the last meeting this summarised supply and demand side work as follows:

- a) Priority 'Respond' packages aimed at helping people to keep moving and support the right partners delivering safely and effectively during COVID-

19 restrictions. These comprised: (i) supporting a return to play; (ii) building on tackling inequalities work, to be discussed in further detail at this meeting - [paras. 10.3-10.9](#) refer; (iii) the "Retrain to retain" support package discussed at the Board meeting of 22 March 2021; (iv) NLRF and local leisure recovery, to be discussed at the Board meeting for 15 June 2021; (v) supporting organisations through further sport survival packages.

- b) Existing sector renewal funding and support for innovation and Technology.
- c) Next steps, based on Insight on the workforce and influential organisations and spaces that underpin activity and key behaviour 'moments' and how best to capitalise on these. Next steps would focus on: (i) the paces and organisations that underpin activity; (ii) children's activity over the summer; (iii) outdoor activity as restrictions ease and over the summer; (iv) cross-cutting principles: Professional and volunteer workforce; and tackling inequalities /supporting those most impacted by COVID-19

10.2 The Board supported this conceptualisation of COVID-19 response work. It was pleased with progress overall and noted that the work in hand and proposed here rightly kept a clear focus on the long-term goals of *Uniting the Movement*. Board members:

- a) supported the focused work with schools and welcomed work initiated here on an active recovery hub and on Secondary teacher training,
- b) endorsed the significance of work under way on supporting partner organisations' digital marketing and outreach
- c) Flagged the value of stories and experiential narratives both as means to exemplify Sport England and partners' successes and as insight for shaping further work.

Tackling Inequalities: COVID-19 and beyond

10.3 Viveen Taylor and Adam Rigarlsford introduced paper [MB21-30](#) which set out learning from The Tackling Inequalities Fund (TIF) and proposed increased investment by £20m to extend reach and support into target communities into the strategy transition year and as COVID-19 restrictions were lifted.

10.4 The Board acknowledged the past successes of TIF. It felt strongly that the audiences whom TIF and this proposed extension were seeking to engage needed to be increasingly important elements of the sport and physical activity ecosystem. Board members noted the importance of thinking in terms both of supply and of demand for the communities this programme

sought to engage. Building local capacity and leadership was a key element here.

- 10.5 Board members recognised the value of the qualitative evidence gained from TIF in terms both of formative insight, and of narrative potential. They felt the proposed 'story-telling impact report' would be valuable. However, they felt that while the case by case benefits of TIF were clear, the expanded programme also needed to be judged on its reach and overall effectiveness. This applied in terms of numbers of people but also in terms of the range of communities. The life experience-based analysis therefore needed to sit alongside robust and granular quantitative evidence about impacts and the effectiveness of delivery, recognising the intersectional nature of inequality and its relationship with place and specific communities and sub-communities.
- 10.6 Board members acknowledged the need to avoid any tendency to articulate aims and outcomes in terms of shorthand or catch-all demographic types. This was particularly important in direct communications and engagement with stakeholders (where the "LSEG" shorthand was particularly unhelpful). Board members had in mind that deficit-based language needed to be used externally with care by Sport England but on balance, and given the cross-cutting nature of the scheme, felt it was important to acknowledge explicitly that structural disparities existed and that Sport England was committed to meaningful action here.
- 10.7 The Board acknowledged that working with new partners and new communities in new ways meant that that the programme was likely to evolve over its lifespan and was therefore comfortable with the responsive approach proposed for its early stages. The Board noted the importance of bringing partnerships developed through this work together with more 'established' partners, and the opportunity to further spread learning from place-based work. It was important that it did not become siloed as the inequality strand of *Uniting the Movement*. Given the aim to engage with new partners and funding recipients, Board members suggested that particular thought was given to Sport England's risk appetite around potential fraud, and that thinking here was based on a granular analysis of where and how beneficial impacts were being seen.
- 10.8 The Board noted that that not all community organisations in need of support could accept lottery funding. It was content that a small amount of lottery funding could be replaced with exchequer funding to ensure the programme can effectively achieve its ambition with such groups, having in

mind that to date under TIF less than £100k of a £20m budget was funded in this way.

10.9 The Board therefore:

- a) **APPROVED** the recommendation in the paper for a further £20m to a TIF Future Investment Fund to continue delivering to target communities;
- b) **AGREED** that this funding be devolved through a network of active partnerships and solicited national partners with individual applications to be assessed and presented at the appropriate level of delegated authority decision making within Sport England (Executive Director, CEO, Investment Committee as required);
- c) **APPROVED** £50k of exchequer budget to commission support to produce an Evaluation and 'story telling' impact report as set out in the paper;

and asked officers to progress accordingly, having in mind the specific points of feedback provided by the Board. It also asked that officers report back within 12 months to Investment Committee on programme impacts to help inform the effectiveness of this as a programme, including justifying further investment if necessary. **Action: Viveen Taylor and Adam Rigarlsford**

11. Risk Strategy & Appetite:

- 11.1 Lynsey Tweddle spoke to paper [MB21-31](#) which introduced Sport England's Risk Strategy. Audit Risk and Governance Committee had also reviewed the Strategy at its meeting of 27 April 2021, providing general endorsement and suggesting some specific amendments now incorporated. The Board noted that the present review was in line with the principal recommendation of the September 2020 internal audit advisory report on 'Risk Appetite' (undertaken in the context of significant COVID-related changes to the risk environment in which Sport England operated), and supported that report's wider recommendations on embedding risk appetite within the organisations day to day activities and decision-making.
- 11.2 Board members were content with the narrative updates and the clear alignment of the strategy with *Uniting the Movement* principles and priorities.
- 11.3 Board members discussed the level of risk exposure that Sport England was prepared to accept, tolerate, or be exposed to in relation to its strategy and

operations. They supported the proposed approach of a medium risk appetite overall, with a low risk appetite around transparency and stewardship of public money, and a higher risk appetite in certain defined circumstances in respect of the delivery of strategic priorities.

- 11.4 Board members felt that the experience of working at speed and at risk under challenging conditions to mitigate the sectoral impacts of COVID-19 had provided valuable experience and assurance. They noted that Sport England's hungrier risk appetite here had nevertheless been set within a broader framework of evidence-based and well-controlled decision-making, such that potential impacts and likelihoods were known, and risks taken were calculated ones. This learning could be used to steer a future approach characterised by pacier and more responsive working and constructive disruption, in furtherance of the transformational goals of *Uniting the Movement*. Equally Board members acknowledged the nature of legal and regulatory risks where – as a public body – Sport England's discretion to take a hungrier approach to risk was limited
- 11.5 Board members noted that intelligently balancing risk appetites would underpin the proposed organisational transformation process, and needed to be embedded in current work on transition and implementation planning and business transformation. Critical to the success of this was realism and openness about what worked and what didn't. Clear rationalisation of the non-binary nature of risk was important – initial or specific 'failure' that led to greater general success should not necessarily be feared. Sport England and its partners need to be able to reframe innovation and how it would help deliver against *Uniting the Movement* objectives.
- 11.6 The Board therefore **AGREED** the strategy as drafted and asked for the points of discussion raised to be taken into account in developing Sport England's ongoing approach to risk management, including further input from Investment Committee on innovation and risk, and revisiting Sport England's risk assurance mapping to help embed risk-based thinking across the organisation. **Action: Lynsey Tweddle** to progress

12. Transition Year

Future investment approach with key partners in the sport & physical activity system

- 12.1 Guided by discussion paper [MB21 32](#) the Board discussed Sport England's approach to its future investment with key partners in the sport and physical

activity system, Board Members noted that in terms of investment this was likely to be Sport England's biggest strategic decision of the initial *Uniting the Movement Implementation* period, and officers were working to a schedule of indicative allocations in place by September 2021.

12.2 Natalie Ceeney summarised Investment Committee's discussion of this matter at its meeting of 27 April 2021. The Committee had broadly supported the proposals. It had noted the importance of conceiving these relationships as genuine partnerships rather than channels of investment. It had also suggested coverage of all areas of Sport England's work, and definition not only by type of body or type of activity, but by the contribution they were making or had the potential to make to *Uniting the Movement* objectives. Further, the Committee had warned against any sense of complacency among would-be partners: key partner status had to be earned, rather than reflecting existing longstanding relationships. The Committee had emphasised the need for partners to demonstrate clear commitment to equality internally and externally. The Committee had also suggested that the set of partners did not become a closed one: while disinclined to recommend specific degrees of churn, the Committee was keen that meritorious additions could be engaged and low performers disengaged in the light of collective contribution to *Uniting the Movement* objectives. The Committee's feedback was incorporated in the present proposals

12.3 The Board noted the contextual points and assessment of strategic opportunity set out in the paper, and the relevance of the preceding item on risk appetite, pace and innovation to this issue. The Board now focussed its attention on the investment design, and in a wide-ranging discussion advised on:

- a) Entry criteria: the determination of the key partnerships as opposed to those with whom Sport England would work with to deliver specific projects; and how these criteria allow for the alignment envisaged in *Uniting the Movement*
- b) Organisational assurance as a key criterion for investment
- c) Phasing of investment and other investment design principles.

12.4 Board members felt that:

- a) the terminology of 'system' needed contextualisation, and to be clearly conceptualised in an inclusive way.

- b) the criteria set out here were broadly sound and there were no obvious omissions. However, while some criteria might be non-negotiable (e.g. Code for Sports Governance compliance), the complete set should not be viewed as absolute, or be applied mechanistically. Context was important: some criteria would be more relevant for some types of partnership in some situations;
- c) new partnerships with the potential to deliver should be supported and developed as well as those that were currently delivering actual impacts. An impact/potential matrix analysis was suggested. The Board welcomed a more open-minded approach to potential partners, including bodies whose core mission lay outside sport and physical activity, but where common purpose and mutual benefits could be identified. Potential work with major conservation and historic environment charities on informal outdoor activity were cited here.
- d) the actual or potential capacity of organisations to deliver or multiply real change on the ground (in addition to connecting and networking) should be factored into decision making. The place dimension of this was vital;
- e) decision-making might usefully consider the counterfactuals (e.g. what would happen if organisation x was not doing what it does? What is the added value of organisation y? Would a key audience be unserved as a result of a decision not to partner with organisation z?);
- f) exemplification of what 'strong' partners would look like, including examples of what organisational behaviours Sport England was seeking in identifying key partners would be helpful;
- g) the position of National Governing bodies could be further thought through. All of these were important by virtue of the core governance role for their sports, but might or might not have disproportionate delivery potential against wider *Uniting the Movement* objectives;
- h) partners needed to be well-run and well-led organisations and relationships with them should be trust-based and long-term relationship. The Board felt it important that Sport England was not over-ambitious in estimating its own capacity and capability of managing complex and meaningful relationships with partners.

- i) there would be considerable status and reputational elevation to organisations identified and acknowledged as a key partner, and this could potentially help raise ambitions across the piece. However, on balance the Board felt that actively positioning key system partners as a 'brand' (analogous to nationally significant cultural institutions) should be avoided, as this reinforced the sense of a closed shop, and ran against the inclusive and collaborative aspirations of *Uniting the Movement*. Moreover, there was evidence (including from core cities who were not selected as LDPs) that 'not getting on the list' could itself incentivise positive change.
- j) While duplication of functions or competition between partners was generally to be avoided, it was important to see actual and potential partners as part of a wider whole that was greater than the sum of its parts. Sport England's role was partly about promoting the right mix. This might mean, for example, that bodies with similar audiences could be considered alongside each other if their approaches or remits were significantly different. This implied good understanding by Sport England of partner organisations' strengths and unique contributions in sometimes crowded fields.
- k) in identifying partners and also in the ongoing management of relationships there needed to be balance of qualitative and quantitative assessment criteria. Both were clearly important, but there was recognition that in a politically and culturally contested environment where opinions varied as to the meaning and value of sport quantitative evidence and indicators of success must not be underplayed. It was acknowledged that some elements of the criteria were subjective – not least leadership. Nonetheless this did not preclude them being applied rigorously and defensibly.
- l) Criteria and relationship management processes should be designed in such a way as to facilitate call-in for poor performance, or should organisations fall into disrepute.

12.5 The Board felt overall that these proposals were shaping up well to both respond constructively to the ending of current agreements, and to set firm foundations for *Uniting the Movement*, including modelling a shared mission, values and guiding principles. It was content that a full business case, taking on point the points of feedback raised in this discussion, be brought for decision to the Board meeting of 15 June 2021. **Action Jon Fox**

Working Environment, Office Flexibility and Consideration of Options for 2022 and Beyond

- 12.6 Charles Johnson introduced paper MB21-33. Board members noted the overview of planned arrangements for a trial period introducing more flexible 'hybrid' working for staff (combining both office based and from home working), as - within the timeframe of the Governments COVID-19 roadmap milestones - Sport England phased back to more 'normal' (pre pandemic) working practices. Board members noted the implications and options for office provision when the lease on the London office terminated in 2022, and government policy of avoiding new leases in London and the South East. These were being addressed under Goal 4: Transition: Managing through Change in the *Uniting the Movement* Implementation Plan for 2021/22.
- 12.7 The Board considered the proposed approach was pragmatic, and endorsed the value of a trial stage. It was satisfied the 'hybrid' approach was outcome-led, being guided by what would be best in terms of Sport England's objectives and for its staff. Board members were pleased that these proposals had been on the whole well received by staff, while acknowledging that for some it presented an unsettling period of re-adjustment. Given the lack of certainty about future lockdown relaxations in June 2021, a flexible approach and learning from practical experience was wise. Sport England's systems, process and behaviours had proven resilient and agile, but given the logistical challenges in seeking to accommodate the strong desire for staff for a more balanced way of working with a greater working from home component, it was sensible to start working though these sooner rather than later.
- 12.7 Looking further ahead, the Board acknowledged the operational and cultural significance of the termination of the lease of Sport England's London office, and were keen that the negative impacts of this were mitigated and opportunities grasped during what would be a critical phase of *Uniting the Movement*. The Board felt that some form of London presence for Sport England would be required and were pleased that a number of alternatives beyond a traditional leased office arrangement were being investigated by Sport England. It noted the potential benefits to sport England and partners of co-location and hub working, if such arrangements were feasible.
- 12.8 Board members were keen that Sport England was open to new types of space and facilities, if it was the case that the primary reason for physical

proximity was increasingly more in the way of informal and creative activity, rather than daily desk-based working. Board members noted the challenges of hybrid meetings – which could well be more difficult than wholly remote or wholly live meetings – and the technology and behaviours needed to facilitate these. Board members also acknowledged the need to ensure that arrangements were fair; considered diverse ways of working; and did not inadvertently disadvantage particular demographics, or those contracted to work remotely.

- 12.9 The Board thanked officers for their work managing these changes at a time of competing priorities, and acknowledged their efforts to go beyond managing risks, and looking to maximise transformational opportunities. It asked for the comments above to be taken into account in progressing plans here and requested a further update after any changes to COVID-19 restrictions in June **Action: Charles Johnston**

13. Any other business

- 13.1 Minutes of past meetings (MB21-34 Draft minutes of Investment Committee meeting of 7 April; MB21-35 Minutes of Investment Committee meeting of 26 February; MB21-36 Summary of Audit Risk and Governance Committee meeting of 27 April 2021; MB21-37 Minutes of Audit Risk and Governance Committee meeting of 16 March 2021) had been circulated for Board members information. No further points of discussion relating to these had been requested.
- 13.2 With no other items of business being raised the Chair thanked attendees and closed the meeting. Members would have a short de-brief session after the meeting. The Chairs and Remuneration Committee would meet later in the afternoon.

[Agreed by the Board at its meeting of 15 June 2021]