

BRITISH FENCING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Last Updated: 23rd June 2020

Date of Meeting	23.06.2020
Location	By Video Link
Present	Chair, JC, TC, MO, PA, TCJ, CH, JT, CO, YH, AC-S
In Attendance	CEO, KR, DM, FG

1. INTRODUCTION

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, with the idea being to cover all aspects at Board level. To cover the whole sport with time for Q&A's with members of the executive team.

Apologies were received from RE-S.

New Declarations of Interest: No new declarations of interest.

Conflict of interest: None

Interim Decisions: Progression funding in UK Sport approved. An interim BF Board meeting on the revised budget which was approved.

Notable results: No notable results.

Action Items: Covered in Agenda items

New Risks: There were no new risks

Strategy & Objectives

2. APPROVE PREVIOUS BOARD MINUTES

The minutes of March 2020 were approved.

3. COVID-19 UPDATE

Chair asked a couple of Board Directors to give their perspective of their time in the current situation, what they had been doing and working on and their feelings on the situation.

CH started by speaking of spending the time alone which was a new experience and enjoying the slower pace of life. Have been working for the 111 Covid-19 Assessment Service. The process has been difficult with getting all GP's set up, but the outcome has been lots of GP's picking up calls. It has been interesting to see how the emergency services have coped. An interesting learning curve.

Have been working with the FIE on a protocol for when events restart, medical commission work, anti-doping regulations that have to be rewritten to WADA's new standards and rewriting some documents for the FIE.

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Had an honours committee meeting and has been involved in the Return to Fencing work group that the CEO has been fantastic at organising and doing the majority of the work. Had a Welfare Officer meeting to assist clubs with their welfare setup.

CO followed – enjoying being at home. A neighbour had sadly died as a result of Covid-19 and the difficulties faced in not being able to help more because of the social distancing.

Has been working on EVF and working with the FIE on the Veterans World Championships and discussing whether or not they will take place. European Veterans hoping to have the European Championships towards the end of November. Rebuilding confidence will be a big issue.

The CEO updated the Board on:

- [REDACTED]
- The FIE has an executive committee meeting on the 27th of June – this impacts on where our senior fencers are
- The Return to Fencing working group is working well and strengthening our relationships with the HN's. Challenge is the difference in HN positions. We are all making sure we are aligned with our messages
- Attended the Scottish Fencing Board
- Lack of indoor venue, can we fence in community centres – waiting to find out
- Published outdoor and online training guidance
- There is uncertainty around the annual FIE and EFC Congress taking place this year
- EFC have circulated the invitations for the congress to be held in Sochi in September. President putting BF's name to a letter to be circulated from some of the European countries saying that it is not advisable to ask nations to travel this year

Chair – the amount of information put out on the website by the executive team has been excellent.

There then followed a small conversation on the government announcements including the confusing messages, trying to decipher what each message means for NGB's, government not including information on safeguarding.

4. FINANCE PART 1. 19-20 Q4 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

DM - The result for the year is a small surplus of £1,329 against a budget of £3,247 giving a positive variance of £4,576. Variance is due to a positive result for events this year, particularly the BYC's. There is also a better than budget result on other events but not to the same level. Commercial finished slightly down due to some cancellations and exceptional development costs.

[REDACTED]

The result is broadly where we wanted to finish. DM pointed out that the accounts were in the shared folder.

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The Audit will start on the 6th of July

Chair thanked DM for coming in slightly ahead of budget.

JT thanked DM and stated that it was a tremendous financial result, have brought forward investments without breaching the budget. Everything has been done financially to help us going into this difficult year.

Board is being asked to approve the Q4 accounts.

Board approved the Q4 accounts.

FINANCE PART 2 - CURRENT PROGRESS AGAINST 20-21 BUDGET PRESENTATION

The main factor in this years' finances is membership revenue. We have budgeted for reduced commercial activity.

We will have an interim AGRC in July.

[REDACTED]

The budget assumed a quick recovery and it is fair to say that things may recover slower than originally thought. It is worth being cautious over the next few months.

Commercial and Sport England revenue is in line with the budget.

YH asked if a second wave of Covid-19 had been taken into account.

DM – if a second wave the impact would be lower and we would have to re-budget, however, not easy to speculate on that.

JT membership numbers are before the HC recharge meaning the actual net shortfall is 60% of the income shortfall.

[REDACTED]

CEO – The community is itching to get started. We are small in our competitions and have done a piece of work on how we would run the Nationals with a 2-metre distance where possible. Recognise that it is a lot of work to do. We will be surveying our volunteers to see how confident they are with returning and volunteering at our competitions.

PA – Leon Paul have done a poll on their club and 80% of their members are keen to return.



TCJ asked if anything was being done with those members that had not renewed.
CEO we have a series of emails to be sent in the future. We will email those non-renewals to ask them to consider renewing. Any decisions we make on the financial side of membership would have to be put to the AGRC before the Board.

Chair – we cannot solve this today but need to bring this back to the AGRC for further discussion.

PA - what are the assumptions of cutting costs across the organisation.

DM – we have furloughed staff. It is hard to find more to cut, short of cutting staff.

5. STRATEGIC AREA - SUSTAINABILITY & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

JC took the Board through the growth of PSRP in Commercial including:

- The target for this year and focus of £43,000
- Contracted/secured income for 2020 is £23,348 (54% target achieved)
- Last year generated revenue of £132,916 with a surplus of £63,743
- Opportunities for partnerships and sponsorships – 3 are under negotiation
- PGL has closed down for 2020-21
- Kingswood is ahead and had an eye on the situation
- Primary School Resource Pack – further sales collateral/tactics developed including a testimonial video.
- Creating and owning our database to market PSRP to
- Confident that we will reach the budget target

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- Execution of the BF Games App – we have handed over the project to another developer who has helped us get it ready for launch, pending our BF release.
- Online content – developing an online version of Core Coach

Clare asked about the China connection

1. JC it is a relationship DM and I have been working on with our connection with Kingswood(part of Inspiring Learning). They want a deal but we should have more insight in August.

Chair – we need to keep a close eye on the budget.

Board thanked James

6. INSIGHT LED - PARTICIPATION CENTRED PROGRAMMES

VB took the Board through the progress, of Higher Education and London Youth including

Higher Education - we don't know what will happen in the higher education sector when things begin to return to normal. There are rumblings around universities going online with limited courses being face to face.

- Need to prepare so we have some form of delivery in September
- Working closely with BUCS
- Have a consultation with our Universities in a couple of weeks to see how we can use those universities to support some sort of swordplay and return to fencing and to support our clubs.

London Youth – no delivery in Q1, expect very little delivery in Q2

- Looking at how we can fill the gaps of possible workforce loss
- We are being included as one of the London Youth restart sports

Sport for Social Change – time and resources have gone into moving everything online.

- Having conversations with David and Francesca on funding
- Have a clearer idea of what we need to fund and how we can support our core funding, and delivery
- The focus will be on the short and long term objectives with London Youth and growth within the youth sector outside London

Muslim Girls Fence

- Muslim Girls Fence is not an immediate focus for Sport for Social Change as there are 2 more years of TIED funding and we have a small amount of core Market Funding set aside
- Nation Lottery funding has been received for a schools' project focusing on mental health for girls involved in MGF

Future Growth - Biggest area to look for funding is within our Youth Sector and London Youth

- Short term objective is to look at how we can plug the gap in the delivery budget and long term how we can grow it – going beyond London and working with other partners across the country
- Have had a 69% retention rate with our young people in our work with London Youth with half being between 14-17 yrs, 78% being retained in regular activity.
- 71% of young people from BAME groups are being retained and 72% of those are female

YH asked if London Youth has delivered any online sessions.

VB – they declined our offer of online sessions as they need to offer critical support to their young and the online sessions have not been a priority right now.

FG - asked about potential foundation funding.

VB – we have signed up to Funds online, we will be contacting the Essex Youth Trust, the London Marathon Charitable Trust as well as the Colonel WH Whitbread Charitable Trust and the John Lyon's Charity. Other funding streams we are looking at are Grantscape, The Hargreaves Foundation and the National Lottery Community Fund.

Chair – asked about the bid with the Change Foundation.

VB – we were not successful with the bid – we were not given a reason.

7. GBR ATHLETE SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT (ADP)

SK briefed the Board on the continued development of ADP including:

- April ADP training Camp via Zoom with 80 fencers attending and positive feedback
- Opens up possibility that we can do a lot more of these
- We have 3 events across all weapons
- True Athlete Project – growing from strength to strength with a big impact on the fencers – looking at mental health, mental fitness and mindfulness.
- Aspiration mentoring programme, aligning mentors and mentees
- Integration between ADP and the senior programme to a pathway offer. Working with Johnny Davis across all the weapons
- Currently looking more deeply at our pathway model/offer
- Online content for fencers – how we make them work a little faster
- On track with Dise. We will not have the 30% from independent schools that we had last year, but we are working through the changes

Chair asked the Board if they thought that BF had made good progress during the lockdown. During the lockdown, we have continued to move forward.

ACS – the amount of progress you have made is amazing, very different delivering something by Zoom than in person.

8. BREAK

9. BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE ITEMS: NOMCOM

JC – Board agreed to extend Chair term for a second term. Need to confirm it at the 2020 AGM.
Board evaluation – this is the third year of using the same questions. No significant changes in any one area. Area to think about is the nature of the Board communication with members.
Succession planning – 2 members of the Board, JT cannot re-stand, ACS is up for re-election. Will look to make a change on the election form to put in skills sets. Next year we will have to start planning early as will lose quite a few skilled Board Directors who will be up for election.
Keen to make continue to make sure the Board is as diverse as can be.

JC asked the Board for their agreement of two decisions.

The first decision in principle relates to the AGM we would like the Board's approval to do the AGM virtually this year subject to our understanding of some of the legal understanding.

TC – do not think we have an option – will get back to NomCom with legal aspects of a virtual environment.

Board agreed in principle to the AGM being held virtually.

The second decision for Board – President of BF term was until the OG, given they have been postponed for a year do the Board agree to extend the President position for another year until after the OG in 2021.

The Board agreed for the President role to be extended for another year.

CEO appraisal and approval to be agreed offline.

10. BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE ITEMS: AGRC

JT – AGRC focused on finances and risks raised by Covid-19 and the mitigation of those risks and both have been discussed by the Board. Have to keep a very close watch. AGRC meeting to do that.

11. EVENTS, COMPETITIONS AND CALENDAR

- Senior Nationals have been set a provisional date of 5th-6th December 2020 in Birmingham with the GB Cup running alongside all depending on social distancing
- BYC's have been postponed this year
- Cadet and Junior championships – aiming to run these in Easter '21 depending on the FIE and EFC information that comes out
- Factors to take into account are the ability to run safely putting social distancing in place, not putting too much strain on our workforce
- Concerns over the financial viability of running events over multiple weekends

Chair asked about ranking events starting.

CEO – after the announcement by the PM today they cannot start until it is safe for people to be able to get together in safe number. We are far away from that right now. We will need to give people notice. How can we support small regional events based on people's safety and their confidence to compete.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

CEO – almost certain that we will be unable to run the Eden Cup.

PA – my slides show that over the last 4 years we have gone from a loss to a surplus. We are in a much better position going forward which gives us some options on which other events we can run to generate a profit.

Slides are in the DB folder.

Chair asked about the Automated ranking.

CEO – these are on hold currently in absence of competition

12. COACHING AND WORKFORCE

- Coaching Courses are currently on hold
- Have gone through final testing for the online safeguarding course
- Online core coach content
- introduction to coaching to be pulled through to university fencing
- The online coach register is in the testing phase. This will be pulled from the sport80 membership platform directly to the webpage
- The issue is getting back to face to face in time

Chair asked how the coaches are doing

SK – not very well. Coaching are not getting any income, some coaches are unlikely to come back.

MO asked about government support for coaches.

SK as an organisation there are weekly briefing but cannot speculate on how the messages have landed.

CH – Liz Behnke has organised online meetings for Regional welfare officers to get the clubs to update their welfare procedures and welfare officers. She has also put welfare courses online.

13. CLUBS AND MEMBERSHIP

- Membership is currently sitting at 9460 which is down from 10473 at the end of June 2019.
- The biggest lapses are in Introduction to Fencing, England Compete Full and England Compete U14 categories. We expect the U14 category will return when school sport begins again.
- The England Compete category will impact most on the finances.

ACS asked if we know if it is a regional trend. CEO our data within the S80 system will not allow us to easily pull that data as people can represent regions other than those they live in.

TCJ asked if there was an offer to the compete members that leave. What are we looking at to get them back?

CEO looking at whether we can create some form of BF league that will give league points. We will only address once fencers do not renew and we have to decide when/how we deliver the communication.

VB – Regional Review – we have appointed someone to do the regional review and the review will be starting in the next week or so. Have had positive conversations with Sport England who are keen to support us.

CH asked who we appointed and what the timescale was.

VB – we have appointed Jacky Bryson who has done similar work with British Cycling. The timescale is about a 12-16 month project. We will review the timeline with her and bring in her detailed recommendations.

CEO – community discussions have been something that we could consider carrying on with. They have created a stronger relationship with those clubs and regions.

TCJ asked if clubs will be in a position to reopen and will we lose some clubs.

CEO there will be challenges around anxiety and particular barriers, kit ownership, venues may be an issue. In part will need to wait to see which clubs and coaches will return, fencing going to look very different for those that want a fencing experience.

Importantly we have to monitor it and help those clubs open in the best way we can following government guidelines.

14. LEADERSHIP

The Board recognised the amount of work the CEO and the exec team have been doing. The executive has kept up with communicating with our stakeholders.

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The Home National external review together with environmental policies have been put on hold
No recent complaints.

15. CEO ITEMS

Q4 Balanced scorecard is almost ready and will be available soon.

16. STANDING ITEM - EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

BLM – JC – the resources are on the website and are excellent. We will know more about how well we have handled it after the discussion next week.

CEO most important thing is we are listening, there are bigger discussions to be had.

PA – we could look at role models from some of the BAME fencers.

17. STANDING ITEM - SAFEGUARDING

CPSU annual review has taken place with positive feedback. The documents are in the Board pack for the Board to read.

CH asked if Liz Behnke's one day per week was enough.

CEO – We are meeting minimum standards. Currently, we do not need more resources but we need a contingency in the budget. The difficulty will be if we get a challenging case.

DM – we normally have a contingency in the budget for these things.

18. AOB

Chair summarised. The CEO and her team have stepped up to the mark on different ways of working, with our interaction with the community and stakeholders have been excellent and very strong. Progress made through participation and ADP programmes. The financial position we are doing ok against budget but must monitor closely. Same with the commercial side of things, have to watch the second part of the year.

Need to be aware of clubs and coaches suffering. Need to get events going.

Quite a bit of hard work still to do but we have put ourselves in a good position.

Will take on board the fact that we could do shorter and more frequent Board meetings.

Meeting closed at 20.05
Date of next meeting – 15th September 2020