

Minutes of the meeting of the General Council (GC)

Held on Tuesday 8th May 2018

Sport Wales National Centre, Cardiff, video linked to Plas Menai National Outdoor Centre, Caernarfon*

<i>Present:</i>	Sue Alvey	(SA)	Chair of General Council, Non-Executive Director Welsh Athletics Ltd.
	Lyn Cushing	(LC)	Secretary of General Council
	Lynette Harries	(LH)	President of Welsh Athletics Ltd.
	Judith Gooding	(JG)	Secretary of Track & Field Committee
	Sharon Leech	(SL)	Secretary of Cross Country and Road Committee
	Arwel Lewis	(AL)*	Secretary of Mountain Running & Trail Committee
	Jeff Marsden	(JM)	Track & Field Officials Committee
	Martin Bell	(MB)	Task Group Coordinator, Coaching & Performance
	Joyce Tomala	(JT)	Regional Athletics Council – East Wales
	Ruth Powell	(RP)	Regional Athletics Council – East Wales
	Graham Webb	(GW)	Regional Athletics Council – South Wales
	Tony Clements	(TC)	Regional Athletics Council – West Wales
	John Hatton	(JH)	Regional Representative – North Wales
	Gerald Davis	(GD)	Welsh Schools Athletic Association
	Dai Williams	(DWSc)	Welsh Schools Athletic Association
	James Williams	(JW)	Head of Operations, Welsh Athletics
	Chris Moss	(CM)	Club Network Manager, Welsh Athletics (Minutes)
	Amanda Bennett	(AB)	Sport & Recreation Alliance

Papers circulated in advance:

Head of Operations Update May 2018	
Management Reports	Item 2
Final Minutes GC 8 th March 2018	
WA Clubs Portal	Item 3
Self-Evaluation GC – Presentation by Amanda Bennett	Item 2

1. Apologies for Absence

Received from Wynford Leyshon, Scott Simpson, Paul Brooks, Dai Williams (South).

SA asked all members present to stand for a minutes silence to commemorate the passing of John Chidlow a valued Volunteer who has served Welsh Athletics as Endurance Official and a representative on the Endurance Committee for a number of years.

2. Self – Evaluation of General Council –

Facilitated discussion led by the Sport and Recreation Alliance, Amanda Bennett.

- a) Amanda Bennett introduced herself and asked all members to give their name and the roles they play within athletics.
- b) AB continued with her presentation on Self – Evaluation (Presentation will be circulated to members)
- c) AB commenced her presentation with slides -
 - i. **Governance Development in Welsh Sport.**
 1. AB explained that an awful lot has changed in the last ten years, with an incredible amount of change within the last three year's. This has had an immediate and direct impact on the way in which the sport is run in Wales. AB explained that we would be exploring the roles of Welsh Athletics decision making bodies The Board and General Council.
 2. AB then asked members to answer a quiz to gauge what members know about Governance. AB explained that Members can confer with their neighbours.
 - a) **The Sport Sector in Wales is regulated** FALSE
 - b) **Welsh Athletics is regulated** TRUE
 - c) **The Board can delegate responsibility to staff and committees within the organisation** FALSE
 - d) **The Board is responsible for setting the governance structure of the organisation** TRUE
 - e) **Members exercise ultimate control over the company and how it is managed** TRUEJW clarified that Members of WA are the Club's, hence at the AGM each club has one nominated person to vote.
 - f) **The Governance and Leadership Framework is an optional framework for NGB's receiving public funds** FALSE
 - ii. **Governance and Leadership Framework for Wales**
 1. AB outlined the Governance and Leadership Framework for Wales it was designed and written by Welsh Governing Bodies and funded by Sports Wales. In 2015 it was optional, in 2016 it became an expectation, if you haven't signed up and started on this you should be doing so now. 2017/2018 it is now mandatory.
 2. AB outlined the seven principles those highlighted in RED particularly relate to items that will be discussed tonight.
 - a) Integrity
 - b) **Defining and evaluating the role of the Board**
 - c) Vision, mission and purpose
 - d) Objectivity - balanced, inclusive and skilled board
 - e) **Standards, systems and controls**
 - f) **Accountability and transparency**
 - g) Engaging with the sporting landscape
 - iii. **Wider context – Sport and Society**
 - a) Professionalisation of sport
 - b) Incorporation
 - c) Public policy and funding – Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
 - d) Commercial assets and strategies
 - e) Governance and risk management
 - f) Expectations of internal and external stakeholders

- g) Exposure in social and digital communications
- h) Introduction of new sports formats
- i) Diversification of communities

iv. What must a Board do?

- a) Sets and maintains vision, mission and values
- b) Ensures accountability
- c) Develops strategy
- d) Establishes and monitors policies
- e) Ensures compliance with the constitution and the law
- f) Sets and reviews organisational structure
- g) Maintains proper financial oversight
- h) Acts as guardian and governor
- i) Ensures system of internal control
- j) Maintains effective Board performance
- k) Creates appropriate sub-committees
- l) Promotes the organisation
- m) Sets up employment and remuneration procedures
- n) Selects and supports the senior members of staff

1. AB explained that the above had been written directly and linked to The Companies Act and as such WA as a company are subject to the act of 2006.
2. AB asked members to split into groups of four to discuss and write down on a sheet of paper - **What must a Board do?** AB asked members to think about-
 - a) The things they discuss
 - b) The agendas
 - c) The decisions they make
 - d) Does the organisation as a whole know what the Board does?
 - e) Is the Board able to and communicate to members at large?
3. AB asked each group to state one thing on their list that they think the Board must do –
Group 1 North Wales Arwel Lewis, John Hatton
 - The Company should be run within Company Law
Group 2 Graham Webb, Martin Bell
 - Communication with the Sport for example publishing Minutes
4. AB pointed out that publishing minutes is not a requirement some sports do some don't. It does not have to be done.
LH stated that going back to the point that was just made. If the General Council are going to be working effectively with the Board then communication needs to be there. If the Board and General Council are to work as one then that information should be available.
AB asked LH if she was referring to minutes specifically
LH replied that GC needs to be up to speed if we are going to work together.
Group 3 Gerald Davies, Lynette Harries, Joyce Tomala
 - The Board must be transparent in their dealings
5. AB pointed out that that is how they would do it but what would they do?
 - Provide leadership – Direct members and the other parts of the Organisation into fulfilling the functions that are desired by the Board or Members for positive outcomes.
6. AB stated that group 3 were headed in the right direction which would come under governance.
Group 4 Dai Williams, Sue Alvey, Lyn Cushing
 - Ensure financial stability

Group 5 Ruth Powell, Judith Gooding, Jeff Marsden

- Organise funding – or ensure there are sufficient resources
- 7. AB replied that it could be public money for example Sport Wales, National Lottery who would want to see how the Board is run to ensure you are fit for purpose and not throwing money down the drain or could be a commercial partner.

Group 6 Tony Clements, Sharon Leach, Chris Moss

- Must be accountable within the decision making structure
- 8. AB asked - What would they do in order to make that happen?
- They must formally meet and take minutes of those meetings and make decisions and must adhere to the Articles and Byelaws.

Welsh Athletics Ltd Articles of Association

8. 1 (1) The business of the company shall be managed by the Board, who may exercise all the powers of the Company.

9. 1 The Board may delegate any of its powers to any committee, sub group or task group. Any such delegation shall be subject to the overall supervision and responsibility of the Board and subject to the decisions of the Board from time to time.

v. Role of the Board

- Oversight
 - Fiduciary
 - Controls
 - Reserved authority
- Insight
 - Expertise - all areas
 - Creativity and innovation
- Foresight
 - Strategic
 - Sport
 - Regulation
 - Communications

vi. Board composition – What does the Board need? Skills and knowledge - at least one Director

Business skills

- Finance and accounting
- Workforce development
- Public affairs and policy
- Communications and marketing
- Governance and regulation
- Membership/Customer experience
- Legal/contracts

Sporting knowledge

- Elite performance
- Competition and talent pathways

- Club and Community athletics
- Disciplines
- International relations

1. AB asked the groups to answer the question - **What does the Board need?**

Group 6 – (TC) (SL) (CM)

- The Board would need a range of skills and experiences from the world of sport, finance, governance.
2. AB asked if in the case of WA Board experience should be in athletics or in sport more widely.
- Group 6 replied that they felt that it should be in sport more widely.

Group 5 – (RP) (JG) (JM)

- The Board should be innovative – creative and forward in their thinking and ideas

Group 4 – (LC) (SA) (DW)

- The Board should consist of members who have expertise in various roles – Financial and Legal etc.
3. AB stated that some Governing Bodies say a Board member with legal background is a waste of a Board position and they would like to outsource it. However, it is very important to ensure that Boards have a Finance Director not a Treasurer. With specific skills and is a qualified Accountant.

Group 3 – (GD) (LH) (JT)

- The Board should consist of Strong Leaders
4. AB asked “ are you referring to the Chair”
- Group 3 replied that this doesn’t have to be a Chair but this person could be sympathetic to the skill set within the group.
5. AB stated that being a Chair was probably not the most knowledgeable but was a skill to facilitate a group discussion and understanding your Team.

Group 2 – (MB) (GW)

- Marketing – Commercial and Communication
6. AB stated that 10 years ago people would say don’t be daft – We have a website and this is updated. However, if you look at any adverts for Board Members you will see Marketing and Communications. Digital and Commercial and every Governing Body is looking for expertise in this area.

Group 1 – North Wales (AL) (JH)

- A board should consist of people with experience in business it doesn’t need to be in sport.
7. AB stated that every Director needs to have-
- Good oral and written communications
 - Excellent listening skills
 - Be concise in their communications
 - Good negotiators
 - Leadership experience and skills
 - Needs to work as a Team

vii. **General Council – What does General Council do?**

1. AB stated that The Board and General Council are two very important parts of the sport in Wales.

Group 4 (LC) (SA) (DW)

- Bring together different components of the Sport and give them a voice.
2. AB asked “bring them together to do what for what purpose” Anyone can answer this.
 3. GW stated the GC role is to influence the Board and their Employees.
 4. AB answered “to influence? What are you trying to create at the end of this”
 5. JT stated GC is trying to influence and inform both with policy and practice.
 6. AB asked inform about what?
 7. TC answered that to ensure the sport is run under the direction it is being taken
 8. SL stated communicating any issues from Grassroots level to the Board
 9. AB stated that it’s the conversation from the Clubs and they are reliant on members of General Council to bring insight from the clubs. What is actually happening when the decision is taken to invest in clubs or programs or investing more in the South than the North this is the impact it will have and it is the role of GC to explain this to the Members.

Group 3 (GD) (LH) (JT)

- GC is the link between the Board and the Regions and Clubs

Group 2 (MB) (GW)

- Ensuring Best Practice and raising any issues

Group 1 North- (AL) (JH)

- Ensure the operational side of the sport is working well within competition.
1. SL stated that the end project is to ensure that Clubs and Regional Councils are effective and athletes performances are high and as many as possible from grassroots are achieving something as well as the elite athletes.
 2. AB stated that performance was important to all athletes in relation to moving up through the rankings and getting qualifying times. There is also the recreational athlete who has no aspiration to go to the Commonwealth Games but enjoy the sport who attends every week, it is important that they are also working within an environment of excellence where things are well delivered.
 3. TC stated it was important to ensure that there are structures and that GC works to ensure that all is effective.

Group 5 (JG) (RP) (JM)

- Passing on Members concerns to the Board which would come from Regional Councils and various committees
1. AB asked if there was a role for GC to communicate from the Board to GC and if so what would that look like?
 2. LH stated that it has always been a two way thing and that is the reason the Chair of GC sits on the Board and would then report to GC any issues that are raised by the Board.
 3. AB explained that under the **Welsh Athletics Byelaws**
 4. **6.1** The General Council of Welsh Athletics Limited will provide guidance, support and alignment on all matters relating to the operational side of athletics
 5. AB asked “What does alignment mean to you?”
 6. TC stated that it suggests that communication is a 2 way thing from the GC to the Board and from Board to GC.
 7. LH stated that sometimes GC have to address the same issue more than once and believes that GC has in recent years influenced a lot of things particularly on the performance side but obviously there are priorities for the Board on what is addressed immediately. This might be frustrating for GC members but it is a question of persisting and making sure that everybody is kept informed.

8. AB stated that she wanted to pick up the point that the Board has priorities and asked "Where would the priorities be written down?"
9. TC answered it is written in the articles
10. AB stated it is the strategy plan
11. TC stated that he feels this is where there is a deficit between what is operational but should be about both and having the ability to communicate strategic direction and development and operational.
12. LH stated it is not only the Board from time to time there are messages coming from this Council to Staff Members and sometimes there are a few tensions which is okay but at the end of the day we should all be pulling in the same direction.
13. AB stated that priorities are written down usually when strategic plans are developed and that there should be more work on developing these strategic plans and there is a process of consultation and you will never please everybody on this. However, the strategic plan would ideally be what is best for the sport and to protect the business.
14. AB asked do you as GC Members see your role in promoting these priorities. These priorities are actually handed to the Staff who must work to these priorities as well. So you can see how these tensions arise where things that flow up and things that flow down building from the bottom, flying from the top and sometimes you are the one who is caught in the middle of this but the fact is you should all be pulling together. There is only one strategy and one set of priorities and really part of your role is to be a great listener for your Members and to disseminate those priorities to your Members so that they better understand what the strategy means even if it is difficult for some people to hear that is your role.
15. JT asked is part of alignment to seek parity across the disciplines because we have had in the past several incidences of where one discipline operates completely differently to another and is that in the best interests of our athletes and members.
16. AB stated that is almost impossible for me to answer as triple jump, pole vault, road running are they so completely different that the way in which they operationally happen has to be different?

viii. Final Question – If you had to build a Council what skills and experience would you put on Council?

Group 1 – (MB) (GW)

- Confident contributors, ability to take part in the meetings and contribute

Group 2 – (GD) (LH) (JT)

- Movers and shakers – People who want to contribute and feel en-powered to contribute

1. AB stated that she would challenge both of these, you can get people who are confident and enjoy sharing their views and are highly opinionated yet know absolutely nothing. Is that what you are looking for?
2. Members answered NO
3. JH stated that you need good organisational skills.
4. AB asked members to talk about expertise in GC Members.
5. JT asked if she could challenge AB on what she had just said and the point that they had made about people in meetings who are members of a committee but don't contribute to the meeting at all and don't disseminate back either.
6. LC stated that the reason maybe that when someone is asked to volunteer from a particular Committee to sit on the General Council no-one wants to volunteer so you may have someone who will volunteer but may not really want to do it. That particular volunteer may not know what the purpose of GC is and this should be fully explained to them.
7. RP stated that she feels it is the same people who sit on all committees.

Group 4 – (DW) (SA) (LC)

- Chair, Minute Secretary

Group 5 – (JG) (RP) (JM)

- Skill sets from each discipline, Coaches and Athletes

Group 6 – (TC) (SL) (CM)

- Clarity of purpose, being clear what the role of a GC Member is.
1. AB asked members to think about the knowledge of the sport, disciplines, development, Clubs, formats, performance, talent and all the parts of the sport that make it great and Council come together and you are this body of expertise and you are conduits between the grassroots and the people who make it happen and the Board that has ultimate responsibility.

ix. To close AB asked Members to think about –

- **How can General Council best serve:**
 - **Members?**
 - **Board?**
1. JW thanked AB for her presentation and explained that the session tonight was part of a bigger piece of work that the Board had facilitated in March. The Governance sub-group of the Board that TC is a part of are working behind the scenes and will take some things forward to the next Board meeting which will involve potential changes in the way the Board operate and then hopefully as part of the joint meeting between the Board and GC there can be a wider discussion on how the Board and GC are interacting closely together. A lot of what has been said tonight has probably been said over the last few years, certainly since I have been with WA a lot of these view point's certainly around clarity of purpose of this group and Regional Council's and Discipline Groups and how that interacts with the staff and Board is a recurring theme which WA want to tackle and get something in place which is right for the Organisation going forward based on our future challenges and opportunities but also right for the members that they feel their views come forward and all start pulling in the right direction. Hopefully all can see that this is part of a big piece of work that hopefully we will all see some progress over the coming months and years.
 2. LH stated that she feels that this is encouraging and that what she would like to see as one way forward is to establish a closer working relationship between the GC and the Team. LH believes there are examples of good practice but perhaps we should conduct a little audit to see how the various factions can be improved bearing in mind that there are Committees and Regions represented here so it's a wider audience out there and the way to move the sport forward is to have this closer working relationship and should be part of our wider vision moving forward.
 3. SA thanked AB for clarifying a lot of the terminology that some find challenging. AB left the meeting.

3. Club modernisation – portal update

1. CM stated that the new club portal was launched at the end of April. Clubs would log on with their own unique ID. The portal has six key features which CM had previously updated members on namely –
 - Club affiliation
 - Club review software
 - Online training courses
 - Club documents
 - Club resource library
 - Webinar training
2. CM also explained that this was an on-going process in terms of the development of software and the next stage was to get more clubs utilising the portal and accessing all the support and resources that are housed there.
3. SA asked if there was anybody around the table who has used the portal.
4. LC answered yes.
5. JM asked how many clubs are actually using the portal at the moment.
6. CM answered about 46 but the aim is to get every club utilising it. A key feature of this was to ensure that every club would have much more support and can access the resources 24/7. CM stated that WA is probably the best Governing body in Wales in terms of this report that we can now offer clubs in terms of the breadth and scope of resources that are already on there and that we can release.

The next phase will be releasing more club reviews and training courses. CM also stated that the other Governing bodies that WA have spoken to are very envious in terms of what WA have been able to develop and the process that WA will be going through over the next twelve to eighteen months and beyond. CM stated that both he and JW had presented to Sport Wales what WA had done with this and a different way of thinking with modernisation which is the way forward.

7. JT asked if he had a breakdown of Clubs within each region that are utilising the portal?
8. CM will email an update of the presentation to each region and a breakdown of the current clubs who are using the portal.
9. JW stated that one of the things that we have discussed tonight as part of the presentation are very relevant to a lot of the topics that are on the portal and you could probably take what we discussed tonight and bring it down to club level it is the same challenges.
10. SA thanked CM on behalf of the GC for all the work he has done in developing this portal because as has already been mentioned WA are the leading sport in developing this.

4. Correspondence

None received

5. Feedback from Board meeting 26th March 2018 (SA)

1. SA reported that unfortunately she was unable to attend. However, SA had taken a few notes from the draft minutes. – The vision of sport in Wales was presented by Sport Wales regarding the way that they view that sport will develop.
2. JW stated that this is a vision for sport in Wales not Sport Wales. This is a process that Welsh Government are driving which will lead to a Vision for Sport Wales and a strategy for Sport Wales to deliver against that. Why is that important to us? Because ultimately our strategy has to be aligned to that in some form aligned to that UK Athletics are looking at a vision for athletics in the UK and that will have an impact on the strategy for Welsh Athletics. These two big strategy and vision documents are being developed and the interesting thing for WA is they might be poles apart on the spectrum, with large communities and tackling inequalities to focus on performance.
3. LH stated that this is not something that is regulatory.
4. SA also reported from the minutes that an independent review led by an external Consultant has been requested regarding the Commonwealth Games.
5. SA also reported that the budget for the year has been approved but there is a 2 ½% reduction.
6. JW stated that all Governing Bodies in Wales have received a 2 ½% funding cut, this is part of where Welsh Government is at the moment, finances are tight and getting tighter and this year WA have also had a small reduction in Lottery investment as well and that again is an indication of reducing lottery income centrally which has a knock on effect to us.
7. SA also reported that the last point was the continuation of the Governance Review the Board was discussed and tonight's presentation from AB was linked in with that. This is an on-going large piece of work and further discussions will take place when you have all had chance to go home and think about what has been discussed tonight. As has already been stated you will receive the presentation and that will allow you to read through it and think about it. You will then have a base to discuss this at the next Joint meeting with WA Board in July.
8. JW also reported from the last Board meeting that a skeleton structure of future Board make up was agreed which has now gone to the Governance sub- group who will look at this and will be finalised at the next Board meeting and will then present this at the next Joint Board and GC meeting. This will also be presented to the wider membership around any potential changes going forward.

6. AOB – Accessibility to Referee reports via trinity for endurance /Sharing good practice within regions (East JT)

1. JT has received a request from Gerry Ashton the new Endurance Officials Secretary saying he cannot access Referees reports.
2. JW stated that he has looked into this on behalf of the East and WA will deal with this and contact will GA.
3. **Sharing good practice within regions.** – JT stated that 2 members from South Region had asked if they could attend the East Regional Council Meeting. They came and I quote were blown away by

what the East Region are doing and were very impressed by the number of people attending from various disciplines and the fact that people were contributing to the meeting and we had presentations from members in the region. So, JT feels that this is the way forward and this was the reason that the East for this item to be included. JT stated that as a region we feel that the other regions need to be interacting and that the East are working on a new pilot agenda for the region we had done this and it had worked reasonably well. We are not saying we are perfect in the East by any stretch of the imagination but all the feedback we are getting is that a lot of our ideas are innovative and pro-active so I think this is something as a Council that we need to take forward.

4. SA thanked JT and stated that perhaps there would be an opportunity later in the year for the East to tell us what you do in your meetings as we are not all able to go to an East meeting on mass to see what they do.
5. JT stated that there were quite a few members around the table who had attended East meetings in the past.
6. LH suggested that it might progress some of the things that came out of the review that Dr Nicky Lewis did with regard to the regions because it was noted there would be some consistency in terms of agenda.
7. JW stated that the reason the East have made so much progress is that they may be the only region who have taken on board the recommendations of Dr Nicky Lewis's Governance report.
8. LH stated but if you want some consistency and clarity then I think within the action plan there is going to be some sort of suggested core agenda and then it would be up to each region to add their own, that might be a way forward.
9. SL asked as not everyone can attend the East meeting perhaps you could record and edit it and put a little snap shot link for other regions to look at.
10. JT stated that would not be possible.

7. Date of next meeting

SA stated that this would be a joint meeting with the Board with a provisional date Thursday 5th July at 6.30pm at the Sport Wales National Centre, Cardiff.

SA closed the meeting at 8.37pm.

FENVAL