

# Blog: Behind the scenes in Milton Keynes

**Author:** Paul Stimpson

**Posted On:** February 04, 2015



Sara Sutcliffe, Chief Executive of  
Table Tennis England (photo by  
John Upham)

**Table Tennis England Chief Executive Sara Sutcliffe looks at the progress made towards the organisations key objectives since it moved to Milton Keynes last March.**

One of the key roles of the Chief Executive is to be accountable to the Board for delivery of the Strategic and Operational Plan by the staff. With a new Board appointed last July we set a number of relatively short-term objectives which were important to achieve by the end of March 2015 to establish the foundations for a longer-term 10-year strategy.

As we head into the last quarter of the 2014/15 financial year I thought I would take the opportunity to explain much of the focus of the last nine months since we moved to Milton Keynes.

The three headline objectives we set ourselves are:

- 1. To continue to implement changes to the new corporate structure and recruit and retain staff to ensure Table Tennis England is fit for purpose.**
- 2. To complete the long-term strategy review and produce the 2015-2016 operational plan.**
- 3. To continue reviewing all areas of business and recommend and/or implement changes to support the strategy.**

Sitting below those overarching objectives are 39 specific tasks to achieve, some of them operational and internal and some of them outward facing. I have chosen a number to expand on further.

- 1. Develop a 10-year strategy for Table Tennis England.** The Board and staff have spent numerous days working on this, including gathering insights and advice, and the resulting strategy will be published in the next few months.
- 2. Sport England funding presentation and on-site governance audit.** The preparation for the Sport England presentation included a 60-page submission, 30-minute presentation and two videos. It paid off with Sport England announcing on January 29 that it has restored Table Tennis England to full funding. The three-day on-site governance audit by Moore Stephens was also carried out.
- 3. Coach Education Roadshow and workforce review.** By March the coach education team will have carried out 12 roadshow events around the country talking to coaches of all levels. We are working closely with Sports Coach UK and taking learnings from other Governing Bodies on their workforce programmes.
- 4. New England Youth Squad launched.** This has been completed along with a re-launch of the Athlete Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence qualification with Stroud and South Gloucestershire College which allows youth squad athletes who are 16 and over to obtain a qualification and also provides funding for their place on the EYS.
- 5. Insight into who plays table tennis and what can we do to attract and retain people in the sport.** Our primary Sport England funding criteria is focused on growing adult participation which is measured by the bi-annual Active People Survey. Participation can be formal or informal sport, both are measured. Sport England is also very keen to ensure Governing Bodies use 'insight' to develop their programmes and then measure the outcomes to ensure that what is being delivered is relevant and achieving what it set

out to do. To that end it is very similar to a new product launch in a retail environment. We spent six months gathering insight through direct research (players, clubs, social participants) and focus groups into adult participation and disability participation. That led to pilot programmes being launched in the workplace, cross-sport environments and a disability pilot with Wheelpower GB. Once the analysis of the pilots is done we will be launching specific offers early in the new financial year. Insight and programme development for the youth and school sector will be next on the to-do list!

**6. Minimum 20 new satellite clubs launched.** Following on from the success of Year 1 of this programme, by the end of March 2015 we will have established 121 satellite clubs (against a Sport England target of 100) engaging with over 2,500 new school aged players.

**7. Review membership structure and benefits.** A focus group has been established and is currently undertaking this important piece of work. We want to ensure we have a membership structure that is up-to date, relevant and provides appropriate benefits to our members.

**8. Handover of Ping! to Table Tennis England.** The ownership of this programme has now been formally handed over by Sport England to us with guaranteed funding for the next two summers.

**9. PremierClub affiliation relaunched and improved engagement.** We have carried out 51 telephone surveys with Premier Clubs as we listen to what they want from Table Tennis England and how we can provide support to them which will lead to a restructured Premier Club programme.

**10. Facilities audit and strategy.** Sport England have supported a wide reaching facilities audit to be carried out. Whilst it has not been possible to speak to every club in the country we have had over 200 responses from a variety of types of clubs and facilities. This has helped to inform a two-year facilities investment strategy which we are finalising with Sport England. We have republished the Funding Guide to assist all sorts of clubs in accessing small grants to improve facilities.

**11. Improved customer service.** We aim to answer all telephone calls and respond to email queries quickly with an appropriate answer. We are pleased with the positive feedback about being able to speak to someone and not leaving a message on a voicemail.

**12. Undertake a review of the domestic competition structure.** This has been ongoing for a few months and the Phase 1 changes will be introduced next season (see the 2015/16 Calendar). The aim is two-fold – to ensure the domestic calendar supports the performance pathway to drive improvements and secondly to provide the right level of competitive opportunities for those who want to play competitive table tennis at all levels throughout the country.

**13. Appoint new IT provider and migrate to Office 365 for better operational efficiency.** This will be completed shortly and we are already seeing the benefits especially for staff working remotely.

The completion of the longer-term strategy has been a very important piece of work and that will be published soon. In the meantime I hope this gives you a sense of just some of the work we have been undertaking at Table Tennis England over the last few months.

My thanks to all the players, parents, coaches, officials and club volunteers who keep our sport active and growing week in, week out.

**Sara Sutcliffe**  
**February 4, 2015**

Downloaded From:

<https://newsarchive.tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/archived/blog-behind-the-scenes-in-milton-keynes/>