



## Proposed governance changes on table at AGM

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Letter to: NC, League and County reps, Board

From: Sandra Deaton, Table Tennis England Chairman

### Background

As you are aware Sport England recently announced the next four year funding allocation to National Sports Governing Bodies. While all sports had to face the realities of the current economic climate, table tennis fared better than many. We have been awarded approximately £9 million for the next four years and for the first time in recent years, the award is geared to providing support and resources to our core constituents, with a significant percentage supporting clubs and leagues.

However, these awards are subject to each and every National Sports Governing Body adhering to certain governance criteria according to the mandatory Sport England Code. Table Tennis England is better-placed than some organisations as we have already made many changes to modernise our structure, which now meet with Sport England requirements.

I am grateful to members of the Table Tennis England's National Council who have formed a small working party to work with the Board to manage these necessary changes.

The working party and the Board have identified some areas which required further clarification and the senior management team has worked closely with Sport England to resolve these issues.

We are pleased that Sport England has listened to our submissions and that we have reached, what I believe, is a successful outcome. However, it should be borne in mind that these changes are applicable to all sports, not just table tennis, and by not complying, we will put our future funding at risk.

Below, I have explained the detail of the points and how we propose to proceed.

We are confident that we have gone as far as possible to meet everyone's concerns and that we are acting in the best interests of table tennis in the future.

The Board is supportive of this proposed course of action and recognises that failing to comply with Sport England's Code could put the future funding of table tennis at risk.

I would ask that you support these changes at the forthcoming AGM and send a clear message to Sport England that we are all working together for the good of the sport.

## Elected directors

The Sport England Code requires that the Chairman is an appointed person but does not preclude a member or elected director from fulfilling this position. Currently the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Treasurer are the elected positions.

We were keen to retain directly-elected representation by and from the membership.

After discussions with Sport England, we are proposing that we retain three elected Directors who would sit on the Board and have the mandate from our members. They would have the position of 'Elected Deputy Chairman'.

This would be a fair and democratic system which retains three elected directors chosen by the membership. These positions would be open to all eligible members who want to stand, either as individuals with a particular agenda or a single issue interest; or as part of a team with a shared manifesto, as is currently the case. They would not be restricted by portfolio positions and will have the option to sit on the Board nominations committee who will make recommendations to the Board regarding appointment of Board Directors. The membership, through their representatives, will then choose the people they want to represent them.

I should mention at this point that the Chairman of Table Tennis England has come from one of the Elected Deputy Chairmen.

In summary, after discussions with Sport England:

1. We are required to appoint a Chairman;
2. We will be able to retain three elected directors as we have now;
3. These people will be able to represent directly the members' interests;
4. They will be recognised as 'Elected Deputy Chairmen';
5. This satisfies the wish for democratic representation as the three elected directors will be those chosen by and from the membership;
6. They can stand as teams and/or individuals – allowing maximum choice for members;
7. One of the Elected Deputy Chairman can be appointed Chairman.

## National Council

The Sport England Code requires that there is a limited term of office for members of a body such as a National Council (within the definition of the Code). There was some concern that an enforced limited term could result in the loss of experience and expertise from our Council.

There has been considerable discussion within the working party and the Board as to whether or not 'our'

National Council fulfilled the definition within the Code.

Our senior management team have had detailed discussions with Sport England on this point – and we believe progress has been made to confirm that ‘our’ National Council falls outside the terms.

The working party made a convincing case that Table Tennis England’s National Council would not meet the definition as it had ‘no rights and powers within the governance of the organisation’ and that it acted in an advisory capacity.

We are now hopeful that this proposition is accepted and therefore there will be no restriction on the length of times individuals can serve on the National Council, provided it continues in its current form.

## In summary

1. There was some ambiguity as to whether or not Table Tennis England’s National Council fell within the definition of the Code and would therefore have to impose time limits on its members;
2. This argument rested on whether or not the National Council had ‘rights or powers’. Members of the working party made a case that as it presently existed in an advisory capacity, it had no governance rights or powers and therefore fell outside the terms;
3. We believe this is a convincing argument and will not seek to impose terms of office on individuals under its current structure.

## Conclusion

Compliance with the Sport England Code is mandatory to receive the funding allocation.

The Board has worked closely with members of the National Council Working Party, and the senior management of Table Tennis England has taken their comment back to Sport England for clarification.

The Board is confident that we have acted in the best interests of table tennis and our membership, and that we have now secured an understanding which protects the future of the sport. We would ask for your support.

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