

Since issuing the AGM papers (LINK), Table Tennis England has received various questions and requests for clarification. These questions, and our responses, are set out below and will be added to as others are raised.

In summary, Table Tennis England's Board has put forward an important proposal which will be voted on at the AGM meeting. The Government requires all sporting bodies who receive public funds to comply with certain 'governance' standards in order to show we are fit to receive this financial support. If this is not agreed, the £9 million earmarked for table tennis will be at serious risk. A few individuals are opposing this. I believe it is important we send a clear and positive message. I hope this question and answer addresses some of the issues, explains what is at stake for our sport, and ensures the support of the clubs and counties at the AGM so we can invest in the future of our sport with certainty.

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What is this all about?

In October 2016 the Government issued the Code for Sports Governance. Government wants to ensure that any organisation receiving public funds governs itself properly. Through the funding agencies, UK Sport and Sport England, it introduced a set of rules in a Code, compliance with which is mandatory. The Government says the purpose is to "ensure that the highest levels of transparency, ethical standards and leadership are present across sport in this country". The Table Tennis England proposal to the AGM addresses what we need to do to ensure compliance with the Code, while retaining the democratic process within the sport.

What would be the difference between compliance and non-compliance?

Put simply, almost £9m of public money will be granted to Table Tennis England in the next four years if we comply. If we don't comply - we won't receive that award of £9m.

So it's just about the money?

It is about the future of the sport because, without the money, everything we do will decline and **all** of our members will lose out, wherever and at whatever level they play. It is the Sport England money that enables club and volunteer support, coach education, facilities grants, competitions and rankings. It enables us to sustain the performance pathway, which ultimately leads to England players performing well on the world stage, and to promote table tennis to a wider audience by such means as live streaming and producing programmes for Sky Sport. Our membership income is only 7% of our total income and would not be enough to do any of the above.

What does Table Tennis England have to do to comply with the Code?

Not a lot. Modernisation of our governance started 20 years ago with the change to being a limited company. Then three years ago we had to make more change to the way we operate, so that has taken us a long way down the road to good governance.

The key change we must now make is that we have an appointed rather than an elected Chairman of the Board.

Why is complying with the Code of Governance so important?

It is part of good governance. The Code for Sports Governance allows for a mix of Directors who are elected, appointed, independent and 'from the sport'. This gives the Board balance, and ensures 'cartels' can't develop. Unfortunately some sports have had a bad reputation in the past - and the Government is making everyone operate on the same terms, in an open, fair and transparent way.

So how do we comply?

We have to change our Articles - the set of rules which set out the way we govern ourselves. At the moment, our Chairman is an elected position. In the future that needs to be an appointed position by the Board. Vitaly, though, the democratic voice of the membership is trained through three elected director positions on the Board.

That needs to happen at our AGM on July 8 when we will be asking the representatives of leagues, counties and other voting members to support us in making that change and guarantee the £9 million of funding.

To make that happen, we need 75 per cent of the vote.

What happens if the vote falls short of 75 per cent?

If the special resolution does not pass, Sport England have made it clear that we will be in breach of the Code and we won't receive public money beyond 31 October 2017. A copy of the communication from Sport England confirming this was sent out with the AGM paperwork.

What difference would it make to our league/club if funding was stopped?

The Sport England grant underpins the whole sport, for example by allowing us to qualify more officials and coaches, ensuring that competitions can run and players at all levels have the chance to develop and fulfil their potential. It allows the sport to grow at all levels in a safe environment through work done on safeguarding, teacher activation and the Table Grant Scheme, for example. Of the £9m granted by Sport England, about £5m will directly support the clubs and leagues structure through our [newly launched Be TT programme](#) and other initiatives.

It will be invested directly into clubs, leagues and volunteers to help them retain and develop the sport. While some of this may not seem to be directly relevant to your League, the loss of this money would undoubtedly be felt across the sport.

Concerns have been raised that the new structure won't be democratic as members will lose the right to elect a Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Treasurer – how can we be reassured that this is not the case?

The Board understands that there is a concern about elected directors. But in reality, the democratic element won't change. There will still be three directors elected by the membership, with the title of Elected Deputy Chairman. Any one of those individuals could stand for the role of appointed Chairman. These directors would still be voted for by the members and would come from the members and they would be eligible to be part of the Nominations Panel which would appoint the Chairman.

Does that mean the elected directors won't have any real power or influence?

If what is meant by real power is one person being able to railroad through his or her wishes, then no they won't. And that's a good thing - it's unhealthy for any membership organisation to be a dictatorship.

The elected directors will have the same power and influence that the three current elected directors (Sandra Deaton, Susie Hughes and Keith Thomas) have – they are each one voice and one vote on a Board of 12. They can influence, debate, and sometimes disagree with other Directors, but they cannot demand or dictate. This ensures balance and control. A Board cannot be made up of 'yes men'. A variety of views, backgrounds and experiences is essential to get good decision-making. That will continue, nothing will change.

The good change which will give more democracy is that individuals can stand for election to the Board on their own agendas and representing particular views, rather than having to be part of a team. It increases rather than decreases the choice for members.

What about the National Council - will it continue? Are term limits going to be imposed?

Members of our National Council have a wealth of experience to bring to our sport. We have successfully argued that as National Council fulfils an advisory capacity and does not have decision-making powers that could undermine the Board, the Code requirement for terms limits will not apply. There is no intention to change that.



If we have until October 31 to comply, why the rush now?

October 31 is the day the Government has required NGBs to comply and therefore Sport England has said it will stop funding if we are non-compliant. This process needs an Article change which can only be done at a General Meeting and a vote in favour at the AGM would send strong message that we are compliant. A rejection of the Board's proposals is not a good message and would damage the goodwill and relationship that has been established with Sport England over the last three years.

Won't this lead to the more 'non-table tennis people' on the Board?

The current Board is heavily table tennis based, representing all aspects, and that won't change. Currently there are the three elected directors and another five appointed directors all from the sport. The remaining three so-called independent directors are not active in the sport but one of those is a former table tennis international player, who is now a lawyer in the sporting world; another is an athlete who has had success at the highest international level, and now coaches to Olympic standards; and the third has high level commercial expertise and also played league level table tennis in his youth. We are fortunate to have their breadth and depth of experience and they all share an interest in wanting to be involved with Table Tennis England. We would like most of our current and future directors to be table tennis people, as they are, but we must also recognise that in a rapidly changing environment we need people who can bring all aspects of experience and expertise to the Board.

Will Sport England be appointing the Board Members?

No, it is the responsibility of the Board.

I have heard that the Standing Orders for the AGM have changed. Why?

It is correct that the way special resolutions (or propositions) are taken has changed. This is based on independent legal advice. We were advised that the former method of debating and voting on an amendment first was not compliant with the Companies Act 2006. Therefore the Board's resolution needs to be heard first and, if that is passed, the meeting will debate and vote on the second resolution which, if passed, would supersede and amend the first resolution. The legal advice on this is attached.

What other sports have had to make changes to comply with the Code?

As far as we know all funded NGBs are having to make some changes but what those changes are depends on their current structure. The FA's governance changes are well documented; British Rowing's current elected Chairman is standing down to comply with the Code, and a new one will be appointed; British Cycling are having to restructure their Board; the RFU are bringing in term limits for their Council; British Judo and Badminton England have both moved from having an elected Chairman to an appointed Chairman and Badminton England has also introduced term limits for their Vice Presidents. This is not exhaustive, every NGB is dealing with its own specific issues.

I have heard that Badminton England has retained six elected directors on its Board?

They are not elected in the way that we understand at Table Tennis England. At Badminton England, anyone wishing to apply to be a director must apply through a transparent process

and will be assess by the Nominations Panel. The Board will then make a recommendation to the AGM who will ‘elect’ the directors. It is more akin to a ratification process. We believe that the Table Tennis England method of directly electing three directors is indeed more democratic.

*table compiled following examination of articles and discussions with Badminton England CEO:

	Table Tennis England	Badminton England (post 2017 AGM – Code compliant)
Chairman	Elected – must change to being appointed	Appointed – 2017 change from elected
Elected Directors	3 x elected by the voting members at the same time so can stand as a team or as individuals. Campaigning and manifestos published. No vetting of candidates against skills matrix.	6 x ratified/elected by the AGM on rotational based of 1 or 2 per year. Open process with a published skills matrix and identified skills gap being sought. Nominated by company member and submit a CV plus candidate profile of max 200 words. All stand as individuals, no teams. Nomination Committee will interview all candidates and publish all candidates CVs and profiles. Nominations Committee will recommend which candidates should be ratified at the AGM. VOTE ONLY PROCEEDS IF THERE ARE MORE CANDIDATE THAN VACANCIES.
Voting	Weighted postal vote, first past the post	Weighted card vote at AGM, first past the post
Nominations Committee	All 3 elected directors can be included. Chairman and independent directors too.	Chairman 3 x independent directors 1 x elected director 1 x county representative (TBC)
Appointed directors	3 x independent appointed by the Board	3 x independent directors are ratified by AGM after open process and recommendation

	<p>5 x member directors (these could be nominated by league/county)</p> <p>All appointed following open process and recommendation of Nominations Committee</p>	<p>of Nomination Committee so effectively nominated directors. No election in that only the number matching the number of vacancies are proposed.</p>
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