

– NATIONAL COUNCIL –

ESTABLISHED BY THE ARTICLES OF

TABLE TENNIS ENGLAND

How it Works

Note for Guidance

Introduction

This note explains how National Council works with the Board, staff and membership of Table Tennis England (TTE) to promote and encourage the sport. It is intended mainly for new national councillors but other councillors, staff, directors and members may also find it useful.

The note is for guidance and does not have any formal status. The main formal documents which affect how Council works are:

- The Companies Acts (especially the Companies Act 2006) – on the gov.uk website.
- The Articles of Association – on the TTE website governance page
- A Code for Sports Governance – on the Sport England website
- The National Council Standing Orders – on the TTE website National Council page.

Council acts as a critical friend to the Board providing support and challenge. Councillors, directors and staff often have different views on the way forward. But we all want the best for our sport and our members. Please treat everyone in the sport with dignity and respect. Criticism is more helpful if it is constructive rather than directed at individuals.

A brief history

Table Tennis England, as it is now known, was founded in 1921. It became a limited company subject to the Companies Acts in 2001. National Council became its governing body in 1964.

In recent years the Government has prescribed how sports organisations must be governed to qualify for public funding. The requirements are now set out in the Code for Sports Governance. To meet these requirements TTE adopted new Articles in 2014. These transferred responsibility for its management to the Board and gave National Council advisory status.

The Articles

The Companies Acts require a company to have Articles of Association defining its constitution. The TTE Articles define National Council as follows:

36 National Council

36.1 There shall be a National Council consisting of one National Councillor appointed by each County Association.

36.2 The duties of the National Council shall be:

36.2.1 to act as a channel of communication between the Board and Affiliated Organisations and Affiliated Members

36.2.2 to consider matters referred to it by the Board, Affiliated Organisations and Affiliated Members

36.2.3 to make recommendations to the Board.

36.3 The National Council shall prescribe and regulate its own procedures.

How Council works now

After the new Articles were approved in 2014, the Board and Council agreed how to work together and new council standing orders were approved. There have been some bumps in the road since but the system that has now evolved is this:

- Each County Association elects a national councillor annually and may also elect a deputy national councillor to attend if the councillor cannot do so.
- Council elects one of its members as the Council Chair.
- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) appoints a senior staff member - currently the Head of Operations and Governance - to act as the Council Secretary.
- The Council Chair and Secretary are the point of first contact between Council and the Board, and work to establish a smooth relationship between the two.
- Council meets four times a year at roughly three-month intervals.
- Meetings are scheduled well in advance and dates are chosen when the TTE Chair and CEO can attend.
- Directors and staff are very welcome and are encouraged to attend and engage.
- TTE supplies the financial and administrative support for Council. The Council Chair and Secretary work together to ensure Council's effectiveness while controlling the financial cost and management time needed to achieve it.

Council Meetings

Council meetings are hybrid. Councillors may attend in person or remotely. One meeting a year is held entirely remotely. These arrangements reduce the need to travel which helps those representing members from counties a long way from Milton Keynes and reduces costs. On the other hand, it is more difficult for those attending remotely to contribute to the meeting and it reduces the opportunity for networking.

Essential expenses incurred in attending council meetings are reimbursed in accordance with TTE's approved rates. Where it is essential to stay overnight in Milton Keynes the office will arrange this on request.

Council Chair

The Council Chair's role is to conduct meetings in accordance with the standing orders and is expected to do so impartially and ensure all views are heard.

Outside the meeting the Council Chair works to ensure that the Board and staff keep Council and the membership fully informed and give Council every opportunity to express its views on behalf of the membership before decisions are taken.

Attendance

The following are invited to attend, though only councillors are members:

- Councillors or, in their absence, their deputies (each receive notice)
- the President
- the Board
- Staff authorised by the CEO
- Regional committee chairs
- Rules committee chair
- Representative of BPTT, BUCS and VETTS.

Preparation for meetings

At least five weeks before each meeting the Council Chair or Secretary sends a preliminary notice to those entitled to attend. This letter invites them to submit motions, papers or topics for discussion four weeks before the meeting.

Agenda

The agenda and papers are posted on the national council page of the website two weeks before the meeting. The Council Chair determines the agenda after consultation with the Council Secretary. The agenda includes reports from the TTE Chair and CEO, Board minutes, presentations by the staff and motions, papers, topics and questions from councillors. The agenda includes a timing for each item which can be varied if necessary.

Minutes and reports

The TTE Chair, Board and CEO each submit a written report. These are available to the membership on the website and are an important contribution to TTEs commitment to openness and transparency. The Board's report is in the form of its minutes with any confidential matters redacted. The CEOs report includes reports from the staff teams. To reduce the management time required, reports produced for the Board can often be reused for Council and items already covered on the website can be referenced via a link.

Councillors can ask questions on reports in writing beforehand, which ensures a more considered answer, or at the meeting.

Finance

A finance report is presented to each meeting. TTE's finances are complex as the Government restricts some of its funding to specific purposes. The critical issues are the relative financial priority of different objectives and how to balance them against the need to keep affiliation fees to a reasonable level.

MAG

Council and the Members Advisory Group (MAG) aim to complement each other. MAG is invited to present a report to each meeting. The chairs of Council and MAG aim to work in partnership and the two bodies make their papers available to each other.

Submitting agenda items

If you submit an agenda item, please include a short note (or, for a power point presentation, the slides) which can be posted on the website in advance. This helps councillors to consider the issue and discuss it with their members before the meeting.

Please submit papers and reports in good time. Late documents can still be posted on the website but their consideration may be postponed to allow councillors to discuss them with the membership first.

Debate and discussion

The rules for debating motions are set out in the council standing orders. The proposer speaks first. Other councillors, directors and staff may each speak once and the proposer may sum up at the end before the vote.

During the meeting the Board can explain its policies, staff can talk about their work and councillors can introduce papers they have submitted. Generally, the presenter speaks first, followed by questions and comments and then the presenter responds. A councillor may contribute several questions and comments but will normally be asked to do so in a single contribution to make the best use of the time available. The TTE Chair and CEO (or their nominees) are always invited to speak if they wish.

Voting

Votes on TTE matters are recommendations to the Board but not binding on it. Council prescribes and regulates its own procedures and can determine them by a vote if need be.

Board engagement and consultation

Although the Board and staff can communicate with the membership via the website or email, it is harder to engage or get representative feedback that way. Council meetings offer the chance to engage directly with representatives who should be in touch with the opinions of their local membership.

The Board consults Council before approving significant change. This is best done when it has specific proposals or options but before it commits itself to them. As Council only meets every three months the Board and Council have to coordinate their timetables.

The Board usually consults Council before it proposes affiliation fee changes. Proposals generally stand a better chance of AGM approval if Council supports them. On the other hand, if Council has reservations, the Board has the option to modify its proposals before putting them to the AGM.

Similarly, the Board or company members can, if they wish, consult Council about other possible AGM proposals to test the water before deciding to go ahead with them.

Council also usually discusses the AGM agenda when it is published so that councillors can report on the issues to their local membership but it is too late by then to modify proposals to deal with problems the proposers did not foresee.

Breakout groups

Part of most meetings is held in smaller groups. This enables a more detailed discussion and gives those who are less confident a better chance to be heard.

Council minutes

Council meetings are minuted by a staff member and, once the draft is approved by the Council Chair, circulated to councillors and others who were entitled to attend the meeting. If you think there is an inaccuracy in the minutes, please raise it at the time so that it can be corrected rather than waiting till the next meeting.

Roles outside the meeting

Councillors' roles extend beyond the formal meeting. While at the venue (before and after the meeting and at lunchtime) please take the opportunity to network with colleagues, directors and staff.

Council can also establish select committees; the majority of whose members are councillors. Select committees investigate a particular topic or issue, produce a report on the current situation and make recommendations to Council.

You are encouraged to raise your members concerns with staff via the help email help@tabletennisengland.co.uk when they arise rather than wait until the next meeting.

Councillors (but not deputy national councillors) also represent their county's membership at general meetings.

Conclusion

From 1921 to 2014 TTE was governed by its membership. Then the Government required it to change its structure as a condition of funding. But Council is still a key influence when it speaks for the membership. So please keep in close touch with the membership in your county and ensure that you represent them at Council. Good luck!

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