

**National Council Paper**  
**Estyn Williams Membership Paper**

A paper was submitted to National Council by Estyn Williams and on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024 I discussed this paper and the contents. The below in italics is a summary of what was discussed on each point and any actions are highlighted in red. The full paper can be found at the bottom of this in *Appendix 1* if you wish to reference back to the full context of the recommendations.

**R1 - TTE should produce a comprehensive plan to increase our membership.**

*This was discussed and Mission 2025 has been overtaken by Table Tennis United as the new strategy for Table Tennis England. AW agreed with EW that membership growth is important and will be crucial to the growth and financial wellbeing of the organisation.*

**Action:** Membership growth is being discussed by SLT and plans are being considered as to how membership can grow both in numbers and in income. This will come out as part of the Implementation Plan.

**R2 - We should publicise TTEs advice service on local groups wherever table tennis is played and wherever potential members might see it.**

*AW and EW discussed the different mechanisms and AW talked through how we are working to build local partnerships and relationships through the Area Networks and these will be critical in helping us promote the sport. This will be underpinned and supported by the Engagement team and the wider promotion that is done online and through social media as part of the wider engagement strategy.*

**Action:** Area Networks to build those local relationships, use local partners and forums to promote activity and Area Managers to support clubs, counties and leagues to make those local connections. Partners coming onto the Local Organising Groups will support this work.

**R3 - We should test out the recruitment information on the website with potential members who don't know how table tennis is organised to see how effective they find it.**

*This was a good idea and should be considered how we do this. AW explained that designing communications from a customer perspective is crucial.*

**Action:** AW will discuss with Keely Armitt in Engagement to consider this as part of any website development and updates.

**R4 - We should build pathways into our mass participation projects to help those who take part to become regular players and then members and we should monitor our success in achieving this.**

*AW agreed that having a strong and inter-linked pathway from introduction, to regular to talent and pathway is vital. There's a move away from 'bean counting' and being driven by numbers to 'Participation with a Purpose'. Development staff's work will be focussed in Community Table Tennis Partnerships and spaces where activity is driven by a wider purpose and there is sustainability and retention. This is where the investment will go.*

**Action:** Area Managers will be building and establishing Community Table Tennis Partnerships where focussed activity will happen and any activity they support and grow will have a purpose to it. This may not always go to a club but may mean club activity starts up in new and different spaces. It will depend on local infrastructure and demand. It's crucial clubs are supported to grow though.

**R5 - We should research how easy it is for potential members to find a league or club that suits their needs, what barriers they face and how many players want to join a league or club but fail to do so because of each barrier.**

*An important point that will be considered how we do this. We do already have some insight into this space both table tennis specific and general attitudes to club sport.*

**Action:** AW along with the Development team and Engagement team will consider how we do this within the activity that is run and established to start to build that insight.

**R6 - We should work more closely with leagues and clubs and help them motivate, train and support their volunteers to improve their organisation and increase their membership.**

*Again really important and now there is a local team in place through the Area Managers there's greater capacity on the ground to do this. However, any support Area Managers offer needs to be followed up by clubs and leagues and they can only support those that want to be supported. There also needs to be an onus on the clubs and leagues contacting them as the number of people in that team is limited and so it is impossible for them to proactively contact everyone all the time.*

**Action:** Area Network and Area Managers are in place and have already been speaking to and supporting 100's of clubs.

**R7 - We should set up a database of all types of local groups which play table tennis and engage with them regularly through *Over the Net* or other newsletter.**

*Definitely and really important. Work has already started on this and a few big partnerships are being lined up with organisations that manage and support local groups for them to become closely connected with TTE, either as members or affiliates. More news to follow on this.*

**Action:** Several big partners being lined up to make this happen. Will also happen on a local level through the Area Networks.

**R8 - We should encourage all types of local groups to affiliate in the independent organisation category to give us the opportunity to recruit their members so that we increase both membership and diversity.**

*Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity is one of our key priorities and focuses for 24/25 and we need to close the gender gap, be more open and accessible to people with disabilities and people from disadvantaged areas as well as those ethnic diverse communities. The category will depend on their level of activity as we want organisations that are delivering or supporting the delivery of table tennis so they are proactive.*

**Action:** As per the action in R7.

The organisation has made great strides since 2022 when this paper was drafted and we will continue to pursue many of the items discussed here as they naturally form parts of Table Tennis United and the Implementation Plans. In order to make that happen we need the support of clubs, leagues, counties, members and others to rally behind Table Tennis United and continue to be forward thinking, creative and embrace new ways of working and changes.

I thank Estyn for his paper, which I enjoyed discussing with him and thought it was a thought provoking read.

**Andrew Wilesmith  
Head of Development**

## Appendix 1 – Full Membership Paper from Estyn Williams

### A Membership Plan for TTE?

#### Introduction

Table Tennis England (TTE) has worked hard to increase participation in the sport. Mission 2025 set a target of 200,000 regular adult players which has been achieved. But this has not been reflected in the size of our membership. Mission 2025 also set a target for 40% of regular players to join TTE which equates to 80,000 members. But when Covid struck, our membership was only 29,072 – far less than Badminton for example. This paper proposes that **TTE should produce a comprehensive plan to increase our membership. (R1)**

#### Becoming a regular player

Almost everyone has played table tennis casually. But regular play usually involves joining a local group. This may be an affiliated local league or club or some other type of group (an ‘independent organisation’) that we do not actively encourage to affiliate.

Those who play casually may not know what local groups are available. TTE tries to help them find one. But not all potential members know that TTE provides this service. **We should publicise TTEs advice service on local groups wherever table tennis is played and wherever potential members might see it. (R2)**

Our website provides information on local groups. The staff and volunteers who provide it already know all about TTE, so they have a different perspective from potential members. **We should test out the recruitment information on the website with potential members who don’t know how table tennis is organised to see how effective they find it. (R3)**

Our mass participation projects measure success in terms of the numbers taking part. This is important but its value is limited if the participants don’t become regular players. **We should build pathways into our mass participation projects to help those who take part to become regular players and then members and we should monitor our success in achieving this. (R4)**

#### Leagues and clubs

Having identified a league or club, players have a variety of experience when they try to join. We don’t have much evidence about how easy they find it. Anecdotally, the barriers include the league or club:-

- being difficult to contact
- being full and not accepting new members
- not really catering for players of that age, gender or ability
- not meeting at a time or place which suits
- not providing the type of play desired
- not being welcoming.

**We should research how easy it is for potential members to find a league or club that suits their needs, what barriers they face and how many players want to join a league or club but fail to do so because of each barrier. (R5)** We can then decide how best to overcome them.

The quality of league and club organisation varies widely. It depends mainly on the number and effectiveness of the local volunteers who run it. **We should work more closely with leagues and clubs and help them motivate, train and support their volunteers to improve their organisation and increase their membership. (R6)**

## Diversity and Inclusivity

TTE has produced a detailed strategy *Level the Table* to make table tennis more diverse and inclusive. Our current membership is not as diverse as we would like. This may be partly because leagues and clubs are less attractive to some types of player – in particular to women and girls. *Level the Table* recognises that there is greater diversity in social and recreational table tennis and promises to adapt the sport to the individuals to be part of the table tennis community. But at present TTE only encourages leagues and clubs to affiliate even though our Articles and regulations permit other groups ('independent organisations') to do so too.

In 2020 TTE introduced new membership categories for club play (which includes insurance) and supporters. But as we do not recruit or engage with independent organisations, we don't know very much about what groups exist and their members know little or nothing about TTE.

**We should set up a database of all types of local groups which play table tennis and engage with them regularly through *Over the Net* or other newsletter. (R7)**

**We should encourage all types of local groups to affiliate in the independent organisation category to give us the opportunity to recruit their members so that we increase both membership and diversity. (R8)**

## Conclusion

A bigger membership is not just about collecting more affiliation fees. It raises the profile of table tennis, improves our credibility in applying for government funding and provides a larger talent pool at the base of the pyramid from which future England players will come.

After years of no growth, now is the time for a sustained push to increase our membership!

Estyn Williams

National Councillor for Warwickshire

May 2022

## Summary of Recommendations

**R1.** TTE should produce a comprehensive plan to increase our membership.

**R2.** We should publicise TTEs advice service on local groups wherever table tennis is played and wherever potential members might see it.

**R3.** We should test the recruitment information on the website out with potential members who have no knowledge of our organisation to see how effective they find it.

**R4.** We should build pathways into our mass participation projects to help those who take part to become regular players and then members and we should monitor our success in achieving this.

**R5.** We should research how easy it is for potential members to find a league or club that suits their needs, what barriers they face and how many players want to join a league or club but fail to do so because of each barrier.

**R6.** We should work more closely with leagues and clubs and help them motivate, train and support their volunteers to improve their organisation and increase their membership.

**R7.** We should set up a database of all types of local groups which play table tennis and engage with them regularly through *Over the Net* or other newsletter.

**R8.** We should encourage all types of local groups to affiliate in the independent organisation category to give us the opportunity to recruit their members so that we increase both membership and diversity.