

Welsh Athletics Board Meeting Minutes Held on the 23rd March 2020

Meeting held remotely via video link

Present: Steve Perks (Chair) (SP)
Nicky Lewis (NL)
Nick Everitt (NE)
Adrian Thomas (AT)
Sue Alvey (SA)
Bernie Plain (BP)
James Williams – Interim CEO (JW)
Chris Jones (CJ)
Adrian Palmer (AP)
Chris Moss (CM)
Rob Sage (RS)

Papers circulated in advance:

Paper – Risk Register
Coronavirus Risk Register
2020/21 budget and revised version
January 2020 minutes
Governance Action Plan
Finance Update
Performance sub-group minutes
Sport Wales update
UK Sport submission – UKA review

1. Apologies for Absence

None received

2. Declaration of Interest

None declared

3. Discussion items

The meeting focused around the immediate action required to support the sport and the organisation during the coronavirus crisis.

Prior to the meeting (16th March), a decision had been taken by the Board to support the CEO's decision to suspend all athletics activities until the end of April. A decision taken in conjunction with the other Home Countries and UKA.

Risk Register – A coronavirus specific risk register was presented to the Board. JW advised that a number of control mechanisms had been put in place to control expenditure, with only business critical expenditure being authorised. JW also gave an overview of the actions taken so far to mitigate and minimise the risk to the organisation.

The companies full risk register was also presented, with an updated reserves policy (reducing the amount held for notice payment from 2months to 1) being agreed by the Board. The full risk register was approved by the Board.

Financial risk – A projected budget for 2020/21 was circulated prior to the Board meeting, JW advised that an updated version had been created and was circulated for discussion. The revised budget factored in no athletics activity in the first quarter and also a revised projected cashflow for the year. The revised budget indicated a projected reduction in income due to coronavirus of 7%, but this was off-set by a reduction in expenditure of 7%, leaving a projected year end deficit position of £3k. The budget was approved by the Board.

BP enquired as to whether payments to clubs would be affected, JW confirmed that Welsh Athletics would honour all payments to clubs. JW also stated that he was in discussions with Sport Wales about support for clubs during this period.

BP enquired as to whether the situation would impact the Run 4 Wales investment. JW mentioned that Matt had confirmed that the grant was linked to the previous years results, so assumed it would not be affected, but would write to R4W to check.

Update – Run 4 Wales have subsequently confirmed that they are not currently in a position to provide a grant to WA, and needed to retain all funds to support their own cashflow.

NE provided an overview of the performance of the WA investment fund, the performance had deteriorated as a result of the impact on global markets, but due to some immediate action and the ultra defensive position of the fund, any impact had been minimised.

NE reminded the Board that as Directors they are ultimately responsible for the reserve position of WA.

JW stated that he and the finance department have been scrutinising all aspects of the WA finance position to ensure that the organisation was well placed to manage any financial challenges in the short and medium term.

Sporting Impact – JW proposed to the Board that the current suspension of the Sport be extended until the end of May.

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The Board discussed whether there should be a directive in relation to physical coaching. JW stated that the current wording is advocate to provide an element of flexibility within the Govt guidelines. NE proposed that WA should be brave and lead in this space and mandate that no physical coaching take place. Following a lengthy discussion, the Board agreed to this position. The Board agreed to extend the current suspension of all activities until the end of May.

JW agreed to share the updated position with UKA and the Home countries in a call immediately following the Board meeting.

Competition – JW updated the Board on ideas being worked through with the Home Countries on a series of virtual races to maintain some form of competition during this period.

Staffing Impact – JW updated the Board on some of their work to support staff whilst they are home working, including providing guidance and resource to support their mental health, and also an update on future initiatives including the establishment of a buddy system. NE & NL provided input on work their employers had put in place, and offered to support the staff with the establishment of a staff welfare group to also include RS, Adam Rattenbury and HR consultant Kerry Chown. RS agreed to set this up.

JW stated that the organisations business continuity plan had been tested prior to the closure of the offices, and that all staff had managed the transition in a very professional manner.

JW also mentioned that the organisation had paused all live recruitment, but had completed the internal recruitment prior to the office closing.

Clubs and membership fee – CM gave an overview of communication plan that is in place to support clubs. He stated that at present there was no need to explore changing the affiliation process, but would continue to consult with clubs to ensure all options were being considered.

Performance – CJ gave an overview of how his team were supporting athletes and coaches during this period. AP confirmed that all training camps had been cancelled. AP also gave an overview of the current International programme, with many events being cancelled as a result of the Government guidelines.

Communication – JW and RS gave an overview of the internal communication pathways that are currently in place, along with an initial version of an external communication strategy. The strategy is aimed at maintaining interest in the sport, whilst also providing guidance to clubs and athletes on how to continue staying physically active whilst observing Government guidelines.

Governance – JW mentioned that a number of applications had been received for the 2 vacant NED roles. Both SP & NL stated the need to continue with this process due to the small number of NED currently in place.

UKA review – SP gave an overview of the recent interview with Dame Sue Street as part of UK Sports review into UK Athletics. A paper that was submitted as part of the review was circulated to the Board for info.

SP thanked JW and his team for all the hard work to date. In order to keep the Board fully engaged with the situation, SP suggested a follow up call in 2 weeks. JW to arrange video conference facilities once again.

8. Date of Next Meeting

8th of April 2020