

Minutes from Board meeting on 10 March 2017



**Venue** Sport Northern Ireland,  
Upper Malone Road, Belfast, BT9  
5LA

**Date** 10 March 2017

**Time** 11:00 – 12:30

**Status** Business

**PRESENT:**

Chair: George Lucas

Vice Chair: Jay Colville

Members: Wilma Erskine

Siobhan Weir

Kyle Ferguson

Catherine O'Mullan

Kieran Harding

Brian Delaney

Darryl Petticrew

In Attendance: Maggie Smith, Interim Chief Executive Officer

Shaun Ogle, Director of Performance

Gillian Gilliland (Minutes)

Apologies: Jackie Bryson

Richard Bullick

Andrea Bingham

Celine McStravick

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
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**BUSINESS**

**1. Register of Members' interests and conflicts of interest**

The Chair advised that he had been a member of Tennis Ireland but has resigned this position; he added that he may be able to add value to today's discussion having been involved in Tennis' funding submission.

No other conflicts of interest were declared.

**2. Chair's remarks**

The Chair thanked everyone for giving up their time to come along to the meeting this morning and stated that it may be necessary to have further meetings to discuss this issue over the next few weeks.

**3. Consideration of the process for lottery investment in Sporting Winners and Clubs 2017-21**

The Director of Performance highlighted a statement within the Minister's letter regarding governing bodies expressing concern about the process and advised this would be discussed during the course of today's meeting along with how the benefits were calculated.

Due to the changes in Board membership during the process to date, the Director of Performance provided the Board with a history and timeline of the Sporting Winners and Clubs to date.

Sport NI commenced a consultation process on the new Corporate Plan in January 2015 and the Corporate Plan along with the Sporting Winners and Clubs element was approved by the Board in April 2015; DCAL approval was received in June 2015. During the period March-July 2015 a mid-term review of Performance Focus and a report on lessons learned from the 2014 Commonwealth Games were produced and informed work on Sporting Clubs and Winners. In October 2015 the Board approved the Sporting Winners principles including how athletes would be funded going forward, through one funding stream. An information evening was held with sports in January 2016 to gather information; this was a very positive meeting. In February 2016 the Sporting Clubs principles were approved by the Board. These two sets of principles were then combined and went out for consultation; following consultation the principles were confirmed without further amendment.

The Sporting Winners and Clubs programme was launched in June 2016; sports completed an Expression of Interest and were issued with guidance documents and workbooks. To assist the sports there were a series of seven clinics held, six held in Belfast and one in Dublin to reflect the all-Ireland constitution of many sports. Submissions were received from sports in September 2016 following which assessments commenced and a project level business case was produced. This business case was approved by the Board in November 2016. Indicative letters of offer were issued to funded sports in December 2016 and unsuccessful sports were offered feedback meetings in December 2016-January 2017.

A joint letter was issued by four sports (IFA, Ulster Rugby, Cricket Ireland and Ulster GAA) to the Minister on 3 February, with a further letter sent to the Chair of Sport NI on 27 February expressing concerns in the process. Three of those sports had been unsuccessful in their applications for funding to the Winners programme. Sports were offered the opportunity to an independent review of the

decision on their application and this process commenced in February 2017 and is ongoing. The Board noted that of the 80 recognised governing bodies, 37 sports had applied to the programme and of this number 12 were undertaking a formal review of their funding decision.

The Director of Performance highlighted value for money was very important in the assessment process and is clearly highlighted in the Guidance Document issued to sports. As part of the submission process sports had to submit a strategic proposal and they were assessed against 10 elements; these elements were used to assess value for money. This detail was contained within the guidance documents issued to sports. The value for money score was calculated and the sports were ranked green, amber and red in terms of benefits and outcomes and the level of investment requested. The other factor considered was affordability and the context was set for the Board in terms of National Lottery balances and what was affordable. This then translated to six options which were brought to the Board in November 2016 and the Board approved Option Four. The Director of Performance emphasised the process has remained consistent throughout. The Board took a strategic decision based around benefits and outcomes without knowing the indicative award for each sport.

The Chair requested that members receive a copy of today's presentation.

Catherine O'Mullan thanked the Director of Performance for his presentation and stated that in the December 2015 presentation to the Board and within a Board paper it had been indicated the Board would receive information on individual proposed investments to sports but this was never received. Catherine advised there were significant implications of the Board not receiving the outworkings prior to the allocation of funding; the fact that culturally significant sports were not receiving funding should have been reported to the Board.

Brian Delaney stated the Board took the decision on Option Four in good faith based on the information presented and had the list of sports with funded amounts being made available to the Board he is certain this decision would not have been taken. Brian stated that it is only possible to make strategic decisions if you understand the operational outworkings of the programme.

Siobhan Weir queried the consultation process, whether there were any queries raised on the principles and specifically in relation to culturally significant sports and was anything significant changed as a result of the consultation. The Director of Performance advised that there were no adverse responses received from the consultation process; sports would also have had the opportunity to raise issues regarding the principles at the clinics. It was also advised that FAQs were produced at each of the clinics held and these were published on the Sport NI website. Members queried whether value for money was highlighted at the clinics and the Director of Performance confirmed he would check about this.

Catherine O'Mullan stated that looking over the papers the principles and objectives did not change throughout the process. Catherine queried the process of allocating funding to the 32 sports applying to the programme. The Director of Performance advised this was based on the benefits and outcomes model and the ability of the organisation to deliver benefits, in this case medals, and was set out in the paper to the Board in November 2016 and which was discussed in detail at that meeting.

Darryl Petticrew stated that looking back over the process this has been communicated well to stakeholders and there was a good level of engagement; this was a challenging process but he did not see that as the issue. Darryl queried the statement made by the GAA about being told not to apply under Sporting Winners as he could not believe this would be the case. Catherine O'Mullan also queried whether Sport NI was aware of the Ulster GAA being told not to apply. The Director of Performance advised Sport NI do not discriminate against any sport and he was not aware of the Ulster GAA being told not to apply. He confirmed the Ulster GAA had requested the submission

documentation for both Sporting Winners and Sporting Clubs; however Ulster GAA were ineligible under Sporting Winners. The Chair asked the Director of Performance to investigate again whether any Sport NI officers told the Ulster GAA not to apply. Ulster GAA have not submitted a formal review of funding and the Director of Performance said he would investigate in order to ensure staff had not given such advice.

Siobhan Weir stated that looking back over the consultation process there appears to be many opportunities for the sports to raise concerns and query the eligibility process; Siobhan stated that it was surprising that it was only at this stage these concerns have been raised.

Members queried whether there were any sports who had applied for funding knowing they were ineligible; the Director of Performance advised he was not aware of any organisation applying in this way.

Kyle Ferguson queried the review process and the existing funding programme which is due to close at the end of March with potential job redundancies. Kyle stated this could be a PR disaster and queried whether the existing process should be halted. The Director of Performance advised that sports are aware of the length of their current funding and also advised that, in conjunction with the LRA, Sport NI ran a seminar in December for sports on their obligations as employers. The Director of Performance confirmed the process of funding sports that were successful is ongoing and unaffected by the review process; 27 sports have received indicative letters of offer. It was also highlighted that three of the four sports as signatory to the letters have received funding under Sporting Clubs.

Members again requested sight of the list of sports who applied, amounts awarded and unsuccessful sports and a comparison of the funding position under the current Performance Focus programme. The Chair advised the reason this information had not been supplied was to protect the Board and ensure the process was not corrupted in any way. It was agreed this information would be tabled to the Board at the meeting on 15 March but members were asked to keep this information confidential as these were provisional awards as part of an ongoing process.

The Vice Chair queried the statement in the letter about Sport NI excluding 95% of sport in Northern Ireland with this process and the Director of Performance agreed to examine this and come back to the Board. Kyle Ferguson also queried was it possible to get a paper detailing how Sport NI is working with culturally significant sports. The Director of Performance advised this was possible and in fact culturally significant sports did receive funding; it was also noted that there is ongoing work with these four sports through the work of the Sports Institute.

Catherine O'Mullan queried what criteria these sports failed on in their submission and this should be detailed within the response letter to the four sports. Catherine also queried whether this has been communicated with these sports already. The Director of Performance confirmed feedback meetings had been held with these sports so they would be aware of the reasons they were unsuccessful.

#### **4. Holding Review letter, process and timetable for review and decision**

Brian Delaney queried how we move this forward and whether it is possible to find a means to fund these four sports. Members discussed the possibility of funding these four sports in a different way either through any leftover money or from a separate funding stream. Catherine O'Mullan and the Interim Chief Executive both advised that a completely new funding scheme would be required which was open to all.

The Chair advised that in his letter the Minister asked Sport NI to consult with the Board and that is the reason a response has not yet been issued but following today's meeting a holding response needs to be issued next week. The Chair further advised the Board needed to agree a timeline for responding. The Chair confirmed he would write to the Minister on Monday providing this timeline.

The Chair asked the Board were they all content they had enough clarity in order for a response to be drafted or does further discussion need to take place at the meeting on 15 March. Further discussion would take place at the meeting on 15 March.

The Interim Chief Executive highlighted two important points within the Minister's letter, firstly that the Board need to satisfy themselves on the outcomes of the programme and also this programme is lottery funding and therefore the Minister has no jurisdiction over this funding. However, the response to the four sports is different and the Board need to address the issues raised in their letter.

The Chair asked the Board members present whether anyone wished to halt the current process. Brian Delaney stressed that any delay in the process would impact on athletes who were now in preparation for the Commonwealth Games. The Board unanimously agreed that the process should continue pending the outcome of this review.

The next steps were agreed as follows:

- The minutes from today's meeting to be sent to Board members on Monday.
- Draft holding letters to both the Minister and sports' letters to be sent to the Board on Monday for discussion at Wednesday's meeting.
- A brief note of what was agreed at today's meeting to be sent to the Board this afternoon, to inform those members not present.

**The meeting closed at 1.10pm.**

**Date of next meetings**

Date	Venue	Time
15 March 2017	House of Sport	14:30 Board meeting

Chair: George Lucas Date: 15<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017.

