

BADMINTON ENGLAND

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EVALUATION 2016

INTRODUCTION

It is recognised good practice within boards of directors that they regularly review and evaluate their performance and this applies equally to boards of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport. It also provides a good opportunity to examine whether the Board of Directors (BoD) reserves the right matters to itself and that the board members possess the right range of skills, knowledge and experience to both set / agree policy and strategy, and monitor, check and challenge the effective delivery thereof.

As we have approached the end of the current Whole Sport Plan (WSP) and Road to Rio funding period – ending March 2017; it has been right for the BoD to ask “what is the right strategy for Badminton in England going forwards?” This question has been central to our strategy development for the last eighteen months and has led to activities being placed under the microscope to ascertain which we must continue, which we should continue, which we could continue, and which it would be best to stop – all of these being considered under a variety of funding scenarios going forwards.

We have also asked ourselves which are our most pressing priorities and which would produce the best return on our investment whilst contributing most to the delivery of our strategic goals. Clearly this work could, and should, not be done in isolation i.e. without any consideration of the opinions / priorities of our stakeholders, sponsors, members, partners, and customers, and wide consultation took place together with an appraisal of areas of synergy between our strategic goals and those of others. That said, the BoD was aware that the previous approach of “maximising income” had not delivered on strategic goals – in fact, in some cases it had detracted from doing so as the priority became to deliver against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of others to retain income.

In an effort to ensure that the BoD asks the right questions of itself and others it has developed a skills matrix and sought to ensure that the members of the BoD have the best mix of skills, knowledge and experience to both contribute to the development of strategy and to monitor its delivery. Each member of the Board has either their own portfolio of work or an area in which they act as advisers / mentors.

The BoD proactively seeks to ensure that its members and their families do not have any conflicting interests with their membership of the BoD. This takes the form of an annual written declaration which also gives assurance that they are fit and proper persons to hold a Board position.

The BoD provides a written report on its activities to each General Meeting of Badminton England (four per annum, one of which is the Annual General Meeting [AGM]) and answers any questions posed by the attendees. There is also regular communication from Badminton England to its members and, more generally, via its website.

THE BOARD EVALUATION PROCESS

Members of the BoD were asked to complete a simple questionnaire which sought their opinion on the operation of the Board, their contribution to it and the skills / knowledge / experience that they brought. It also sought their opinion on the successes and shortcomings of the Board and its operation. Furthermore opinion was sought on how the skills / knowledge / experience of individuals had been used and where they might be used in the future.

Some questions required simple “yes” / “no” / “somewhat or sometimes” answers whilst others sought more detailed opinions. All non-executive Board members, in post at the end of September 2016, completed the questionnaire and conclusions drawn from the responses.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The use of the new style questionnaire produced some really interesting (and challenging) results. Its aim was to seek views about the overall performance of the Board, individual contributions to it (both past and planned), the skills, knowledge, and experience deployed, the perceived areas of success and where improvements could be made. It also looked at the spread of primary skills across the Board – although a number of responses identified additional skills that could be brought to bear.
2. The absolute honesty of the responses was both welcomed and applauded. Whilst this identified a significant breadth of opinion it is to the credit of the Board that it was, and is, generally harmonious and that Board decisions are “owned” by members of the Board. The Board is not afraid to take difficult decisions or to challenge the perceived wisdom of the past.
3. Whilst there were many positives to be taken from the evaluation it also posed a few issues that needed addressing. Some were:
 - 3.1 a general desire to concentrate more on strategic issues but without always completing the rest of the cycle i.e. create strategy → monitor / evaluate performance / delivery → confirm or modify strategy going forwards (whilst monitoring / managing costs and risks throughout the whole process);
 - 3.2 a lack of resilience in some aspects of the skill sets i.e. where a primary skill resided in only one member of the Board;
 - 3.3 an absence of succession planning (this may be difficult to deliver given the nature of the recommendations in the Sport England / UK Sport Governance Code);

- 3.4 the continuing perception of an “us and them” composition of the Board, in essence we are all there for the good of badminton regardless of background, skills, experience or knowledge;
- 3.5 the lack of diversity in the composition of the Board i.e. it is not representative of the playing community or the wider population;
- 3.6 the need to ensure that the new governance structure and the terms of reference for the various parts of it are implemented – thus releasing the Board from consideration of some detailed matters; with clear and concise recommendations only being placed before it for final decision.

Some other issues raised arose because of factors external to the Board and the demands placed upon Badminton England from a whole range of sources.

The list of issues set out above is by no means exhaustive but by initially addressing the above we should set the tenor of our thought processes and behavioural characteristics going forwards.

NEXT STEPS

- A. The Board considered the detailed responses received to the questionnaire and agreed them at its meeting on 30 November 2016.

It decided that many of the issues outlined in Section 3 of the CONCLUSIONS fell within the remit and purview of the Governance Working Group and referred further consideration to it. In the meantime it was agreed to produce a summary of the more detailed analysis of the questionnaire and this is that document.

Derek Batchelor

Chairman

22 January 2017.