

Board Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the seventieth meeting of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority Board, held on 3rd June 2024 at 10 South Colonnade, London and via video conference

Present

Jil Matheson (Chair)
Martin Esom
Bradley Pritchard – via video conference
Jane Sawyers
Derek Wilson – via video conference

In attendance

Giles Smith, Chief Executive Officer
Ken Scott, Head of Inspectorate
Gavin Jenkins, Head of Corporate Services
Steve Stathakis, Head of Special Projects
Jo Welford, SGSA Inspector – via video conference
Anil Keshwala, Football Licensing and Oversight Manager - via video conference
Joey Edomobi, Board Apprentice - via video conference
Frankie Broadbent, DCMS – via video conference
Sarah Hannaford, DCMS
Caroline Hayward, SIA Legal – via video conference

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

- 1.1 Jil Matheson assumed the role of Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 There were apologies for absence from Alex Lacey and Jon Sellins. There were no declarations of interest given.

2. Minutes of the sixty-ninth meeting of the SGSA Board, including matters arising and action log SGSA24(19)

- 2.1 The Board agreed the minutes of the previous meeting.

3. Audit and Risk Committee Update (Verbal)

- 3.1 Martin Esom presented a summary of the meeting that had taken place on Friday 31st May.
- 3.2 He noted the overall annual opinion from Internal Audit as being moderate (and the need to continue to ensure the rating does not slip to limited), and the discussion over potential revisions to the Strategic Risk Register.



3.3 The following comments were made on the Strategic Risk Register:

Risk 1 - Serious incident(s) at a ground licensed or advised by SGSA

The Committee questioned whether the risk register contains the right mitigating actions in place which if noted would bring the risk down to a more acceptable level.

Risk 2 - The SGSA responds ineffectively to a major incident

The Committee felt that this was an operational worry rather than a strategic risk. Furthermore, it is a worry that can be reduced with an effective crisis response plan.

Risk 5 - SGSA loses key personnel and is not able to replace them

The Committee agreed that this risk should be combined with risk 12 (Insufficient capacity and capability of staff) to produce an overall HR risk.

Risk 7 - SGSA doesn't engage effectively with stakeholders including supporters

It was agreed that this is an operational rather than strategic risk, although there remains a residual risk around stakeholder engagement on the new strategy.

Risk 8 (SGSA fails to promote its work effectively) was also determined to be an operational risk.

Risk 9 - SGSA receives insufficient income from advisory services

The Committee concluded that this risk relates to all income, not just that from advisory services.

To ensure that the risks relating to income are escalated sufficiently within DCMS, it was agreed to invite the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee to meetings between the Chief Executive and senior DCMS finance staff.

Risk 10 - SGSA cannot resource advisory work or does so at expense of regulatory work

The Committee determined that this is an operational risk.

Risk 11 - Unable to implement new corporate strategy

The Committee suggested that this risk be rephrased to make it clear that implementation of the corporate strategy is entirely underpinned by a suitable funding settlement.



Risk 13 - SGSA develops ineffective team culture

The Committee determined that this was an operational risk.

Risk14 - SGSA loses access to vital systems or data

The Committee suggested that additional information on mitigating actions, both in place and planned should be added to this risk.

- 3.4 The Board agreed with the proposal for them to take ownership of the risk register and to have a future discussion on risk appetite.
- 3.5 In their Audit Completion Report, the NAO confirmed that they are recommending that the SGSA is given a clear audit certificate. The NAO commended the Head of Corporate Services for his work on the accounts, as did the Board.

4. Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24 and Budget 2024-25 SGSA24(20)

- 4.1 Gavin Jenkins presented the paper highlighting the key points of the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24. The Board made no suggestions for changes to the draft and recommended that the Accounting Officer signs the Annual Report and Accounts when the NAO have completed their audit.
- 4.2 The timing of when the Annual Report and Accounts can be signed has been affected by the general election on 4th July. The Board will receive an update at their meeting in July.
- 4.3 On the proposed budget for 2024-25 the Chief Executive Officer and Head of Corporate Services noted that further work is required on the budget, in particular staffing costs, and this decision will therefore be deferred to the July Board meeting.

5. Chief Executive's Report SGSA24(21)

- 5.1 Giles Smith provided his first report as Chief Executive to the Board highlighting:
 - That his appointment as Accounting Officer has been made official and he has the necessary training in place.
 - The ongoing engagement with DCMS on short-medium term policy and funding issues, and the interplay with the election period.
 - The latest on the Board application process which attracted a very positive number of applicants but has now been paused due to the election. The Board supported the proposal to increase the number of appointments to three if possible.
 - The dropping of the Football Governance bill as a result of the election being called. Giles is investigating whether this has created spare capacity in DCMS which we may be able to use, particularly in the Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) space.
 - Updates on Injury statistics, the Council of Europe work, the annual conference feedback, stakeholder survey results, work in the devolved nations and work with the VNL.



5.2 Ken Scott gave a verbal update on the UEFA Champions League final the previous Saturday which had gone well in the view of the FA, Baroness Casey and others, with only a limited number of arrests.

5.3 Giles (and the Board) thanked Ken for undertaking the role of Interim Chief Executive since January

6. Head of Inspectorate's Report – Dashboard SGSA24(22)

6.1 Ken Scott introduced the latest version of the dashboard report.

6.2 He noted that the two clubs promoted from the National League – Chesterfield and Bromley, have both received an SGSA licence application to complete.

6.3 The Board discussed the good progress on grounds implementing licensed standing. This progress is in part down to fans requesting licensed standing areas, and grounds themselves becoming more aware of the risks of progressive crowd collapses.

6.4 Jo Welford highlighted the work that she is going to be doing on revisiting the previous evaluation of licensed standing by CFE. The Board welcomed this work and recommended that it be published in due course.

7. Women's Super League second consultation SGSA24(23)

7.1 Steve Stathakis presented to the Board his proposal for the second consultation on the licensing of the Women's Super League.

7.2 The Board endorsed the text of the second consultation although noted that work commencing on licensing the league is very dependent on funding arrangements being agreed.

7.3 If agreement cannot be reached in a timely way the SGSA must have a contingency plan in place to ensure that momentum on the work is maintained even if this means a delay to the first year of licensing.

7.4 The Board endorsed the wider proposed approach to taking forward this work, notwithstanding the above point re. the need to secure funding and thanked Steve for his work on it.

8. Licensing 2024-25 and licence fee reform procedures SGSA24(24)

8.1 Anil Keshwala updated the Board on the licensing process for 2024-25 noting that licence applications have been received from all except one ground. The reasons behind the delay from this ground are known and confidence is high that deadlines will be met.

8.2 Gavin Jenkins noted that as of 3rd June 20 clubs (22%) had paid their 2024-25 licence fee, 26% by value.

8.3 Giles Smith informed the Board of the communications plan in the weeks leading up to the deadline of 30th June for licence fee payments to be made, and the escalation plan after this date should any licence fees remain unpaid.



8.4 Giles confirmed that letters up to 30th June will be reminders of the upcoming deadline rather than more formal warning letters. More formal letters and escalation will only follow if the deadline is missed. The Board agreed with the plans to engage competition owners to support, and with plans to make public statements should the need arise. The Board requested to be kept informed of any potential issues.

9. Board awayday discussion

9.1 The Board agreed with the proposed agenda for the upcoming awayday, noting that discussions should focus on our enforcement powers with reference to some examples e.g. Zone Ex, and the new strategy.

10. AOB

10.1 There was no other business.

Gavin Jenkins

June 2024