

Swim England East Region
Minutes of the Board of Directors
9th December 2025 at 19:00, on Zoom

Present:	Stewart Murray (SMu)	Regional Chairman
	Keith Belton (KB)	Finance Director
	Gerry Metcalf (GM)	Vice Chairman
	Ian Mackenzie (IM)	Director
	Tom Baster (TB)	Director
	Helen Stephens (HS)	Director

Also in attendance:

James Salmon (JSa), Regional Manager
 Lottie Thompson (LT), Specialist
 Claire Coleman (CCo), Swim England

25/177	Apologies and introductions
25/177.1	Apologies were received from Sheila Mackenzie.
25/178	Declarations of conflict of interest
25/178.1	IM declared a potential conflict of interest as Chairman of the Swim England Water Polo Leadership Group. No further declarations were made.
25/179	Water Polo proposal
25/179.1	Claire Coleman presented Swim England's proposal to clarify responsibilities between regional and national programmes, with a focus on club growth and member retention, and rebranding existing Talent Centres as broader Development Centres.
25/179.2	<p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy alignment: 18-goal Swim England Strategy, with pillars covering foundations (e.g. stronger clubs), enablers (e.g. connected digital ecosystem), and community growth. • Issues identified: Duplication across pathways (regional academies, national centres, GB pathway, British Water Polo League); unclear points of responsibility for clubs; access-to-water constraints; and a marked decline in athletes aged 11–15yrs. • Approach: Region-led participation growth, using club health tracker insight; Swim England to support with resourcing where feasible; national programmes to focus on performance development. • Development Centres: A rebrand of Talent Centres to support skills and broader participation, with a break-even funding model, and potential future regional administration, subject to capacity and appetite. No transition expected before 2027.

25/179.3 IM challenged the clarity of the talent pathway and noted parental/athlete perceptions that “there is no pathway.”
CCo confirmed that selection events lead into teams and acknowledged communication gaps. Swim England will clarify how the pathway operates and improve messaging.

25/179.4 IM expressed concern about the absence of Richard Blackshaw at this meeting and other regional meetings.
CCo stated that he was unable to attend this meeting as he was required at another last-minute priority meeting. CCo will feed back the Board’s concerns.

25/179.5 SMu asked for a clearer understanding of cost implications (for pool time, equipment etc.) and any budget model before the Region considers taking on any additional activity.
CCo agreed to meet with JSa and a Board member to present the breakdown of the financial model, without any expectation to proceed if it is not viable.

25/179.6 HS asked about the proportion of standalone water polo clubs compared to water polo sections within swimming clubs.
CCo reported an approximate split around 55/45 between standalone clubs and sections within swimming clubs.

25/179.7 TB asked about partnerships with BUCS (Universities) and ESSA (Schools) and capturing non-member player bases.
CCo agreed that the opportunity exists, noting ESSA’s prevalence (often fee-paying schools) and potential university partnerships, while emphasising early-age club recruitment.

25/179.8 **Conclusions:** The Board was supportive of efforts to grow participation and membership in water polo, while seeking clarity on responsibilities and costs.

25/179.9 Claire Colman left the meeting

25/180 **Minutes**
The minutes of the Board meeting held on 9th November 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

25/181 **Matters arising – using the Action Log**

25/181.1 **Stock insurance:** KB has not progressed this any further because of prioritisation of plans, budgets and county year-ends. Ongoing

25/181.2 **County governance:** Essex has a small number of items to complete. Cambridgeshire are continuing to progress.

25/181.3 **Changes to the Articles of Association:** Status updated to “Awaiting Charity Commission” - currently 6–8 weeks into the 16-week period.

25/181.4 **ARP (Audit, Risk & Probit) Terms of Reference:** Helen Kent-Jackson contacted JSa requesting more information. This is progressing.

25/181.5 **Directors’ identity checks:** One outstanding

25/181.6 **Regional awards process:** This has been updated and circulated. A question remains regarding adding to citations and if this is fair. A response from Swim England is awaited.

TB advised that Swim England awards may change next year. He suggested pausing the review until April and revisiting this once the national direction is clear.

- 25/181.7 **Cambridge Diving apprenticeship scheme:** JSa has contacted Sharyn Bord, and some information has been shared. The scheme will be discussed in more detail in the New Year.
- 25/181.8 **AI-generated minutes pilot:** Early trials produced minutes within less than 30 minutes. Formatting into the regional template still requires manual adjustment and sensitivity checks. The process is to be refined.
- 25/181.9 **Finance Policy/Delegated Authority:** KB circulated some amendments. After discussion, the Board approved a Regional Manager sign-off threshold of £200.
Action: KB to update and reissue the policy
- 25/181.10 **Advertisement for new Board members:** SMu has sought examples from Regional Chair colleagues and feedback is expected at the next meeting. The target is to recruit at least two new members.
- 25/181.11 **Southend Leisure Centre (diving boards/fulcrums):** IM has had a meeting. The Council is to reimburse £5,000 to the club for the fulcrums purchased last year. Payment is expected by the month end and funding will be applied for in financial year starting on 1st April 2026 to replace three damaged boards. This is a positive outcome.
- 25/181.12 **Governance review questionnaire:** SMu submitted the response on behalf of the Board. There is further feedback under Item 25/190.
- 25/182 **Ratification of items agreed since 9th November**
 - 25/182.1 Regional Awards Panel process: The Board noted the process and agreed to pause ratification pending Swim England changes to the national awards format. The Board will revisit the process around April next year.
- 25/183 **Finance**
 - 25/183.1 KB presented the November 2025 reports. The overall position has improved versus start-of-year forecasts.
 - 25/183.2 The Masters surplus will be lower than the figure shown due to the sponsorship for the inter-counties competition being counted twice. A net improvement of approximately £600–£700 is still expected.
 - 25/183.3 Water polo income/expenditure variances reflect cancelled activity.
 - 25/183.4 Disciplines need to update their plan/budget when events change for more accurate forecasting.
- 25/184 **Leadership Group minutes**
 - 25/184.1 **Swimming Leadership Group:** Minutes noted, and actions progressing.
 - 25/184.2 **Artistic Swimming Leadership Group:** Plan and budget reviewed prior to submission. Dates set for 2026.
 - 25/184.3 **Disability Leadership Group:** Plan and budget agreed. Championships date set and moved by one week to avoid a clash with another Region. This should improve potential participation as it will also avoid a club's championships.

25/184.4 **Masters Leadership Group:** Attendance at meetings has been low; GM proposed replacing the county-representative model with interested member representation to improve engagement. A meeting is tentatively set for 4th February 2026. There are already two interested Masters for the Group.
The proposal was unanimously agreed.
Emma Winter to provisionally hold the venue/dates until these can be agreed with the Group.

25/185 **Risk Register**
25/185.1 No changes this month.
The potential risk from the Swim England organisational changes and points of contact remains. An update is expected following a Swim England meeting on 16th December.

25/186 **Regional Manager's report**
25/186.1 **Club Health Tracker:** 34 clubs completed - just under a third. This shows a year-on-year improvement across all six areas. There have only been two red flags, both are for pool time, and these have been followed up.
Some Regions are offering financial incentives for clubs to complete this. East Region has a similar completion number despite not offering incentives.
Action: JSa to see if it is possible to show a discipline-level breakdown.

25/186.2 **Development day** (19th November) The day, led by Swim England, covered changes to club support and communication. Further sessions are planned in 2026.

25/186.3 **Team Manager courses:** There were 368 TM1 and 60 TM2 completions in the last year. One tutor has been stepped down. Recruitment for an additional presenter is needed.

25/186.4 **Swim England reorganisation:** A weekly list of leavers is circulated, but there is no information on key contacts' replacement. A meeting on 16th December is expected to set out new roles/interim contacts.

25/187 **Budget and plans for 2026**
25/187.1 KB summarised the submitted budgets and the consolidated position.
The water polo budget was not received despite reminders. All other discipline budgets were in scope.
The Board approved all the budgets and plans except for water polo.
There is currently a placeholder to align with last year's water polo plan/budget, and this can be updated following the planned Water Polo Leadership Group meeting on 16th December.

25/188 **Regional Licensing Officer**
25/188.1 TB advised that the current swimming licensing officer will stand down in April 2026. The Region will seek a new appointee. The planned review of licensing processes is paused until the new officer is in place.

25/189 **Regional Score Card review**

25/189.1 There are three areas which are amber, but this is driven by Swim England programme dependencies (Club Portal trial paused; SwimMark replacement delayed; EDI group staffing changes).
Most other items are green and on target.

25/190 **Regional Chairs feedback**

25/190.1 SMu provided feedback on the governance review moving from the sprint (survey/insight) to the comprehensive phase (from February 2026).
January workshop dates are being canvassed, and, as he is unable to attend, he has asked if an alternative representative can attend.

25/191 **Any other business**

25/191.1 Tutor upskilling/funding:
IM outlined national changes to coaching courses from September 2026 and the shortages of tutors, notably in diving, water polo and artistic swimming.
The Board requested a written proposal and noted that diving has budget provision.
Action: IM to write a proposal for the next meeting and check artistic swimming's position.

25/191.2 Swim England short coaching courses:
LT highlighted newly available short courses for skills development and asked about regional promotion/support. The Board noted this for consideration.

25/191.3 One Swim England Summit:
TB raised concerns about weekday scheduling and about the cost limiting member access. SMu confirmed that the Regions have challenged Swim England on these points and will continue to feedback concerns.

25/192 **Confidential items**

25/192.1 No confidential items were discussed.

25/193 **Date for the next Board meeting**

25/193.1 13th January 2026 at 19:00, via Zoom