

**Swim England East Region**  
**Minutes of the Board of Directors**  
**13<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 19:00, via Zoom**

<b>Present:</b>	Stewart Murray (SMu)	Regional Chairman
	Keith Belton (KB)	Finance Manager
	Gerry Metcalf (GM)	Vice Chairman
	Ian Mackenzie (IM)	Director
	Sheila Mackenzie (SMa)	Director
	Tom Baster (TB)	Director
	Helen Stephens (HS)	Director

**Also in attendance:**

James Salmon (JSa), Regional Manager

Fran Vesztröcy (FV), Regional Welfare Officer – for item 26/004

**26/001**

**Apologies and introductions**

26/001.1 Apologies were received from Lottie Thompson and Sarah Barrow.

**26/002**

**Declarations of conflict of interest**

26/002.1 No declarations of conflict of interest were made.

**26/003**

**Presentation by Sarah Barrow**

26/003.1 Sarah offered her apologies and noted that, being new to her role, she was not yet in a position to confidently articulate how she would support the Region.

**26/004**

**Welfare Officer's report**

26/004.1 **National Safeguarding updates**

The Swim England "Fuel Up and Feel Great" campaign has launched. This covers nutrition and eating disorders. Resources include videos and written guidance. Links are to be shared in next regional newsletter.

The Club Portal trial ended in December. Concerns have been raised about clubs extracting information held on the system and maintaining these records.

The December National Welfare Forum meeting was cancelled and there has not been a safeguarding and welfare working group meeting since the Swim England reorganisation.

26/004.2 **Safeguarding restructure**

A new Head of Safeguarding has been appointed - Matt Basford, previously at Scouting. Two National Safe Aquatics Managers - James Diamond and Richard Ball – have also been appointed.

Currently the appointments for the East Region and the London National Safe Aquatics Officers are still to be made.

There has not been a briefing on the Swim England "one front door" approach or on reporting mechanisms.

26/004.3 **Regional safeguarding data**

In 2025 there were 202 referrals in total, with 48 referrals in the last quarter. Over the year, 26 cases were referred to Swim England Safeguarding for independent investigation and 12 were referrals to other agencies.

Data recording improvements have been made for 2026 to help identify trends, including county-level tracking for targeted interventions.

SMu asked if the "toolbox" could be used to reduce policy queries. FV confirmed that she was working on accessibility through multiple channels, including QR codes on key fobs, as well as regional website updates currently being prepared with JSa.

TB asked what is included in the "Other" category. FV explained this includes social media, risk assessment, photography queries or anything without a Swim England category.

**26/005**

**Minutes**

26/005.1 The minutes of 9th December 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

SMu noted that an AI tool had been used, taking approximately 1.5 hours versus 7-8 hours manually.

JSa confirmed that most of the minutes were AI-generated, with manual tidying and formatting.

**26/006**

**Matters arising – using the Action Log**

26/006.1 Stock insurance: Minimal progress due to prioritisation, so ongoing.

26/006.2 County governance: This was discussed at the County Forum. Uncertainty remains over who is the Swim England contact for this, following the staffing changes.

26/006.3 Articles of Association: Charity Commission approval has been received. A resolution is to be considered at the Annual General Meeting. (KB)

26/006.4 Audit, Risk & Probity (ARP) Terms of Reference: This is with the ARP Chairman for review.

26/006.5 Directors' identity checks: Complete.

26/006.6 Apprenticeship scheme information: There will be further follow-up with Sharyn Bord. (JSa)

26/006.7 AI-generated minutes: This is working well with significant time savings at no additional cost.

26/006.8 Advertisement for new Board members: This is in progress. (SMu)

- 26/006.9 Leadership Group Managers/Officers: JSa to contact members regarding re-election and will send out nomination forms.
- 26/006.10 Finance Policy: This is complete. KB to verify if the website has been updated.
- 26/006.11 Tutor funding proposal – to be discussed as an agenda item

## 26/007

### Ratification of items agreed since 9th December 2025

- 26/007.1 No items required ratification.

## 26/008

### Finance

- 26/008.1 KB presented the December reports, noting that the December salaries were not yet included. He estimated a year-end deficit of £11.5K compared with the original forecast of £37K. It is a significant improvement.
- 26/008.2 KB proposed removing the development-only codes section from the summary reports, as approximately half the submitted budgets omitted this information, and it appears unused. The Board agreed.
- 26/008.3 KB highlighted concerns with the water polo budget and plan. Many of the titles don't align. Regional academies show monthly figures despite being described as bi-monthly in the plan.
- He had sent queries to Jackie Spinks but had no response. JSa's follow-up has also not been responded to.
- 26/008.4 IM stated that the previous manager (Dean Walker) operated independently so the current team lacked experience with the process, and Jackie Spinks had been experiencing IT issues.
- He will contact Jackie to offer further assistance.
- 26/008.5 KB circulated the draft Annual Report "words" section. This had been updated from the 2024 text, and he requested the Board's input to this.
- IM queried the removal of high diving. KB confirmed this would apply to the 2026 report, not 2025.

**Action:** All Board members to provide input on Annual Report content

## 26/009

### Leadership Group minutes

- 26/009.1 Diving:
- This was a well-organised meeting discussing individual clubs, the development programme, and competition planning. The budget and plan were fully reviewed.
- IM reported that the invoice to Southend City Council for payment for the fulcrums had not been received. IM has made the club aware of this.
- 26/009.2 Water Polo:
- A productive meeting with the following agreed changes:
- Training is to be more age-focused rather than all ages.
  - More regional competitions are planned.
  - The Team Selection Policy was finally agreed.

SMA queried the budget allocation for county championships participation. JSa clarified that this relates to a planned regional competition between counties.

IM noted that the February inter-regionals for 18-year-olds is unlikely to happen as there is currently no date set. A budget adjustment may be needed.

26/009.3 Coaches Forum:

This was a well-attended meeting. Carl Cooper discussed the Swim England changes and the uncertainty about the future level of support for delivery. The next meeting will be 18th February. TB will attend.

Hertfordshire currently has no coach representation - one Hertfordshire coach (Luke Ames from Stevenage) has expressed an interest. IM to raise the issue at the Hertfordshire Management Board.

26/009.4 Masters Swimming:

There are ongoing representation issues as discussed at last month's Board meeting. GM is assisting in recruiting additional volunteers.

The planned open water masters training day has only five expressions of interest, all from Bedfordshire.

26/009.5 County Forum:

An excellent meeting, with all counties represented. There was substantial discussion concerning county governance, but there is uncertainty about Swim England support post-reorganisation.

It was agreed to amend the terms of reference, allowing suitable replacements when the chairman or secretary of a county are not available.

## 26/010

### Risk Register

26/010.1 No changes this month

26/010.2 SMA raised a concern that the lack of a Swim England contact is an increasing risk given FV's safeguarding report.

SMu to raise the matter of personnel concerns with Andy Salmon and the Swim England Senior Leadership Team, via the Regional Chairs' meeting

## 26/011

### Regional Manager's report

26/011.1 National Awards:

Swim England will not be making national awards in 2026. The current plan is to make the awards at the 2027 One Swim England Summit. Nominations for these will open in Summer 2026 so the Region would need to make regional presentations in December 2026/January 2027.

This creates challenges as the Region normally uses the short-course Championships for most of the presentations. A process review would be needed once confirmed dates are received from Swim England.

KB proposed continuing on the usual timeline for the Region's Jeff Cook Salver Award.

26/011.2 Swim England Reorganisation:

An update to regional staff is scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> January. This should provide more clarity on new organisational structure and contacts.

There are still vacancies on the organisation chart, with no or limited guidance on interim working arrangements.

26/011.3 Club updates:

Harlow Penguins SC:

The club has some difficulties and is not in a position to continue operating. A Special General Meeting to wind up the club has been postponed from 4<sup>th</sup> January to 29<sup>th</sup> January. This has given more time to explore more options. Dunmow Atlantis SC has proposed for a club merger.

The Harlow Penguins committee has three relatively new, inexperienced members. Regional support has been provided by JSa, Jo Stalley and Chris Galer, with support from Sarah Barrow nationally. The Dunmow Atlantis chairman and secretary have also offered assistance.

KB noted that there were serious financial issues at the club.

26/011.4 TB raised concern about the 14 Harlow Penguins swimmers entered in the imminent Essex County Championships and emphasised protecting swimmers as the priority.

26/011.5 TB expressed concern about governance systems not identifying issues earlier, despite the club having Club Affiliation status.

26/011.6 TB queried whether there were other clubs experiencing similar financial hardship. JSa confirmed that no others are currently known.

26/011.7 The Board emphasised the need to learn from this situation to prevent future club failures. The Club Health Tracker and the affiliation process could be used as potential early warning system.

26/011.8 Brocket Diving Academy:

The club have agreed to dissolve and a new club, Hatfield Diving Club, is being set up as a replacement.

IM noted that the Brocket Diving Academy committee wrongly assumed that the immediate closure of one club and an opening of another one was possible.

JSa confirmed that the Region was working with the new club to expedite new Club Affiliation to minimise training and competition gaps.

26/011.9 Club Health Tracker:

One additional club has completed this (35 in total). All disciplines except artistic swimming are showing year-on-year improvement.

There was uncertainty about national responsibility for the club health tracker, following Andy Jack's move to a regional squad role.

## 26/012

### Meetings in August

- 26/012.1 SMu proposed removing all regional meetings from the calendar in August to provide a break for the Region's volunteers during this downtime period.
- KB supported this principle but noted potential exceptions for event-focused meetings.
- TB suggested an emergency committee approach for any matters arising during August.
- The Board agreed to remove August meetings, with flexibility to convene if required.

## 26/013

### Proposal to fund tutors

- 26/013.1 Artistic swimming already has a tutor in place, and diving has tutor training covered in their 2026 budget. IM presented a proposal for £2,500 to support tutor training for water polo.
- The proposal:*
- The Region supports the Swim England tutor programme by sponsoring, in addition to the tutor for diving, a further tutor for water polo*
- GM noted that Swim England previously required commitment agreements for funded training. It was agreed to request commitments.
- IM noted that there were currently no courses as Swim England were updating these courses.
- The Board unanimously approved the proposal, with commitment agreements.

## 26/014

### Any other business

- 26/014.1 SMu reported that the election for an Independent Director on the Swim England Board had been declared null and void owing to voting access issues. A new election is underway.

## 26/015

### Confidential items

- 26/015.1 No confidential items were discussed.

## 26/016

### Date for the next Board meeting

- 26/016.1 The next Board meeting is scheduled for 10th February 2026 at 19:00, via Zoom.