

Swim England East Region
Minutes of the County Forum meeting
Tuesday 22nd September 2026 at 8pm, via Zoom

In attendance:

Kevin Rumsey (KR)	Norfolk Chairman/Chairman of the meeting
Stewart Murray (SMu)	Regional Chairman
Phil Pelling (PP)	Bedfordshire Secretary
Angela Eguakhide (AE)	Essex Secretary
Bryan Thompson (BT)	Hertfordshire Chairman
Sheila Mackenzie (SM)	Hertfordshire Secretary
Ian Cotton (IC)	Suffolk Chairman
Karen Woodhouse (KW)	Norfolk Secretary
Gergely Kokas (GK)	Cambridgeshire Chairman

Also in attendance:

James Salmon (JSa)	Regional Manager
Sarah Barrow (SB)	Swim England Club & Community Development Lead

26/23 Apologies, welcome and introductions

- 26/23.1 KR welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 26/23.2 Apologies were received from Chris Vinter, (CV), Suffolk Secretary.

26/24 Declarations of conflict of interest

- 26/24.1 None were declared.

26/25 Previous minutes

- 26/25.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June 2026 had been circulated in advance.
- 26/25.2 No amendments or points of accuracy were raised, and the minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting.

26/26 Matters arising

- 26/26.1 No matters arising were raised which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

26/27 Regional updates

26/27.1 Membership Management System (MMS)

SMu provided an update regarding the new Swim England Membership Management System. The system is expected to go live from 19th

October 2026, with implementation taking place during a transition period leading up to 28th October 2026. Counties and clubs were advised to be aware of possible disruption during the changeover period.

SMu reported that he had recently viewed demonstrations of the system with JS and SB and stated that the new platform appeared intuitive and should simplify administration for club membership officers. The intention is for membership management, workshop bookings and related administrative functions to be incorporated into a single platform.

26/27.2 **Governance Review**

SMu reported that, following meetings between Regional Chairs and the Swim England Leadership Team, concerns had been raised regarding the direction of the Governance Review process. Regional feedback highlighted a loss of confidence in the existing approach, communication difficulties and differing views on future direction.

As a result, Swim England has agreed to "reset and reframe" the review process. A new steering group will be established to examine consultation responses and feedback before determining the next phase of development.

SMu emphasised that governance reform remains necessary and that the review process has not been abandoned. The objective remains to improve organisational efficiency, communication and governance structures.

Swim England is expected to issue a formal statement outlining the revised position and next steps.

26/27.3 **Regional communications**

SMu highlighted concerns regarding communications reach across the Region. Although the Region has approximately 22,000 members, only around 800 individuals currently subscribe to the regional newsletter, with open rates significantly lower than this figure.

The Region is considering how best to improve engagement and communication channels whilst remaining compliant with GDPR and safeguarding requirements. Various options, including QR codes and surveys, have been explored but restrictions relating to communications with under-18 members continue to present challenges.

26/27.3.1 BT asked whether the Region was permitted to email members directly, given that the majority are athlete members.

SMu explained that concerns relating to GDPR, safeguarding and direct communication with young members significantly restrict direct engagement. While Swim England may undertake certain communications centrally, the Region has elected to take a more cautious approach.

- 26/27.3.2 AE suggested that club constitutions generally require a parent or responsible adult to be associated with junior members and questioned whether clubs should ensure that this requirement is met.

This would provide a potential route for strengthening parental engagement and representation within clubs.

- 26/27.3.3 GK suggested that clubs could distribute surveys on behalf of the Region, as clubs already hold parental contact details.

SMu welcomed the suggestion and agreed that it may offer a practical solution to improve feedback collection.

26/27.4 **Regional events**

SMu advised that the Regional Masters Championships had recently taken place, the Para Swimming Championships were scheduled for 27th September in Newmarket, and preparations for the Regional Short-Course Championships were underway.

Members of the Forum were encouraged to support events by volunteering as officials or event volunteers, and to register as early as possible.

26/27.5 **Regional engagement sessions**

SMu reminded counties of the regional drop-in sessions being delivered jointly by JS and SB. Following successful sessions in Norwich and Chelmsford, the next event would be held at Parkside Pool, Cambridgeshire, on 8th October 2026.

26/28 County updates

26/28.1 **Norfolk**

KR reported that Norfolk's Challenge Gala, aimed at developing swimmers between novice and county level, had been successfully delivered despite venue challenges.

The County Open Water Championships had also been completed successfully. Preparations were underway for the County Annual General Meeting (AGM) and the 2027 County Swimming Championships.

Feedback from clubs will be considered through the County Chair Forum to assist future planning and event development.

Norfolk is undertaking a review of its governance documentation to ensure that procedures, risk assessments and event management processes remain current and fit for purpose.

26/28.2 **Essex**

AE reported significant concern regarding the withdrawal of Swim England's £1,000 National County Team Championships grant. Rising

costs associated with travel, accommodation and transport are placing increasing pressure on county finances.

AE asked whether further representations could be made to Swim England regarding the withdrawal of grant funding.

JS advised that previous enquiries had received no substantive response but agreed to raise the matter again with Swim England. It was felt that it would be good to have a response regarding future support arrangements.

Essex Winter Swimming Championships will operate as a Level 2 Open Meet because of increasing venue costs at the London Aquatics Centre. Entry will be open to swimmers outside Essex, although only Essex swimmers will be eligible for finals, medals and county titles.

The Essex Swimability programme had again been successful and will continue.

Essex is working with Swim England London regarding competition licensing because the County Swimming Championships are now held at the London Aquatics Centre. Risk assessments and competition procedures are also being reviewed.

26/28.3

Cambridgeshire

GK reported that, following the County AGM, vacancies remain for Secretary, Welfare Officer and Open Water representative.

The county completed the year with a financial surplus and established a £25,000 "Investment in Excellence Fund". The fund is supporting swimmer development camps, coach development, National County Team Championships participation, Masters development and technology initiatives.

The county is exploring technology-based solutions including AI tools and a swim performance platform to assist with athlete analysis and event planning.

Cambridgeshire continues to face significant pool access challenges through pool closures and reduced availability across several areas of the county. New pool developments are progressing but are not expected to alleviate shortages before 2029.

26/28.4

Hertfordshire

BT confirmed that development programme planning is underway, with coaches and venues secured. An additional weekend has been introduced for the County Swimming Championships

Hertfordshire has implemented a coach development fund providing 50% funding support for Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications. Uptake from clubs has been lower than anticipated.

BT echoed GK's positive comments regarding the swim performance and event-planning software currently under development.

26/28.5 Bedfordshire

PP reported that AGM preparations and planning for the County Swimming Championships were underway, alongside swimmer development activity and discussions regarding athlete mental-wellbeing initiatives.

Bedfordshire's principal concern remains the closure of diving facilities at Inspire: Luton Sports Village because of failures affecting the movable pool floor. This has substantially increased operating costs for Luton Diving Club, which is currently required to travel to alternative venues for training.

SMu asked whether the pool floor issue affected swimming as well as diving activities. PP confirmed that the floor remained at water level due to hydraulic failure, restricting the use of a substantial part of the facility and affecting both disciplines.

26/28.6 Suffolk

IC reported that preparations for the National County Team Championships, the AGM and County Swimming Championships were progressing well.

Suffolk is managing the impact of the closure of Sudbury Pool following structural issues affecting part of the building. The county will work with the affected club and local authority regarding both short and long-term solutions.

26/29 Club Affiliation and SwimMark update

26/29.1 JSa advised that Swim England's future affiliation model remains under review. A dedicated working group has been established to consider replacement arrangements. No major changes are expected before mid-2027.

26/29.2 Fourteen clubs are progressing through the affiliation process during the current quarter.

26/29.3 The Online Membership System (OMS) and affiliation portal will close on 9th October 2026 in preparation for the new Membership Management System. Existing submissions will be transferred to the new platform, with affected clubs receiving further communication and potentially extensions where required.

26/30 Sarah Barrow – Swim England Club & Community Development Lead

26/30.1 SB introduced herself and outlined her role and responsibilities within Swim England. She explained that the new Club & Community Development Lead role was established to strengthen support available to clubs and to improve local engagement.

26/30.2 SB described the club support and development offer, which includes:

- Club development forums
- County and regional drop-in sessions
- Club engagement events
- Club health tracking
- One-to-one club support
- Club links programmes
- Access to national resources and toolkits

There is cross-department support through Swim England's Matrix Team approach.

26/30.3 SB reported positive feedback from recent drop-in sessions and confirmed that additional in-person and online opportunities were being planned across the Region.

26/30.4 Members of the Forum were encouraged to contact SB directly regarding pool access challenges, club development planning, coach development, governance issues and strategic support needs.

GK asked whether Swim England intends to take a strategic role regarding pool closures and facility provision nationally.

SB confirmed that facilities and water-space access remain a significant strategic priority. She encouraged counties to ensure that potential pool closures are reported promptly so that the Facilities Team can engage early and support local negotiations where possible.

26/30.5 KR requested that SB's presentation and contact details be circulated alongside the minutes. SB agreed.

26/30.6 KR encouraged all counties to invite SB to county meetings or events during the coming year to strengthen collaboration and utilise the support available through the Club & Community Development programme.

26/31

Any other business

26/31.1 National County Team Championships invitations

KW queried whether invitations for county dignitaries and presidents attending the National County Team Championships had been issued.

AE advised that attendee details are collected through the team-entry process and suggested that the information may not have been submitted this year.

26/31.2 JSa advised that no nominations had been received for the position of regional President-Elect. The vacancy will be readvertised, and counties

were encouraged to identify suitable nominees. Candidates must be members of a Swim England East Region club.

26/32

Confidential items

26/32.1 No confidential items were raised.

26/33

Future meetings

26/33.1 The next meeting will be held on **5th January 2027 at 7:00pm.**