



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Irish Table Tennis Association Company Limited by Guarantee held in the National Sports Campus Conference Centre, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15 on Saturday 22 June 2019 at 10.30am.**

**PRESENT:** Mr Joseph Hickey (Chairman), Mrs Patricia Hunter (Finance Director), Mr Rob Cowan (Operations Director), Mr Kenneth Strong (President), Mrs Jennifer Monaghan (Company Secretary), Mr Richard Butler, Ms Emily Burns, Mr Chris Cowan, Mr Paul Dolan, Mr Chris Earley, Mrs Helen Earley (National Safeguarding Officer), Mr Ian Erskine, Mrs Tara Fusco, Mr Phillip Gillen, Mrs Jing Yi Graham (WIS Manager), Mr Henrik Heckmann, Mr Conn Higgins, Mr Alan Hurley, Mr Eoin Kelly, Mr Tony Leahy, Mrs Anne Ludlow, Mr Wallace Mahaffy, Mr Jamie McConkey, Mr Tom Mitchell, Mr Arnold Morgan, Mr Conor Mullally, Mr Con O’Ceadagh, Mr Niall O’Flaherty, Mr Michael Scott, Mrs Jennifer Thompson, Mr Alan Strong, Mr Tony Martin and Ms Lorna O’Rahilly.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr John McKenna (Operations Manager), Mrs Joan Shields (Administrative Assistant) and Ms Sophie Earley.

**APOLOGIES:** Mr Tony Phillips, Ms Anna Kelly, Mrs Cathryn Gibson, Mr Ivan Shorten, Mr Gavin Maguire, Mr Pat O’Brien, Mr Denis Kelly, Mrs Sabrina Devereux, Mr Joe Finnegan, Mr Alex Thackaberry and Mrs Kitty Thackaberry.

**WELCOMES:**

The Chairman, Mr Joseph Hickey opened the meeting and welcomed all present. The Chairman asked the Secretary to confirm that there was a quorum and Mrs Jennifer Monaghan confirmed that there was. It was approved unanimously that Mr Hickey chair the meeting.

Following a fire safety briefing from Mr John McKenna, Mr Hickey requested that Mrs Monaghan read out apologies received. Mr Hickey then extended the Board’s thanks to the members for their attendance at the meeting and introduced Mrs Patricia Hunter (Finance Director), Mr Rob Cowan (Operations Director), Mr Kenneth Strong (President) and Mrs Jennifer Monaghan (Company Secretary) to the meeting.

**MINUTES OF THE 2018 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:**

It was noted that the draft minutes as produced to the meeting would be amended to note that Mr Denis Kelly had been in attendance and that they would be amended to reflect a question relating to the number of affiliated members in various categories.

Subject to the above amendments, the Minutes of the 2018 Annual General Meeting, held on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2018, were adopted as a true record on the proposal of Mr Chris Cowan, seconded by Mr Niall O’Flaherty.



#### **CHAIRS OPENING ADDRESS:**

The Chair delivered his opening address.

Mr Hickey advised that events had taken place over the last year and it was decided by the Directors that he should address the AGM at an early stage to explain, as best he can, what happened and to provide some background on the new Directors.

Mr Hickey referred to his previous involvement in table tennis administration at provincial and national level up until 1987. The meeting was advised that 2006 and 2007 was a very contentious period in table tennis culminating in a strong suggestion from the Sports Council that a new Board was required.

Mr Hickey was approached by a number of people to get involved again after an absence of 20 years. In October 2007, he was elected as Chairman of the Association. Various people joined him on the Board and together with the Branches, they worked well to bring about improvements in the management of the sport. Grant aid from the Sports Council was restored and significantly increased over the following 2 years, based on proposals on how the extra money would be spent. Mr Hickey served as Chairman for 4 years until 2011 and then served a further 4 years as President before standing down from all posts in 2015. He commented that he fully intended that his future involvement in the Association would be as an ordinary member.

2018 was another very difficult year for the Association. In the later part of 2018, it became clear that the 5 Directors on the Board were no longer capable of functioning as a unit. In total, 7 people who were Directors of the Association stood down in 2018. Mr Con Higgins resigned as a Director on 11th November, Mr Alan Strong on the 12th and Mr Paul Dolan on 14th November. This left just the Chairman, Mr Michael Scott and the Finance Director, Mr Peter Graham and meant that the Board did not have a valid quorum to conduct meetings. However, it was noted that the Chairman and Finance Director were fully authorised to appoint new Directors and then continue to hold Directors' meetings and manage the sport as they wished.

They did not appoint additional Directors at that time. They decided instead to take a different approach and contacted Sport Ireland and met with them on 27th November. During this engagement with Sport Ireland, the Chairman and Finance Director communicated their unhappiness with aspects of the management activities of the Association and, in particular, the areas of the sport on which funds were being spent. The Chairman and Finance Director also sought legal guidance from Sports Ireland but were advised that they needed to obtain their own advice.

Separate from these discussions, representatives from some of the Branches were engaging with the Chairman to suggest he convene either informal or formal meetings to consider the



whole matter and try and agree a way forward. Unfortunately, no such meetings were convened.

By this time, the Chairman and Finance Director had engaged a Barrister with expertise in company law and it was agreed that they would facilitate the appointment of 3 former Chairs of the Association as Directors and would then resign.

Mr Hickey was appointed to the Board in addition to Mrs Pat Hunter and Mr Rob Cowan. A new Secretary, Mrs Jennifer Monaghan was also appointed by the Board. Although Mrs Monaghan has no table tennis history her professional background is set out in her Secretary's Report. These appointments and resignations took place on 21st December 2018.

The first meeting of the new Board was held on 3rd January 2019 during which it was agreed that a Committee, to be called the Management Committee, would be established. The purpose of this Committee is to manage the sport itself, leaving the Board to deal with corporate governance, financial matters and so on. The Chair of this new Committee is Mr Richard Butler and he is joined by Mr Alan Strong, Mr Conn Higgins, Mr Paul Dolan, Mrs Cathryn Gibson, Mrs Tara Fusco, Mr Arthur Brett and Mr Jamie McConkey.

This separation of responsibilities was first put forward by the then Board at the 2017 AGM and approved as a concept by the members, but not implemented until now. Mr Hickey advised that whilst various people were involved in restoring a management structure to table tennis, the Board want to acknowledge the considerable contribution made by Mr Butler. His engagement with many people over this period was critical.

Mr Hickey informed the meeting that the Board sought an early meeting with Sport Ireland but the earliest they could accommodate them was the 29th January. When they met with the 3 Directors, they were formally advised that, based on the information received from the previous Chairman and Finance Director, Sport Ireland had earlier decided to bring in an external person to manage the sport. In addition, they were advised that table tennis would not be approved for any grant aid for 2019 when grants were announced in a few days time. A long discussion took place that day and the Board communicated their grave concern at the impact this would have on the sport in Ireland. Two days later on 31st January, Sport Ireland wrote to the Board and advised as follows:

Table Tennis Ireland would, after all, be included in the Grant Announcement. However, table tennis would not be receiving the general increase in grant that was being given to other Associations. In addition, they were advised that the funding would only be released on a piece meal basis, dependent on the Association dealing with the following:

1. The successful participation and closure of a financial audit.
2. The successful participation and closure of a governance audit.
3. Participation in an ongoing liaison process with Sport Ireland until the AGM in June and afterwards should they require it.
4. Engagement with a Sport Ireland appointed third party liaison if required.



5. Sport Ireland satisfaction with regard to the strategic and operational direction of the sport.

Mr Hickey advised that the financial and governance audit has been ongoing over the last 2 months and we hope to see it concluded as soon as possible. However, Sport Ireland are in the driving seat here and they are currently reviewing all the information provided by the Board. Sport Ireland has not yet sought to appoint any third party liaison. Work on the strategic and operational direction of the sport is somewhat constrained until we establish what our grant situation is going to be but Mr Butler will provide input on table tennis activities generally in his report.

The Chairman addressed a related matter which was that the absence of this funding from Sport Ireland caused potential cash flow difficulties for the Association. Following a conversation with the Finance Director, Mr Hickey arranged for a company under his control to provide the Association with an interest free loan. Subsequent to the receipt of that loan, the Board advised Sports Ireland that the non receipt of grant money was causing difficulties and they immediately released 25% of the grant. The loan was repaid but Sport Ireland have since made it clear that they are not happy to see Directors providing loans to the Association even where there is no interest or other cost involved in such loan.

The meeting was advised that the Association has lost out on the grant increase that most Associations received in 2019 and have not yet received 75% of our usual grant and are very restricted in what they can do until Sport Ireland decides what happens next.

Considering all of this, Mr Hickey advised that he is pleased to say that having read all of the reports submitted to this AGM and observed the amount of work and effort put in by so many people, many of whom are here today, he is hugely impressed at the calibre of willing volunteers available to the Association at Branch, Committee and National level. This is a fantastic resource and people who only play table tennis, have no idea how fortunate they are to have so many very capable people working away on a voluntary basis, around the country, to organise our sport.

To summarise, what has happened should not have happened. The road ahead will be challenging but the Board are confident that, with the goodwill and support of all of the volunteers and members, the Association will be able to resolve the various issues and, in due course, go on to create a better and brighter future for table tennis in Ireland.

Mr Hickey welcomed questions from the floor.

Mr Eoin Kelly queried whether there are contingency plans in place if the Sport Ireland audit conclusions are not favourable. Mr Hickey advised that everything requested by Sport Ireland has been provided and the hope is that the audit will progress quickly. Sport Ireland has released 25% of the grant and it is hoped that they will release more funds in the near future. Mr Kelly asked when the current funds would run out and was advised that 25% of the grant will likely last 3 months. Mr Hickey was asked whether the Association can plan their activities as



normal. The Finance Director, Mrs Hunter, advised that the budget will be scrutinised but on the expectation that Sport Ireland will release further funds, the Association should be able to continue with business, subject to the limitations imposed by the funding that is available.

Mr Michael Scott, the immediate past Chairman then addressed the meeting at some length. He said he wanted to set the record straight and to address his concern that both himself and the previous Finance Director, Mr Peter Graham's integrity had been questioned by members.

Mr Scott advised that both himself and Mr Graham are Chartered Accountants and in the past 6 months he has received abuse on social media and in other forums to which he has not responded. Mr Scott explained that for the first time in his career he has had to seek advice from his professional body on how to respond to the accusations. His professional body have advised on what he can and cannot disclose to the AGM about his position on the Board.

Mr Scott advised that his reasons for resignation were set out in his resignation letter and his main issues when acting on the Board of the Company were as follows:-

- 1) Parents are seen by the association as cash cows and this needs to be addressed;
- 2) There were attempts to withhold information from him while he was director. For example he attempted to understand why so much funds were being spent on only 1-2 players.
- 3) He wanted to know where the WIS money was being spent and found it difficult to get answers. Other Board members continually blocked information from him.
- 4) He felt female players are treated badly.
- 5) There were leaks in the previous committees with factually incorrect information being shared and leaked on social media.
- 6) There were undisclosed conflicts of interest.
- 7) The finances were not clearly available or correct and were out of their control.
- 8) The appointment of a High Performance officer was not completed correctly.

Mr Hickey noted that Mr Scott had referred to these events as happening in 2017 and 2018. He noted that the Finance Director, Mr Graham who joined him in the complaints to Sport Ireland had served as Finance Director from June 2017 until 21<sup>st</sup> December 2018. Therefore the Finance Director had completed and signed the 2017 accounts. Mr Hickey noted also that the Finance Director had presented a very professional 2 page written report at the AGM in June 2018 which did not refer to the above finance issues and queried if the Report to the 2018 AGM was incorrect. Mr Scott said that the Finance Director would need to answer that.

Mr Hickey further commented that Mr Scott was in the Chair for 6 months and he had difficulty in understanding why, with the obvious support of the Finance Director who was in control of financial issues for 18 months, he was unable to address whatever information and financial concerns may have existed.

Following further discussion, Mr Hickey advised Mr Scott that it was absolutely necessary to move on with the meeting and that he has been given ample time to speak. Mr Conn Higgins, a Director who had resigned in November 2018, advised that he strongly disagreed with much of Mr Scott's statement.





#### **FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

The Finance Director, Mrs Hunter, outlined her Report, which had been distributed in advance of the meeting, using a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation covered the following:

- Overview of Financial Performance 2018
- Income
- Participation
- Coaching
- Administration
- Challenges to Costs

In concluding, Mrs Hunter advised that TTI incurred a deficit of €7,127 in 2018. The one-off payments and overspend on High Performance all contributed to this deficit. The financial focus for 2019 must be on cost control and careful decisions on where our resources should be allocated, whilst seeking to maintain the effectiveness in each area of activity. The Board has implemented processes and controls to ensure that TTI remains within budget in all areas of expenditure. Mrs Hunter extended her thanks to the former Finance Director Peter Graham for his assistance when she became the Finance Director in December 2018.

Mr Scott commented that some of the technical references included in the report which had been contributed by the professional auditors were not correct and it was agreed to bring these to their attention. Mr Michael Scott further advised that he felt that the Financial Statements were misleading. After further discussion, the Finance Director's Report and the Auditors Report and Financial Statements were adopted on the proposal of Mr Alan Strong, seconded by Mr Tom Mitchell.

#### **REMUNERATION OF AUDITORS:**

The meeting authorised the Directors to fix the remuneration of the Auditors for 2018 on the proposal of Mr Jamie McConkey, seconded by Mr Alan Strong.

#### **OPERATIONAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

The Operation's Director, Mr Cowan, outlined his Report, which had been distributed in advance of the meeting, using a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation covered the following:

- The responsibilities of the office;
- The role of the new Operations Manager (Mr John McKenna) and an administrative assistant (Mrs Joan Shields).
- The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport draw down of the 2017 Sport Capital grant.
- The introduction of a new secure I.T. infrastructure for emails and file storage.



- The new Garda vetting process
- GoMembership
- Coaching courses and certificates
- The introduction of a new Teachers Award, licenced through Table Tennis England
- The organisation of several major events (Classifications, Nationals, Inter Provincials and All Ireland Schools).
- The Primary Schools International in Lisburn in April 2019.
- The setup of a Strategic Committee

Mr Cowan finished his report by extending special thanks to colleagues in the Ulster Branch, the President and the Finance Director for their dedicated work to make the Primary Schools International event a success. Mr Cowan further thanked all the other volunteers who worked so hard to make national events a success. All members were asked to consider whether they could volunteer, even in a very specific area.

Following a discussion regarding the development of GoMembership, the Operations Director's Report was adopted upon the proposal of Mr Paul Dolan and seconded by Mr Tony Leahy.

#### **COMPANY SECRETARY REPORT:**

The Chairman advised that Mrs Monahan's Report is included in the AGM packs published online and that questions can be taken. Mr Scott raised a query regarding the need for Audited Branch Reports as stated in the Constitution. Mr Hickey referred to Mrs Monaghan's statement in her report that the Constitution and By-Laws would be thoroughly reviewed and amended by the next AGM.

The Secretary's Report was adopted upon the proposal of Mr Tom Mitchell and seconded by Mr Jamie McConkey.

#### **MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT:**

The Chair of the Management Committee, Mr Richard Butler, outlined his Report, which had been distributed in advance of the meeting. The presentation covered the following:

- The aims and objectives of the Management Committee.
- The work which will be undertaken by the Committee and reliance on the 2013-2016 Strategic Plan.
- The significant work required with regard to participation and with regard to events.
- High Performance and Para initiatives including camps and Talent ID opportunities.
- Coaching initiatives.
- Marketing and online platforms.
- Cultural changes to address in Performance relating to player and club engagement.
- Coach appointments and a Coaches database.
- Continuing Coach Education and Development.



- A new Selection Committee.
- The appointment of Jamie McConkey to Chair a Volunteer Remuneration Committee.
- GoMembership.
- The 2019/20 Calendar and 2020/21 Calendar.
- A new Strategic Plan, for the period 2020-2023.
- A new venue booking checklist to include the need for a defibrillator in all venues used by the Association.
- Club and Coach/Administrator Assistance Manuals.
- Management of the Affiliation database.
- The appointment of a Youth Rapporteur.

Mr Butler acknowledged the work of the Office, the Referee and Umpires and Ulster Branch for their delivery of the Primary Schools Six Nations Championships in Lisburn, which were very positively received. Mr Butler commented on his dismay at the situations which arose in 2018 and wished to record a debt of gratitude to the three former Chairs, Mr Hickey, Mrs Hunter and Mr Cowan for agreeing to allow their names go forward again, when they have, in past lives, more than done their bit for the organisation.

Mr Butler also thanked the Branch Chairs for their support, in particular during the aforementioned particularly difficult period through December and January as we attempted to glue the organisation back together, and indeed more recently as former Officers made various attempts to sow discord in the Association with the selective dissemination of talking points for this meeting.

In conclusion, Mr Butler acknowledged and thanked his fellow Committee members for accepting a role on the Committee – Mr Arthur Brett, Mr Paul Dolan, Mrs Tara Fusco, Mrs Cathryn Gibson, Mr Conn Higgins, Mr Jamie McConkey and Mr Alan Strong and he acknowledged and thank the staff, in the office Mr John McKenna and Mrs Joan Shields; WiS Manager Mrs Jing Yi Graham; and Interim Lead Coach and HP Para Coach Mr Gavin Maguire including past staff - Mr Dave Heffernan and Mr John Murphy.

Finally, he thanked the members as without their involvement we wouldn't have an Association.

Following a discussion of the Report, the Management Committee Report was adopted upon the proposal of Mr Conn Higgins and seconded by Mr Alan Strong.

#### **OFFICER'S REPORTS AND PROVINCIAL BRANCH REPORTS:**

These Reports, which had been published on the Association's website and circulated in advance of the meeting, were taken as read and adopted:

1. National Safeguarding Officer's Report (Mrs Helen Early)





2. Anti-Doping Report (Mr John McKenna)
3. Ranking Report (ITTA Board)
4. Irish Veterans/Masters Society Report (Brian Finn)
5. Branch Reports and Accounts for Connacht Branch, Leinster Branch, Munster Branch and Ulster Branch.

#### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**

Mr Hickey requested that Mr Ken Strong chair proceedings for the election of officers.

Mr Strong separately put forward the following persons for election to the positions as set out opposite their names. In each case, Mr Strong enquired whether there were any other proposals for the position. Upon confirmation that there were no other proposals, Mr Strong's requested a proposer and a seconder for each appointment.

**Chairman** – Mr Joseph Hickey (proposed by Mr Tony Martin and seconded by Mr Alan Strong)

**Finance Director** – Mrs Patricia Hunter (proposed by Mr Jamie McConkey and seconded by Mr Con O'Ceadaigh)

**Operations Director** – Mr Rob Cowan (proposed by Mr Conn Higgins and seconded by Mr Arnold Morgan)

**Company Secretary** – Mrs Jennifer Monaghan (proposed by Mr Joseph Hickey who referenced that Mrs Monaghan was a colleague with the same employer as referred to earlier and seconded by Mr Jamie McConkey)

**Vice Presidents** – Mr Pat O'Brien, Mr Tony Phillips, Mr Ivan Shorten, Mr Joe Finnegan and Ms Anna Kelly (proposed by Mr Joseph Hickey and seconded by Mr Niall O'Flaherty)

**Disciplinary Committee** – Mr Ken Nixon, Ms Laura Lee Jenkins, Ms Anna Kelly, Mr Arnold Morgan, Mr Jay McAllister subject to their acceptance (proposed by Mrs Pat Hunter and seconded by Mr Niall O'Flaherty)

**Jury of Appeal** – Mr Paul Talini, Mr Noel Hitchcock, and Mr Keith McGarry subject to their acceptance (proposed by Mrs Pat Hunter and seconded by Mr Jamie McConkey)

**President** – Mr Tony Martin (proposed by Mr Ken Strong and seconded by Mr Richard Butler and Leinster branch)

During the appointment of the Disciplinary Committee it was noted that a request for members was submitted to Branches twice without any response. The existing members were appointed since no volunteers had come forward. It was proposed that the Board write to the Branches to ask for volunteers and that those outside the sport would be very welcome on the Disciplinary Committee.

Mr Strong informed the meeting that his role as President over the last 4 years was a privilege and an honour. It was noted that in the last 50 years Mr Strong has been involved in many roles



such Branch Secretary, Association Secretary and Chair. Mr Strong thanked the Chairman, the Board, the Branches, the Staff and all members for their support.

#### **PRESENTATION OF ANNUAL AWARDS 2018/9:**

The 2018/9 Awards were announced by Mrs Patricia Hunter and citations read as follows:

- *Junior Male Player of the Year:* Art McLaughlin
- *Junior Female Player of the Year:* Sophie Earley
- *School of the Year:* Griffeen Valley Educate Together National School
- *Para Award:* Colin Judge
- *Senior Male Player of the Year:* Gavin Maguire
- *Young Coach of the Year:* Conor Mullally
- *Coach of the Year:* Alan Taylor
- *Volunteer of the Year:* Niall O'Flaherty
- *International Performance of the Year:* Sophie Earley
- *Women's Player of the Year:* Sophie Earley
- *Club of the Year:* Leaside Club, Cork
- *Joe Veselsky Award:* Con O' Ceadagh

#### **LIFE MEMBERSHIP PRESENTATION:**

Mr Rob Cowan then spoke in some detail on the significant service given by the outgoing President and also in other roles over the last 50 years. He advised that, as a recognition of this contribution, the Board wished to award Mr Ken Strong with a Life Membership of the Association and this was endorsed by the meeting. Mr Strong thanked the Board and advised that he was deeply honoured and privileged to accept it.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

The meeting discussed the pros and cons to holding the Junior and Senior Interpros in one location over a single weekend. After much discussion, it was proposed by Mr Tony Leahy that the event be held in one location in Dublin over a single weekend. This was seconded by Mr Tom Mitchell and passed.

The Chairman notified the meeting that the following items had been raised by Mr Eoin Kelly on behalf of Munster Branch prior to the AGM:-

- a. That the Board of TTI consider issuing of appropriate instructions for the regulation of the provincial branches. Mr Hickey advised the meeting that the Board had agreed to draft such regulations and send them to the Branches for their consideration.



- b. That the Management Committee of TTI consider taking into account travel and accommodation costs for players and families to apply proportionality to the levying of costs to the provinces for future Inter Provincial Competitions. This was referred to the Management Committee.
- c. That the current use of the word "ladies" be replaced with the use of the word "women" in respect of all non-junior female playing categories and activities run under the auspices of TTI, and its Provincial branches, from season 2019/2020 onwards. This had been agreed by the Board.

**CLOSING REMARKS:**

Mr Hickey thanked all for their attendance, congratulated all prize winners and then closed the meeting.

---

**CHAIRMAN**

DRAFT