



Soundwell Swimming Club Committee Meeting Minutes

Location: Zoom
Date: 17th October 2024

Present: Jon, Sarah, Matt Chubb, Emma Dodd, Laura Larder, Claire Kerslake, Louise Phillips, Dan Phillips, Corinne Moore, Russ Smith, Helen Mills, Marie Trott, Nicola Proctor, Simon Gale, Ashley Barnett, Grant.

Apologies: None

Agenda Items:

1. Welcome, updates and news - Sarah Taylor
2. Soundwell/Bristol Penguins merger - an opportunity to ask questions about the merger in advance of the drop in sessions in October
3. Treasurer update - Matt Chubb
4. Head Coach update - Jon Wills
5. LTS update - Emma Dodd
6. Camp update - Emma Dodd
7. Welfare update – Claire Kerslake
8. Disputes and Complaints - Sarah Taylor
9. AOB

Key Discussion Points from 28.3.2024

Ref	Key Discussions
1.	Sarah opened by thanking everyone who attended. <u>National:</u> Updated guidance from Swim England on pool safety and supervision during training. The primary focus on training where no dedicated lifeguards in attendance and coaches are essentially acting as lifeguards. This is not applicable for us as all our sessions have dedicated lifeguards provided by our pool providers. <u>Regional:</u> Thanks for my nomination for the Regional Awards as Volunteer of the Year. I was really chuffed to have won and had a lovely afternoon at the awards ceremony. I'll be attending the SE National Awards on 30th November – please expect me to be begging in the coming weeks for help at our meet as the awards clash with our first day! At the Regional Chair's forum we had a presentation from Becky Walker – Swim England Club Growth and Programmes Manager – with a National Growth Update. Swim

	England has a Growth Tool Kit which is aimed at supporting clubs in growing and retaining members. They are looking to develop it further and took feedback on areas of priority for clubs. The Swim England Inclusive Club Guide was discussed and it was apparent that there was some awareness of the guide, but not across all clubs. A refreshed Swim England strategy is being launched soon with the Swim England CEO attending the next Chairs forum in January 2025. Swim England are now doing monthly checks of clubs with DBS and safeguarding out of date and sending it to the Region. Regional office will be in touch if OMS is not up to date. <u>County</u> Nothing to report. <u>Club</u> Our Level 3 meet was filled in a record 3 weeks! We are pleased to be welcoming some great local clubs with large entries, which hopefully will mean good support on the officials front. I'll be coming out for volunteers for our meet after half term.
2.	Sarah hopes that everyone has had a chance to read the note that went out from herself and Ben Mullen last week. Sarah wanted to thank all the people who have stopped her poolside and asked questions or provided feedback as it is really important that we get your questions answered. We have some drop-in sessions booked for next week at Badminton School and St Stephen's Church. This is a chance to come in and have a conversation and we will give a little presentation. What we want to achieve is to give you more information about the big picture and general direction that we are going in. The complexities of merging two clubs together within all the swim England framework, guidelines and different constructs is quite considerable. Clubs don't go down this route unless they have a firm overarching commitment to proceed, and that's where we have got to as two committees. What we have is an intent and a desire to go ahead, and by doing that, then we can start to follow the formalities and drill in on the detail of how we will work together, what construct it will take, what the committee will look like and what benefits are we trying to achieve <u>Question 1</u> Corinne: Could we have access to a FAQ page so that anyone who wants to can use it as a reference guide. Sarah: We will definitely be doing this. We will collate all questions asked at this meeting and at the drop in sessions and produce a FAQ documents with answers that parents will be able to link to and follow. If we get asked new questions over the coming weeks and months we will continue to update the document. We will also make sure that both clubs are giving out the same information.

Question 2

Russ: How has the merger come about? Did we approach penguins, or did they approach us?

Jon: I have been trying to create a bigger structure and a more stable environment for swimmers to be in for the last seven years. Pre COVID this initially was looking at four clubs, Penguins, Bristol North, Severnside, Southwold; however that did not proceed. I went back in contact with Penguins around a year ago and started engaging talks again. I feel like Josh (Penguins Head Coach) and I are very like-minded.

Russ: how do you see the merger playing out for those swimmers in the National Potential?

Jon: National Potential are the ones that are going to see the most benefit from the merger. I am trying to expand the pool program so there are more opportunities for the kids at the top of both clubs to train together, access more training time in the water, and more time in the gym. The aim is to create that top end performance environment, while still having the swimmers train within their current National Potential squad.

Sarah: The feedback we most often get in the club, particularly at the top end, is the desire for more pool time. One of the biggest opportunities here is to optimise the pool time across two clubs to free up that extra time, and to give swimmers the chance to operate on a more level playing field to their counterparts in other big city clubs and boarding schools. The reality is that pool time across all regions is at a premium, so there are very few ways that we can do that. By merging with another club and optimising all those resources that we jointly own means that we can start to give the swimmers more for their money and increase their opportunities for competition and training.

Question 3

Dan: What makes the process of merging clubs complex? Also, who has been through this journey before that we can learn from?

Sarah: Penguins have been through this process before as they have had another club merge with them in the past. We will also be working with the Regional team who have also dealt with a merger. The more complex side of things will be the legalities, but as Penguins are a registered charity (CIO) we will go into their legal structure. The practical administrative side of bringing things together and having one set of policies, and one platform for taking fees, is a very process driven activity and it does require a lot of work. Swim England are quite keen to encourage smaller clubs to merge as it will provide resilience to clubs. The reality is, with rising costs and reducing volunteers, smaller clubs are finding it harder to keep going. By providing some financial resilience by having a bigger mass, it puts clubs in a much stronger position to negotiate with pool providers to keep financially stable.

Dan: How are our volunteers going to handle the amount of work needed to merge the clubs?

Sarah: We do have the benefit that we are two clubs with a strong volunteer base. We also have two Chairs that are very focus driven in terms of checklists and action plans. Penguins will be moving ahead with things from the legal perspective as they have a full time paid operations manager who will be doing a lot the day to day stuff. Emma Dodd has picked up the rebranding, while also working with Penguins.

We do not underestimating the level of effort needed for this, but what we do have is two large committees who can work together, and although we want our club affiliated around March next year so that the swimmers are ready to go into Regionals and Nationals, we do anticipate the administrative bit underneath actually taking up to August.

Question 4

Helen: I think the merger is a really good idea. I wanted to raise that it is already difficult as a working parent to manage all the current training, so how will potential changes to the timetable affect travel?

Jon: We do not want to put anybody in a position where they have to travel a ridiculous amount, and to the best of our ability we will be looking to avoid that. As it stands there may be some minimal changes, but that is purely logistical to be able to access additional pool time. We are very mindful of keeping disruption in changes to the minimum, and we are aware that people will have to factor in travel and school so we are not expecting people to be at every single session bang on time. There will be a bedding in period for people to find their feet.

Question 5

Russ: How big a club is penguins and what is their current membership? How many of their swimmers would make it into National Potential?

Sarah: Penguins have around 650 members, which is big, but the two clubs have similar structures. There is no plan to have one National Potential Squad. There will continue to be two squads as is the current structure, with more opportunities for these squads to train together.

Russ: Will the shared training happen within the other squad levels?

Jon: At Regional Age levels the respective squads will start to come together once a week, and we will build on that in National Potential.

Sarah: In the younger age squads things will continue as normal, however there will be more opportunities for meets and league work as well as social things.

Question 6

Russ: Will there be financial parity across the clubs seeing as the current fee structure different?

Sarah: Overtime there will be parity with Penguins coming up to meet us at the top end. This will mean that there will be some stability and hopefully it will cap our fees for some time.

Question 7

Dan: How do we work through the differences in cultures between our two clubs?

Sarah: This that has been discussed in great detail between myself and Ben. We feel the underpinning strength and ethos of both clubs is the same and we are hoping that can lift the new merged club to an even better place. We know there are some concerns from parents at both clubs about the differences in cultures, but the wonderful thing about having the two pillars is that it does give us a bit the breadth to have our own personalities. We don't want to wipe out the fantastic cultures from both clubs that parents really want. What we do want to do moving forward is work towards a new culture when we are all together at competitions as a team. We know this may be something that happen gradually and a complete change in culture may take 2-3 years.

Jon: Ben at Penguins is keen to build a more competitive environment at the club, and a lot of that drive will come from same people leading the programme at Soundwell, so we will still be pushing the same culture and the same behaviours.

Dan: We also don't want to forget the parent social side if things for swimmer and parents.

Sarah: We want to keep the great things that both clubs already do socially, but we also want to look at things that will mean both clubs come together with parents and swimmers mixing. We don't want to lose our individual club histories, but we will look to integrate them into a bigger forum.

Question 8

Corinne: Will there be two committees or will they be merged:

Sarah: The two committees will need to merge, but everyone that currently has roles will come together. There are some roles that can only have one nominated person, but there is enough work for everyone to be able to help. Things like Welfare will have location specific people.

Corinne: What will the coaching structure look like?

Sarah: Jon will be the Senior Head Coach and Josh from Penguins will be the Head Coach.

	<u>Question 9</u> Russ: Have we decided about names? Sarah: We are investing in a brand consultant and we will definitely be going for a new name which will be used from Regionals onwards. Emma is taking the lead on this. <u>Item Raised by Ashley</u> Ashley: Arena League rules mean we would have to start again from the bottom when we are currently in the Premier League. Sarah: We will talk to Areana about the fact that if we have two Premier Division clubs that are merging, can we continue to remain in this division? We also will look at A, B and C teams which will extend the opportunity for more swimmers to get involved in Arena League. <u>Next steps</u> • Drop is sessions w/c 21/10/24. • Letter to Secretary to call a Special General Meeting. • SGM will commence on the same day as our next committee meeting, 28/11/24. • Eligible members will be asked to vote at the SGM. • If we get the required votes then we will go through the steps to change legal names and to bring processes together.
3.	<u>Treasurer Update</u> <u>September / October finances</u> Squad Numbers – Septembers Committee Meeting saw Learn to Swim numbers at 109 and squad members of 128. October sees numbers for Learn to Swim drop by 2 to 107, and the squad numbers increase to 136. <u>Financials</u> Squad Fees totalled £1,920, including the first part of the Annual Membership Fees. This will pay for the 2024/25 Team Unify costs with the remainder put aside to pay for the 2025 ASA Fees. Squad Fees for October also includes the catch up from Bristol North on fees owed. Both of these shows favourable income for the month versus the budgeted position. The shop income was £125, up £25 on the budget. Kit sales totalled £59. Sponsorship – we have removed last month's £350 income from our Co-Op account to the Natwest reserve account.

	Coaching Invoices came in line with budget. Pool Costs were £13, 000 for September, in line with budget. ASA Fees from new swimmers joining this year. Swim England have reduced their costs Competition Expenses - Guildford still need to be booked.
4.	<u>Head Coach Update</u> Training All sessions are now up and running smoothly. Swimmers are training hard as we come into the end of our endurance cycle. We will soon be transitioning into the quality phase of training ready for camp. There is an opportunity to run a development camp with Penguins for 10-14 year old county qualifiers. It will run over easter at St Swithuns School for 5 days. I would like to target RP for this camp and have a coach come forward to assist. It would be good to get an expression of interest to gauge numbers. Club merger Exciting times ahead of us with the potential to create something special by bringing Soundwell and Penguins together. There is lots of work going on in the background to ensure swimmers are provided with the best possible opportunities within the home club environment, camps and competitions. Competition <u>Bristol North L3</u> Strong performance from our juniors. Lots of PBs and opportunities to work on racing skills. We also managed to bag top club in the process. <u>GC open water</u> Lots turned out for their first (and potentially last) experience of open water. They braved the cold and rain to compete and managed to gain top club in the process. It's a great introduction event as the distances are manageable. <u>Arena league</u> Great team effort and a solid 3rd place finish. Great support from the stands! Roll on round 2. <u>Inter-Counties</u> Strong representation from the club as swimmers, TMs, coaches and officials. Swimmers performed well and were impeccably behaved.

5.	<u>LTS update:</u> Everything is progressing well in Learn to Swim. Thursday night is currently very full which is great. We are looking to change things around slightly on a Sunday to give access to the big pool to swimmers from the learner pool to help with progression.
6.	<u>Camp update:</u> Everything is underway with only week left until we go. There are a few things outstanding, but these will all be sorted in time.
7.	<u>Welfare Update</u> Claire, Emma and Louise are meeting tomorrow to go over and finalise the risk assessments for camp. Three more DBS reports are now through for our Team Managers. There have been a couple of welfare issues, but these have all been sorted.
8.	<u>Disputes and complaints:</u> None
9.	<u>AOB:</u> Sarah did a tot up and we currently have 17 Team Managers and 18 Officials, which is huge! We are one of the biggest teams attending this weekend at Glos, and we have stepped up to help in all roles needed, coach's, TM's and Officials. Sarah just wants to thank everyone for all the time they give.
	OUR NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING WILL BE ON THURSDAY 28TH NOVEMBER AT KINGSWOOD LESUIRE CENTRE. TIME TBC.