

MINUTES
ABTO MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 1-24
Monday 22 January 17:00 to 20:00

Attendees:

By Zoom:

Chair: Malgorzata Grzyb (MG)
Vice Chair: Kath Lovell (KL)
Honorary Treasurer: Darren Michaels (DM)
Steff Johnston (SJ)
Veronica Mwondela (VM)
Steven Wilkinson (SW)
Alex Wolfe (AW)

Apologies:

LTA Officiating Manager: Matthew Morrissey (MM)
Selena Coburn (SC)
Mike Crossley (MCR)
Myooran Nathan (MN)

N.B. The minutes record the order in which the items were discussed.

All members must check the minutes for actions assigned to them.

Actions log will be updated accordingly.

It was agreed that the meeting would be recorded to help with accurate minute taking. The minutes will remain as the official record of the meeting and the recording will be deleted once the minutes are confirmed.

The recording started at this point.

1. Welcome, apologies and member news.

MG welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the objective of the meeting.

SJ noted apologies.

Since November, the following ABTO members have notified us they are retiring from officiating and have accepted the invitation to become associate members:

Barbara Richardson

Alex Petalas

We received the sad news of Alan Mills' passing on 18th January.

Congratulations to Selena and Craig on the birth of their baby boy.

2. Declaration of interest

No declarations of interest.

3. Matters arising not on the agenda.

No matters arising.

4. AGM Learnings

MG – there was a lot of planning ahead of the day and it went very well. Need to understand the feedback from a virtual and in-person perspective.

There were not a lot of people there in person. If numbers continue to decline, need to consider whether it is worth having it in person.

How do we encourage more people attending? If the LTA hold their conference at the end of the year, this may encourage more to turn up.

SJ - how do numbers compare to previous year. The minutes previous minutes would need to be checked but the numbers have dropped.

DM – the register from previous years can be checked. People are used to joining virtually. If they are coming for the conference, this will encourage them to attend. If the conference and AGM are held on different weekends, we will see an even larger drop in numbers. Need to understand why there is a move to December again for the LTA Officiating Conference rather than March.

VM – we should decide once we hear from the members.

MG – may be do a survey. Once we know what is happening with the conference, we can decide.

AW – received a lot of positive feedback from nominees and winners. Can we have a confirmed date ready for the grass court season together with the award categories. This would drive more people to the event and in turn a more social event.

MG – the posters were updated and produced, not sure why they were not distributed.

ACTION 2024-1-1 Task R&R group to produce posters and put up at events.

MG – the AGM conflicted with a lot of tournaments which impacted attendance.

SW – last time we had a 2-day conference was 2018 with the AGM on Saturday. Award session was well received this year, strategy was also an interesting point with ELC, next steps and our position. A lot of the membership lives far away and hybrid provides accessibility. Maybe have a regional meeting at the same time somewhere like Nottingham.

MG – Matthew's report indicates that LTA may try to have online sessions earlier in the week.

MG – asked SJ to continue to chase MM regarding the AGM date.

5. Panel updates

Grading

DM - The panel have reviewed all chair and line umpire grading decisions and provided feedback to the LTA ahead of the requested deadline. No acknowledgment has been received from the LTA that the feedback has been received, which is disappointing.

The Panel identified errors with the underlying data provided by the LTA for the referee and court supervisor grading reviews, which could have led to incorrect decisions being made. Although, the LTA initially advised the Panel that the data was accurate and that they had carried out lots of checks on the data, the LTA subsequently acknowledged that the data was inaccurate and resent it. This meant that the Panel had to repeat their review of the LTA's initial referee and court supervisor grading decisions.

Kath joined call at 17:30

This second review is currently ongoing, and the Panel will provide its comments to the LTA by the end of next week. The Panel has effectively had to complete its review twice, which could have been avoided if the LTA had listened to the concerns initially raised by the Panel. The Panel has also noticed incorrect decisions being proposed by the LTA for non-ABTO members (e.g. where they have met the criteria for promotion, but where the LTA has not identified them to be promoted). The Panel are not going to raise these with the LTA as the officials have specifically asked not to be represented by ABTO.

The Panel have also identified instances where a non-ABTO member has been flagged for promotion where they have not met the stated criteria. The Panel have a duty to raise such issues as this could have a second order adverse impact on ABTO members, e.g. through reduced selections.

DM thanked the Panel for carrying out their reviews and in particular having to redo their review of the referee and court supervisor grading decisions, due to the errors in the LTA's data.

AW - wouldn't necessarily notice unless you have experience, or it has happened to you.

SJ questioned why data is so wrong. **DM** – can only presume that the right level of rigour and checks on the data do not take place. ABTO are not provided the raw data which would enable us to carry out further checks of our own, but the Panel would encourage more checks to be carried out by the LTA before the initial grading decisions are provided to ABTO.

AW - members need to raise mitigating facts and need support with the understanding the deadline for doing so (1 December each year).

DM – AW raised a good point regarding the circumstances form. It should be made available all year round and members encouraged to submit it when something happens, not wait until later in the year as they may forget. This year the information about submitting circumstances was embedded amongst emails relating to referee work cards and may have been missed by on-court officials. The communication from the LTA regarding submitting circumstances needs to be much clearer.

KL –we should encourage members to submit as soon as something happens from the start of the year.

Selections

KL – a lot of selections arrived at the end of the year and the same is happening in February.

MG – was a calendar issued by MM?

KL – not really, members need this to provide availability and could miss emails if they are away. Notice period is better but not very organised.

DM – this is dependent on tournament organisers so beyond MM's control, but more notice is better.

MG – enough people on panel to take into account constraints. Ask MM for flexibility if there isn't any but try to divide and conquer.

ACTION 2024-1-2 KL raised the need for a panel administrator to work alongside her prior to November.

MG – how else can the panel work, could we slice and dice the roles?

MG - worth the Panel having a session to go through the spreadsheet and help other members get up to speed.

KL - happy to go through and show what is done.

SW - that would be useful, not through lack of trying. Difference in opinion of how much can be influenced.

DM – happy to do the session, different people pick up different things.

ACTION 2024-1-3 Panel working session to be set up.

T&D

VM is not able to provide an update and thought **MN** would be attending.

MG – the main item is around The Conversation and to get some planning underway. Suggestions could be a Q&A with Denise Parnell and Andy Wynne, the people behind Wimbledon, mentoring sessions with mentors and mentees, first aid, giving officials basic first aid training.

ACTION 2024-1-4 - topics to be decided and planned.

KL – diversity and inclusion session with Louise Hunt, **SW** was meant to talk to her.

ACTION 2024-1-5 (E7) **SW** to pick this up.

DM confirmed that budget should not be a concern.

6. Working Group updates

Governance – **MG** Annual process of deleting personal data and files, completion by end of March.

Referee – **MG** Need to progress the plan for evaluations. Bob Jenkins has volunteered to get involved plus we have other members who were part of the group last year. Need to decide how to get everyone involved and get this moving.

KL – **MN** sent questions to **MM** but no reply. Will follow up with **MN** and resend if required.

F&E – **MG** this will be business as usual – we need to make sure everything is still current and if any changes are needed.

ACTION 2024-1-6 (E8) **VM** to schedule a session with **MM** and to understand if there are any increases in April.

R&R – **MG** We need to get more nominees and increase promotion of awards. The group will need extra support towards the second half of the year. There is a lot of work required. Look at citations and how this can be managed more effectively.

AW volunteered to support.

Future strategy working group – Update on the impact on line umpires and when the survey is to be issued. **SW** and **MC** are in the group. **DM** confirmed he does not have sufficient capacity to be involved with the group going forwards.

Awaiting confirmation from **MM** regarding timings of **LU** survey

7. Actions from previous meeting

MG - vast majority are for **MM**. **SJ** to chase status.

TOR action – **KL** asked for this to be transferred to someone else due to workload. During the meeting **MG** asked **SJ** to review however since the meeting **MG** has agreed to complete. **KL** asked to forward all documents to **SJ** (now **MG**).

Voting systems – **AW** to start thinking about suppliers and compare to previously used one.

BREAK

Break started 18:17

Meeting restarted at 18:28

8. LTA Officiating Update

Updates received by **MM** and shared with the committee for their comments and questions.

KL - not happy that **AGM** is being relegated to Sunday, would be good to have in the middle of conference if it starts on Friday and ends on Sunday.

MG – this was discussed at the start of the meeting. There are pros and cons but would not see as relegated if we can get access to **NTC** and is conversation we can have with **MM**.

9. ABTO/LTA Joint Officiating Strategy 2024-2026

MG – Currently waiting for the **LTA** to sign off the strategy. We know our priorities, 1st priority is impact of Electronic Line Calling (waiting for the survey), 2nd priority is Welfare, 3rd priority is referee evaluations. **KL** to follow up with **MN** and **MM**.

ACTION 2024-1-7 **AW** discuss with **MN**. **MN** is waiting for **MM** to confirm the budget regarding welfare sessions.

MG - A Regroup with external members is required. It would be good to have some actions and a plan of what is to be achieved in 2 months.

MG - Make sure we are progressing actions.

ACTION 2024-1-8 **MG** to check with **MN** regarding the mentoring programme and the current numbers.

MG is keen to have some good items to show members that we are adding value, and why it is worth being a member. Everyone to take away actions and to make some tangible progress.

10. Membership retention

MG – This comes from the website discussion and the fact the **LTA** cannot force opt in. There is nothing we can do to change this but we can try and change how it is presented on the website. The **LTA** have committed to take us through the new redesigns so we can see a member's journey, content, and messaging. They appreciate our position and want to help us not lose too many members accidentally.

DM – **MM**'s email said that one of the key benefits would be to create time and efficiencies in grading and selections. **DM** was not unclear how such benefits would arise.

SW – less work involved in redactions.

DM – suggested members should get a second chance (i.e. double confirmation) and be asked again before opting out in case they ticked the box by mistake / assuming it was marketing, etc.

MG referred everyone to the email sent to **MM**.

MG – we need to sell ABTO to members and show why they should be members. The biggest risk are the newer officials. Are we likely to lose members in their first year as an official?

KL – Could there be a trial period? even if they opt out, could they come to some conversation sessions to see what happens. MM could send an email to them.

MG - would be onerous process.

KL - can it be made easy for them to change their minds. If it was an accident, could they opt back in? need to be able to do it. How could they opt back in?

MG to reread KL email.

DM – welcome pack is great, but you only receive it after you are a licensed official, which is after the opt-out process. Maybe committee members to attend courses; have a welcome event for new officials scheduled alongside the timetable for courses. Develop some material including messages of why you want to be a member of ABTO.

SW – 2 min video played in training courses about ABTO. What has ABTO done for you this year? Gather data around grading challenges and explain that if you are in ABTO, this is what you get.

AW – do something at Wimbledon, visit local tennis club, ABTO house during The Championships, with literature, similar to Nike house. Could include members who are just spectating.

MG - what else can we do? BAU, highlight the Conversation, welfare work, referee evaluations. Everything we have in our strategy.

KL - Need to do more with R&R, recognition in their own counties has arisen as a direct result of ABTO nominations. LTA did not nominate anyone for County awards.

ACTION 2024-1-9 KL to write a piece for bulletin.

DM – video around benefits, award winners, could ask non-committee members to contribute to it.

KL – SC has made a lot of videos for Bradfield.

DM – how do we get feed onto website?

AW – slides used for awards on social media, ask LTA to help with promoting ABTO.

DM – LTA website has a section about officiating, maybe add ABTO information to that area, so new officials hear about ABTO from the start.

ACTION 2024-1-10 MG to write up ideas and circulate. Everyone to think about what we can implement. Looking for people to volunteer but still need to deliver on other actions.

MG – request for bulletin content by 26th Jan. It would be good to have some new content to avoid repeating the same information.

11. Chairs update

No comments or questions raised.

12. Finance update

DM – apologised for not circulating usual update due to the short notice at which the meeting was arranged. Current bank account balance is £5,515.67. Paid for awards, salvers, and Eventbrite for AGM registrations. Cost of face-to-face AGM increases costs. Would like to start budget process for 2024 asap and will need to negotiate what budget / grant will be for this calendar year.

ACTION 2024-1-11 All panels and working groups to provide budget to DM by end of Feb.

ACTION 2024-1-12 DM and MG to discuss early March before discussing with MM.

13. Future meetings / AGM date

AGM date is not known yet.

25th Mar, 20th May and then a date to be confirmed in September. Following that, the next meeting will within the period 6 weeks prior to AGM

14. AOB

No other points raised.

MG - Please ensure minutes are read and follow up on actions and strategic priorities. Encourage calls amongst groups between meetings.

15. Close of meeting

Next meeting will be 25th March.

Meeting closed at 19:33