

MINUTES

ABTO Management Committee Meeting 4-24

Monday 9th Sept 17:00 to 20:00

Attendees:	By Zoom:	Chair: Malgorzata Grzyb (MG) Vice Chair: Kath Lovell (KL) Honorary Treasurer: Darren Michaels (DM) Selena Coburn (SC) Mike Crossley (MC) Steff Johnston (SJ) LTA Officiating Manager: Matthew Morrissey (MM) Myooran Nathan (MN) Veronica Mwondela (VM) Steven Wilkinson (SW) Andy Wynne (AWy)
	Apologies:	Alex Wolfe (AW)

N.B. The minutes were recorded in the order in which 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 and apologies.

MG welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies confirmed.

2. Declaration of interest

No declarations of interest were noted.

Matters not on the agenda.

MG asked for the Welfare report to be added to the agenda.

Andy Wynne (AWy) joined the meeting at 17:10

3. Championships 2024 Report

MG congratulated AWy on his first Championships. AWy commented that there was a general feeling of appreciation of how The Championships were run this year although AWy acknowledges that not everyone provided feedback.

Report was taken as read.

No decision has been made regarding ELC, so work is continuing until notified otherwise.

The Chief Umpire's team will not be located in the portacabins for the Qualifying competition next year.

Kath Lovell (KL) joined the meeting at 17:16

For the Championships, the Chief umpire's room is to be used for chair umpires, and Chief umpire and his team will move to the officials' restaurant.

Finance for officials to be reviewed in Sept 2024. No increases made in 2024 outside of the Qualifying competition.

Discussions around accommodation continue and AWy has some suggestions he is proposing and will update at the next ABTO MC meeting.

Survey results are not yet known; however, they will provide areas of focus and AWy assumes catering will be on the list. Recognised the amount provided does not go far but AWy did not receive the same complaints at the Qualifying competition.

There were some issues regarding clothing such as the jacket quality and not everyone received a jumper.

There were IT issues, such as not getting access to the system until 2 days before the Qualifying competition commencing. These issues, together with the bad weather made the Championships challenging.

Meetings with ITIA and ITF seminar were very well attended and access to media centre was appreciated.

MG – challenges on day 1, arriving at the same time, queuing for locker numbers, work cards – always been a challenge, maybe consider changing.

AWy - Segregated some groups on day 1 but will look to streamline and realises it is a key focus.

DM – the overnight expenses rate is lower than the LTA rate, could that be considered.

AWy – valid point and has ideas to suggest to the Club. Look at hotels as an option similar to how Covid was managed. Finances are frustrating, can make some progress but will be smaller steps. It is high on agenda.

MM – can provide some historical background on finances and something to consider before discussing with the club. Will meet with AWy prior to meeting with the club.

VM – have the survey results been published?

AWy – waiting for AELTC staff to return from annual leave, meeting to be held to discuss. Will pass the message onto the club and will share once results have been published and how we

deal with the contents.

VM – WTA have declared all tournaments 500+ will go to ELC, common question asked so officials can forward plan.

AWy – All grand slams have been talking about it. We cannot keep everyone waiting, people need to know one way or another. Has been assured that a decision is coming soon. The Club need all information before making final decision and expects it to be soon.

VM – whatever decision is made; we should be told first rather than hearing it in the news.

AWy – has said this before and would be unacceptable to read it in the press first. Need to manage the situation in the right way.

MG – appreciate there are meetings coming up and would be good to have an update at the next meeting on 28th Oct.

AWy – will be away but can join and hopefully have some news.

AWy left the meeting at 17:37

4. LTA Officiating Update

Report was taken as read.

MM - Information regarding WTA has come through a tournament director and not an official announcement.

Proposed 2025 Line Umpire Grading Structure shared with grading panel. Proposals will also be put forward in due course for the Referee and Court Supervisor Grading Structures, not a lot of changes expected for the Chair Umpire Grading Structure.

Proposal regarding fees & expenses, expect some increases. MM to catch up with the working group.

Selections completed until end of the year. There were a lot of withdrawals and in the process of trying to fill the slots.

Steven Wilkinson (SW) joined the meeting at 17:41

There should be some Challengers in the tournament calendar for the 1st quarter, which hopefully will be published in October.

MG – are the withdrawals from a particular role? What is causing it? Particular time of year?

MM – geographical element, we know where we will receive more withdrawals, no particular pattern. It is frustrating and may look at patterns towards the end of the year.

Line umpire assessments – 43 have been queried, they will be reviewed, and feedback provided.

Referee evaluations – proposal sent to T&D panel for discussion and finalising. Plan to carry out evaluations Oct half term.

LTA Conference – 29th and 30th Nov. Can use centre court and other meeting rooms have been booked. Will have hybrid sessions and run evening sessions for those who work and/or cannot travel.

Recruitment – planned 4 courses across 3 days (Fri to Sun) combining line and chair accreditation courses to quicken the process, locations include Loughborough, Sunderland, Newport, and Nottingham. Looking for other venues in 2025 such as Scotland. Optimistic it will work but will reduce the number of attendees. 300 applications so far. Close on Friday and selections will take place next week.

Referee courses scheduled in Isle of Man, Kent, Nottingham, Gloucester, and Cornwall. At end of the year looking at Scotland and Wales.

National Referee course 12th and 13th October hosted by Kath Lovell and Chris Mann.

ITF white badge course in Serbia – Mark Wilkinson (referee) and Alasdair Gordon (chair) attending.

MG – ensure ABTO is mentioned during the courses either someone from the committee or can share the slide deck and video recording for someone to present.

MM – definitely want ABTO involvement and can build into the schedule.

VM – assessment of candidates coming through, last year was 50 / 50 gender and shows inclusiveness.

MM – out of 300 applicants, 38% women and over 10% non-white background. Ensure the same percentages carry through to the courses and where possible increase. Certain venues chosen based on recruiting from those areas.

DM – could you look to stagger selections issued to the selections panel for comment and try to ensure they do not overlap.

MM – understand but designate and Professional selections will always be close together especially if calendar is issued late. Cannot always publish calendars due to cut off dates and therefore cannot promise. Will do my best.

KL – Selections always issued during the pro circuit, would be good to not have during the pro tournaments.

MM – does bear it in mind and understands it is frustrating, difficult balance and will do best to improve.

SW – if possible, provide bullet points regarding reasons behind decision to avoid duplicating and suggestions that have already been thought of.

MM – torn on this and feels the selections panel should review selections without any bias. Use comments from panel to highlight to the tournament director and helps with the discussion. Will do best to add more information. More difficult for referee selections towards the end of the year due to volume.

MG – conference – review topics for the conversation and ensure we are not duplicating or at least complementing topics.

MM – wants the conference to be more of a conference rather than workshops. Opportunity to get external speakers.

5. Chair's Update

The report was taken as read.

MG - survey results shared with MC detailing 3 consecutive years. Results for ABTO questions are declining so need to review before the next survey is issued.

MG - Ideas of welfare – aligned with MN's paper, i.e. mental health first aiders and suggestions for conversation topics.

MG – the Bulletin will be sent for the first from ABTO email address and not through the LTA. Any ideas or points to be included please share with MG.

MG – member retention 890 members, 65 have opted out, pop up window to avoid accidental opt outs now added. Asked MM on who have opted out, check not on mentoring programme or Facebook group and referee working group.

MM – were any checks carried out on FB group, where people have left? Check whether it is a new licence or a renewed licence. If new, can check if they meant to opt out, renewed license opted out would need to be taken out of groups. Good opportunity to clean groups.

KL – when people asked to join, check if they are an official, people leaving would be removed from groups. New process is more difficult so need a way to provide a list.

MM – will look to issue a report to make it easier.

DM – 65 seems a high increase, any more info as to why they are opting out.

MM – not asked for reasons just made sure they are OK with opting out. Surprised to see some people on the list so looks like it is a mistake.

MG – how many opt-outs are new officials?

MM – believe it is about 10-15, so around 20% are new officials. Opportunity to plug ABTO when sending new officials next steps to become an official.

6. The Conversation

Report taken as read.

MG asked VM and SW regarding planned Conversation topics for ABTO Day plus other sessions.

SW – conversation online - responding to survey feedback something rule based, impact of Live ELC, what can they do in the future, match assistant duties. Will speak to KL regarding ideas.

SW – understanding impact to grade structures or at least what we can tell them.

SW – ABTO Day – following on diversity and inclusion topics – Louise Hunt set up as a trainer, difficult as an online Conversation, maybe can do on the day, break into a smaller group. VM - tried to plan until end of the year.

MN – good to understand the live ELC approach.

VM – people from US and Australia who have experienced it to discuss topic.

MN – rule books have changed based on above.

KL – check detail, happy to help find contacts, maybe do a recording, and play back.

MM – nothing added to the conference for the match assistant role. People will be surprised at the level of commitment and concentration it requires. Needs to be a positive perspective of this role. We want to keep officials so needs to be positive.

MM – name of role needs to be considered. Different countries approach it differently, even ATP and WTA may be different. We do not know what it will look like, and we can define what we want the role to be providing it is aligned to the tours and tournament expectations.

SC – would you have to be a line or chair umpire to carry out the role of match assistant?

MM – yes, expectation is they are already trained and can go on court if required.

MG – need to look into having a session for off court officials such as court supervisors and referees, dealing with parents etc.

MN – safeguarding session last year was good, challenging scenarios, experience related session for the ABTO day.

MG – Can Louise Hunt’s session be delivered in hybrid format?

SW – could work if in person and easier than online and look at involving LTA councillor responsible for D&I.

MG – need to reach a decision quickly for October and how it impacts the ABTO Day. Need to confirm in the next couple of weeks.

SW – confirm date and amount of time required. Can move along in the next fortnight.

7. ABTO Day Planning

MG – need to agree timings on workshops to be held, can then confirm start time of AGM either 1.30 or 2pm. Factor in lunch break.

DM – lunchtime is always a rush so can we go for 2pm and then have a buffer of 30 mins.

MG – issue was online rather than in person attendees.

MN – was the technical issues and then not a lot of time for lunch for those dealing with the attendees.

MG – need to agree if AGM and workshops will be hybrid.

Decision: All MC agreed to have a hybrid day.

MG - any thoughts on how to get more people attend in person?

DM – maybe not have the whole day as hybrid and just the AGM. May encourage people to attend so they can attend workshops.

MG – did not want to stop opportunity to obtain credits by having only in person sessions.

MG - SW and VM to consider what works or not for the sessions and whether they should be hybrid.

VM – mindful of being London centric, long way to travel. Best to give options to attend face to face or hybrid, shows inclusion.

MG – submitting of motions – any thoughts for committee to submit motions? Something to be considered so deadline is not missed.

All – no one said they had a motion to submit.

MG – need someone to act as a project manager to coordinate activities – someone who would like to take that on would be grateful.

SC – should we ask for questions in advance? They can then have a supplementary on the day.

MN – we are here to answer questions throughout the year and have other opportunities to ask questions.

MG – been able to predict questions in the past such as live ELC. If thinking changes, will update.

MN – volunteered as project manager but it may impact referee evaluations.

MG – thank you, will pencil MN in.

BREAK started 18:56

Meeting restarted at 19:10

MG – date for ABTO Day is set so all asked to hold the date and attend. Reports due to SJ by 7th Nov, showcase what we have been doing.

Date to submit motion for dissolution is 12 weeks before AGM which was 8th Sept. SJ confirmed nothing has been received so far.

8. 2024 Elections

MG – AW facilitated intro with new supplier, Civica. Both Civica and UK Engage provided quotes, following discussions Civica reduced their quote. UK Engage had issues in the past and is not the best system. Have seen the online demo for Civica and seems better.

Prices are detailed in the paper, and we need to decide who to engage.

DM – will there be a manual written on how we use the system, last time we did not need to have an election and were over charged because not a lot of work was conducted. Learn from experience and agree upfront. Civica are well known and used by several building societies.

MG – does not recall a manual in their proposal, the system is intuitive and not as complex as before and may not need a manual. They are keen to work with us and will probably produce it themselves.

SW - there are 2 separate options with costs broken down so nothing to negotiate. Votes for a change of provider.

SC – concerns over software used as a councillor ehowever the voting system may be different.

SW – good feedback.

MG – still going towards Civica.

No other comments or feedback received.

MG – going to be main contact point so will go with Civica.

DM – UK engage – LTA used them previously for ABTO elections and that is why we went to them, with Civica they are keen to work with us so that changes things.

MN – volunteer to be the coordinator, had some involvement with it previously.

MG - are you sure you are not taking on too much.

SC – work with MN on the project management side.

MG – to initiate contact with Civica.

9. Updates

a. ABTO Awards

KL – no discussions have taken place, and no nominations have been submitted so far.

MG - deadline is 30th Sept, let us encourage when at tournaments, R&R group will need to cross check nominations, check salvers and cost.

VM – go back to same provider as last year.

MG – will include reminder in the bulletin again, posters up at events, more difficult for off court officials. Is there budget for the salvers.

DM – the cost of the salvers was included in the budget, but they need to be picked up from Reading.

SJ – volunteered to pick up salvers.

SC – happy to put PowerPoint and graphics together.

b. T&D

MG – is there anything more to discuss, already discussed conversation. Talk about the referee evaluations.

MN – around 40 people involved in mentoring. Referee evaluations towards October should be available. Has emailed MM for the data. Needs coordination and referee expertise.

KL – list of evaluators needs to be provided, amazing we do not know which events people are attending.

MG – try and coordinate offline, conscious MN has volunteered for a lot. Use existing structure, try, and get an evaluator in time for October.

KL – Chris Mann had the same difficulty, become a poisoned chalice.

MG – not right they are not evaluated, not good for the referees or the tournaments.

KL – taken on without resolving issues.

MG - Need to think about how to resolve.

DM – MM suggested that in the proposed new Referee Grading Structure, referees need to pass a course to move up grades, rather than evaluation to avoid them being a blocker to progression.

MN – inconsistent to what has been said regarding referee evaluations and how this relates to the structure.

MG – a lot for the group to think about and review where the issues are and then look for a more sustainable solution for the future.

c. Grading

MG – since writing the report draft 2025 Line Umpire Grading Structure has been shared with the panel for comment and input.

DM – nothing more to report.

d. IDEA

The report was taken as read, no further comments.

e. Welfare

MN – looking for comments if any. As previously discussed, the Mental Health First Aid initiative needs to be rolled out.

Is it just for ABTO members, it is LTA funding so may need to offer wider?

KL - Non ABTO could ask to rejoin to access the support. The people being trained Trainers should be ABTO members.

SW – we are being funded to get ABTO members trained up and should not ask if they are a member if they need support.

MN – this is for ABTO but would not turn anyone away.

MG – all comms would be sent to ABTO members so would only be a small number who may have left.

DM – thought we had already decided to go ahead, was expecting to have a certain number of people ready to go.

MN – expressions of interest but nothing formalised and were planning to hold fire until after the elections later this year.

DM – asked why they were holding fire until after the elections.

MN – there may be a change in the committee so waiting until this is confirmed.

DM – maybe let members rather than committee members take priority for training in the short term.

MN – people more likely to contact the MC due to role.

SW – should start rolling out rather than wait for the elections, they are not mutually exclusive so good to get things moving.

MG – agree offline on how this should be presented in the bulletin rather than a separate email.

MN – no other decisions to be made from the paper.

10. Actions Log

MG – going to skip and jump to accounts.

11. ABTO Accounts

Submit outstanding expenses to DM ASAP.

DM – circulated accounts spreadsheet and asked if there were any questions. Fee estimate received from our accountants Mills Pyatt for preparing the accounts for the upcoming year end. They have quoted £430 plus VAT (i.e. £516) which compares with the £504 they charged us last year. Request the MC to formally approve the cost.

MC approved to appoint accountants.

MG – once accounts prepared by accountants, will be signed off and presented at the AGM.

12. AOB

None notified.

13. Close

MG - starting to come to the busy time of year, thank you for the ideas and volunteering. Keep momentum and ensure calls take place to keep going.

Date of the next meeting is 28th October.

Let us get workshops confirmed in the next couple of weeks so we can update the bulletin.

With no further business, the meeting closed at 20:00.