

Provincial Towns Swimming Association AGM 2017
Adair Arms, Ballymena
Friday 4th August 2017 at 7.30pm

Attendees

Nick Brown (Ballymoney), Kevin O’Kane (Newry), Alison W (Templemore), Ross Gillespie (Templemore), Ian Withers (Portadown), Aidan Walsh (Cookstown), Beverley Doran (Larne), Paul Silutius (Cookstown), Iris Behme (East Cavan), Bernadette Moore (East Cavan), Jennifer Williamson (East Cavan), Lynn Montgomery (Coleraine), Ruth McDougall (Olympia), Paul Higgins (Portadown), Diane Bergeron (Mid Ulster), Louise McBride (Ballymena), Emma Wells (Ballymena), June Traill (Ballymoney), Derek Beattie (Ballymena) & Gerry Boyle (Newry)

Skype

Terry McCartney (Enniskillen) & Marie Donnelly

Apologies

Steve (City of Belfast)

Opening Remarks

Derek Beattie thanked everyone for coming tonight to this the postponed Annual General Meeting of the Provincial Towns Swimming Association. A fantastic turn out!

‘It is important that we have representation at this meeting so that we know your feelings about the league and you can have the opportunity to raise any concerns or issues. Last year’s attendance was an all time low and thankfully I don’t have to say that again this year. Unfortunately with all the upcoming changes within Swim Ulster/Ireland we did not have the necessary information in May/June to make holding the meeting worthwhile and this was the earliest date we could find that we thought might be a good alternative. I have cut out the sandwiches this year as it was costly and with poor numbers most was wasted but tea, coffee and biscuits are available at the back of the room I hope any of you who have travelled a distance and maybe missed your evening meal will understand.’

‘Welcome!’

Before the meeting continued, Derek introduced the current office bearers to put a face to the names recorded and confirmed that Emma would be taking the minutes of meeting as the minute secretary elected at last years AGM.

Minutes of previous AGM

Derek thanked Emma for her excellent detailed minutes from the last meeting. As with previous years the minutes are not circulated to the members and are held on record by the secretary available on request. The previous year’s minutes were proposed by Derek and seconded by June as a true reflection of the meeting.

Chairman’s Report – Derek Beattie

'We have had another successful season. I want to thank Newry and Ballymena for hosting the Time Trials and End of Season Gala. All were well supported and enjoyable events though I would like to see all clubs participating. June proposed that we hold the EOS in Bangor but cost and availability prevented it this year however it is something we should discuss.'

'I believe we had generally less problems with timing equipment this year though at the EOS gala when June was unusually unavailable we did have a couple of sticky moments which with incredible calmness, Emma from Ballymena aided by Terry from Enniskillen not to mention 'Phoning a Friend' – June, got us underway. It does highlight however how much we depend on June, the expert on the system. We should look at training for the clubs who agree to run the galas.'

'Thanks also to Chris from Swilly for again collating the gala results and updating the league tables. We had some problems with clubs not providing the information but in general an improvement. I feel that this is an area where we can do better so that everyone is kept up to date. I would however remind you that prior to computerisation, not so long ago, clubs only knew how they were doing by talking to other clubs. It meant that at the End of Season Gala there was an element of anticipation and surprise when the results were handed out. Perhaps it gave the EOS gala more of a purpose and importance as an event.'

'Last year I suggested that we should replace the permanent trophies with certificates due to the difficulties in collecting the trophies. We chose to purchase small relatively inexpensive cups and shields for the winners and runners up to keep. I would like to hear your reaction to this and whether we should continue down this road or make a greater effort to reinstate and maintain the permanent trophies.'

'Thanks also to Gerry our treasurer for keeping us solvent. Gerry has chosen to stand down this year and I thank him for his many years of service, around 20 I believe. The association was run so successfully for many years by the same group of office bearers. Unfortunately in recent years we have lost the others through bereavement or ill health. On behalf of the association I wish Gerry continued good health and enjoyment in his life outside our swimming family.'

'Last but by no means least thanks to June for everything she does to organise the league - from developing the website to providing electronic timing for the final. I will repeat what I said last year. June is as you know is our main contact and she has a busy life so your full and timely cooperation is necessary and appreciated. '

'One of June's more thankless tasks is to resolve disputes between clubs. I would once again ask you all to compete in a spirit of friendship and cooperation. Inevitably conflicts of interest will arise but if rules are followed and you try to find resolution immediately, disputes can be avoided.'

'I tried to help June a bit this year with follow up on payment of registration and gala fees as well as helping with the time trial and EOS gala. I would like us to get back to more rigorous renewal of membership, nomination of club representatives and prepayment of time trial fees. Chasing up is an onerous task, which should rarely be necessary. I hope with the appointment of a new Treasurer we can take the opportunity to look for improvement in this area.'

'I feel that we have an excellent league and don't need to make any significant changes but I also know that we can do better in some areas.'

'The points for improvement I highlighted in last year's minutes are still relevant. I have reiterated them in an appendix for discussion at the end of the elections.'

'We are not a normal committee nor do we meet at any time other than the AGM. We are here to facilitate the running of the league which has run successfully this way as long as I can remember but for it to work we depend on all clubs to do their bit and help when requested.'

'I wish everyone a pleasant summer break and look forward to next year's competition.'

Secretary Report – June Traill

June thanked everyone for their help and support over the last year and to Derek and Emma for assisting in the running of the end of season gala whilst she was away at a family wedding.

As the Chair had already covered a lot within his report for the year there were just a few elements that June wished to bring to the members attention. The 2016-2017 season had been a relatively uneventful season with not too many issues that that June as our league secretary had to become involved with. The chasing of results was still an issue with both June and Chris spending a lot of time trying to contact clubs sending emails which were unanswered to ensure the league table was updated in a timely manner. A big plea was made that all members address this with their representatives, Derek suggested that results be submitted within two weeks of the gala and that he would be happy to follow up any deviations from this.

June also noted that a lot of clubs were still recording the slowest time for swimmers in the galas. A new form to be utilised by everyone which calculated the average time in line with FINA rulings had been distributed last year. The recording sheet permits the input of both times which in turn calculates the average time of the swim. Anyone who requires the new recording document was requested to contact June via email.

Treasurers Report – Gerry Boyle

The Outgoing Treasurer, Gerry Boyle who has held the role since 1997 and for twenty years explained that he felt now was the time to hand over the reins. He provided a history and insight of the Treasurers role over the years from his initial involvement as parent then coach with Newry and Mourne and his duties as the PTSA Treasurer.

The Treasurers report encompassed the last two years as an accounting period with three cheques outstanding to be paid once new mandate completed for the bank. A copy of the Treasurers financial statement is attached to the minutes.

From the financial statement an investment account holding a balance of £11,123.17 was declared as with previous years. The origins of these funds relate to an account opened on 20th January 1978 with £1,000.00 from funds collected for an end of season gala for PTSA team winners to compete in a gala with Stirling & Glasgow. The balance has in turn accumulated with interest over the years and there has never been any need to withdraw any funds thus serving as a reserve of funds available to the PTSA should they be required.

As the number of copies of report were limited as with numbers in attendance with last year and due to the fantastic turn out this evening Emma agreed to forward copies to everyone present on completion of the updating of the minutes.

Election of committee – office bearers

Derek explained the process of the election of officials for the PTSA including their roles in regard to administration duties and including the updating of mandate holders with our current banking and investment accounts. An email requesting nominations for the roles had been sent to all members prior to the meeting with no response thus the roles

were put to those present to fulfil and suggestions for roles welcomed at this point of the meeting.

All positions annulled

Derek Beattie as Chair declared all positions vacant and as outgoing Treasurer Gerry Boyle took lead for the election of new office bearers.

Election of Office Bearers

Chair – Derek Beattie (Ballymena)

Proposed by Diane (Mid Ulster) & Seconded by Ian Withers (Portadown)

Treasurer – Emma Wells (Ballymena)

Proposed by Diane (Mid Ulster) & Seconded by Ian Withers (Portadown)

Secretary – June Traill (Ballymoney)

Proposed by Diane (Mid Ulster) & Seconded by Ian Withers (Portadown)

Minutes Secretary – Louise McBride (Ballymena)

Proposed by Emma Wells Seconded by Derek Beattie

Acceptance of Positions

The members elected Derek Beattie as Chairperson, Emma Wells as Treasurer, June Traill as League Secretary and Louise McBride as Minutes Secretary for new season 2017-2018.

Derek confirmed with everyone present that there were no objections or concerns raised that there were three representatives from the same club elected as officials. As a league with so many clubs dotted throughout the province for the signing of cheques which requires two signatories for each withdrawal/cheque/monitoring of account, it can be difficult if office bearers are not in close proximity of each other it was agreed that we would see how the office bearers nominated this year worked together and review at the next AGM.

A.O.B

The following issues were raised, discussed and agreed with the representatives from clubs present.

- **Age rule changes**

In line with new competition guidelines within Swim Ireland, June felt as a league we should take lead from Jon Rudd and support and abide by the new rulings which would benefit swimmers. It was agreed that the lower age bracket would be capped at the two years (9yr&10yrs) with the best practice supported in that those swimmers within the age bracket be utilised to swim first even if a younger swimmer not in age bracket was faster. It was also agreed that younger swimmers would be permitted to swim in non counting relay races but not individual swims unless all avenues had been exhausted and agreement reached on the Wednesday before the gala took place or at the very latest BEFORE the gala started. For the purposes of our league the PTL year for the younger age group A would be those eligible had to be nine by 31st December 2017, therefore not including those that turn nine once year changes mid season. June had amended the PTSA rules accordingly with this update.

The suggestion of an upper age limit was also broached as there had been incidents were coaches/older swimmers not possibly registered with swim Ireland had swam in Group D which had in turn led to the younger D Group swimmers feeling deflated. It was agreed that

transparency before the swims and discussions with each competitive club as for June to individually check each swimmers eligibility would be tedious and time consuming so therefore that had to be an element of trust that all lists of swimmers provided by clubs confirming members of Swim Ulster/Swim Ireland provided at the start of the season was up to date and followed by coaches. It was felt that as we are a league encouraging all to swim as well as promote competitiveness in our swimmers it would be unfair to put an actual age limit on Group D but it was agreed that a ruling for those swimmers eligible to swim in Group D must be recorded in PTSA rulings.

June agreed that she would circulate with those present a proposal to reflect an agreement reached for those eligible to swim in Group D on the best practice basis that swims should be allocated to younger group d swimmers (15/16 years) available.

- **Can league be improved?**

The overall consensus of those present was very positive on the current PTSA league. It was agreed that it was a great league providing the perfect opportunity and introduction to competitive swimming available to all swimmers including those who did not compete in open gala environment too. The PTSA experience afforded every child the chance to be part of a team in a safe and friendly environment.

- **Raise fees**

From memory, neither the Chair nor the Treasurer could remember the last time the fees had been increased for PTSA league membership and in view of the increasing costs in the administration & running of the league as well as including pool hire for finals possibly in Bangor along with swim hats for the North/South team this should be discussed further.

A suggestion of raising the fees to match those paid for Aquasprints league was discussed and it was agreed that from next season membership would be raised to £75.

The motion was in turn proposed by Ruth McDougall (Olympia) and seconded by Ross Gillespie (Templemore)

- **Participation in time trial & End of Season Finals.**

As Chair, Derek would like to see more participation across the board from ALL clubs registered within the PTSA league. The time trials are the PTSA's biggest fundraiser with a modest fee charged which is by far cheaper than open gala entries without these funds the league would struggle. June passed on Larne's apologies at their embarrassing lack of entries for the PTSA time trials last year and had assured that they would put in a better effort for next year.

June confirmed that Swilly Seals had kindly agreed to host the North time trials this season and Portadown had agreed to host the South Time Trials this year. The finals would be held at Ballymena.

A suggestion of merging and having both time trials and finals held on the one day/night possibly at Bangor Aurora raising profile and interest was proposed for future seasons. It was agreed that utilising the knowledge of members along with best practices within leagues both in and outside swimming would be revisited at the next meeting.

The End of Season finals was agreed to be a benefit for everyone who took part, providing a different identity for swimmers to be afforded the opportunity to swim in another team further enhancing their skills in a competitive arena.

- **Electronic timing at time trials – do we need it?**

Everyone present was happy with the current electronic timing systems and June explained that following extensive research and trials the most accurate timings are through the dolphin system as reactions times from manual time recorders can vary a huge amount and it has been found that the slowest time is always the wrong time.

- **Cups**

Despite efforts in the last few years to have the perpetual cups available for the finals we have not succeeded. We have in previous years appointed a trophy custodian to collect cups, get them fixed but this in turn has proved just as unsuccessful and incredibly time consuming resulting in stumbling blocks along the way trying to locate who has the trophy and where it is the majority of times!

Last year following the AGM it was agreed to purchase 'token' trophies that the winners of each division could keep, feedback was that this should be the way forward and perhaps slightly larger trophies be purchased so that photographs didn't need to be enhanced to make the trophy look better. Derek agreed to look into this for the end of season gala. The cost need not be any greater than maintenance and replacement of cups and would be purchased from the gala entry fees.

- **Attendance at AGM**

In the early years of the PTSA the AGM was held in the home area of the secretary then moved to Ballymena as a central location for most clubs. The chair stated that it was important to keep communication alive and ensure that all clubs were involved. To this end we should consider holding the AGM in other locations which would hopefully encourage attendance from more clubs.

A suggestion for different clubs to host the AGM was discussed and with this in mind the Newry representative agreed to hold the next PTSA AGM and it was unanimously agreed that given the turn out for this years AGM a date in August should be considered.

- **Constitution**

Following from last years AGM Derek had taken on the task of locating not only the minutes books from Jim Stewart, a copy of the elusive PTSA Constitution. Derek was able to source a rather dated typed valid copy from Davy Campbell. Derek at this point took a moment to acknowledged the passing of Davy Campbell of Alliance this year.

'Davy was a regular attendee at the AGMs. He did a lot for Ulster swimming over many years and with his wife organised our finals when it was swum in the Grove. He will be missed by our association and his own club Alliance'.

Derek was keen to have the opportunity and challenge of writing a new Constitution for agreement and adoption at the next AGM. This was proposed by Emma Wells (Ballymena) & seconded by June Traill (Ballymoney)

Derek also confirmed he was in possession of some of the minute books from previous PTSA AGM's.

Questions from the floor

A question was raised from East Cavan rep. about their inclusion in Div 4. They have just re-entered the league and their galas and dates are unclear. June explained that this is due to another team 'Marlins' still not registered. If they swim then the Div 4 fixtures will have to be reviewed.

Portadown then raised concern over the points totals in Div 3 which affected the promotion decision. The problem centred around a gala which was unswum and how the points were allocated. This generated some discussion about how decisions were taken when a club does not swim a fixture. June explained that this type of dispute between clubs can lead to a huge string of emails and the fault could be impossible to attribute. She recommended that all clubs agree their dates before the season starts so that in the event of cancellation the source of the dispute is much easier to establish. At this point the meeting was drawn to a close and the Portadown rep was asked to take it up with June after the meeting.

Closing remarks and thanks were made by the Chair with safe travels home.