

GLOUCESTERSHIRE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Chair report for GHA Committee Meeting on Thursday 21st March 2024.

I attended the West County Chairs Forum on 26th February at which a number of topics were discussed and the West Area Strategy presented.

The Strategy had been produced in-line with the EH strategy, but appeared more comprehensive as it had a greater focus on growing grass roots hockey. It did also cover the key EH themes of ED&I including encouraging more hockey in state schools, Volunteers, Engagement (publicity) and Officiating. There was though a lack of specific actions except for Officiating where a slide of the planned actions short term was briefly shown.

Interestingly, subsequent to the Chairs meeting, there was a specific West Officiating meeting on 13th March to discuss the action plan. In this meeting there was clearly a recognition that there needed to be more effort put into establishing local links between club umpires and the higher levels of umpires in the West. The topics of education, development and encouragement of umpires to take on neutral appointments were also covered. A series of actions were outlined aimed at supporting these objectives. More information on the West website.

County Standing Committee National Working Group. Given the very limited amount of apparent progress and that the meetings seemed to have been downgraded, Rich Beer of EH no longer attending; I raised the question of whether there was any purpose to it. This resulted in a very different meeting to the original agenda the key points from which are as follows:

- EH Strategy – was trailed at CSC previously, but little has been heard since and it has not been communicated in a targeted way to counties so that they can provide feedback and consider the actions they need to take to support it. Could Nick Pink present the strategy and its progress at a county forum? Areas have fed back, but all layers of organisations should have this opportunity and where appropriate gaps identified.
- IT strategy—this is long overdue at EH. Is there any update on progress to produce one?
- Membership at all levels is starting to cause issues – can a list of clubs in each county be produced and shared with relevant county?
- Can a Conflict-of-Interest Policy be provided to counties?
- Could Hockey Makers be recruited to support EH with admin tasks where there is a lack of resource at EH?
- Queries around coaching/officiating insurance remain despite EH responses.
- Centralised Calendar – there is currently no effective way for all counties to feed into the dates for county activity in the centralised calendar. Can a drop in/feedback session be arranged with appropriate EH personnel present?
- Can a national county competition for U/15 and U/17 be considered/consulted on to try to arrest the drop off of players in those age groups?
- A number of counties are struggling or difficult to contact.
- Quarterly county newsletter may help counties be better informed and a draft will be sent out to group for comment tomorrow followed by a general distribution.

The EH AGM was interesting in that it was very much aligned to reporting progress against the strategy published last September. It was clear that the financial constraints are a considerable issue

when taken in the context of all that EH is expected to deliver by the main grants providers of Sport England and UK Sport. The various elements were gone through and the presentation can be found on the EH website. However, a few key points:

- Grant income is static and other sources of revenue difficult to obtain. Increase in fees next season of 5%.
- Aiming for meaningful growth targeting the areas of U13 and Masters.
- Supporting Area, County and Club through Network Meetings and Forums.
- Achieving International success which is seen as very important, particularly in relation to engagement (publicity).
- Improving GMS which is continuing to receive attention and work; there is a set of priorities defined, but there is still some way to go!
- Focussing effort on ED&I, a new trans policy will be released shortly.
- Looking at Environmental sustainability in the context of facilities, recognised as an increasing factor, partnering with football over the next generation of artificial surfaces.
- Leading in Governance, particularly coaching and safeguarding.

Lastly, there is a lot of change at the top with the President and Chair all standing down.

Ian Harvey

20th March 2024