

England Hockey Governance Review

Executive Summary

Findings from the research and consultation

Yew Consulting

January 2018



Executive Summary

Introduction

1. In March 2017 a resolution was presented by club members to the England Hockey Annual General Meeting and passed by a significant majority*. The AGM resolution read as follows:
“This resolution proposes that England Hockey review the sport's current governance structure across the country so that it provides the best opportunity to develop the sport; increasing participation levels and the chances of sustained success at national and international level while safeguarding participants and giving members the best possible experience in the 21st century”
2. In response to the resolution the board of England Hockey established a working group to undertake a review. The working group includes representatives of the Regional Consultative Committee, England Hockey Board and staff and an independent external member, who between them have broad experience as hockey players, umpires and administrators as well as knowledge of governance in other organisations. The working group commissioned independent research and consultation with hockey clubs and administrators to inform the direction of the review.
3. This report presents a summary of the findings from the research and consultation undertaken by Yew Consulting, independent sports researchers and consultants.

The Consultation Process

4. The research and consultation took place between September and December 2017 and considered the current governance of hockey by Regional Associations, County Associations, Umpiring Associations and leagues (collectively called governance bodies throughout this report) and whether this meets the needs of clubs and players. It does not include club level governance or national (England Hockey) level. England Hockey has recently gone through its own governance review against the requirements of the UK Sport/Sport England Code for Sports Governance.
5. The process involved desk research about governance within hockey and other sports and consultation with:
 - club administrators, players and members as well as representatives of the governance bodies through two different online surveys; and
 - representatives of clubs and governance bodies through consultation meetings, one in each of the five regions.

*57 votes to 1, with 3 abstentions

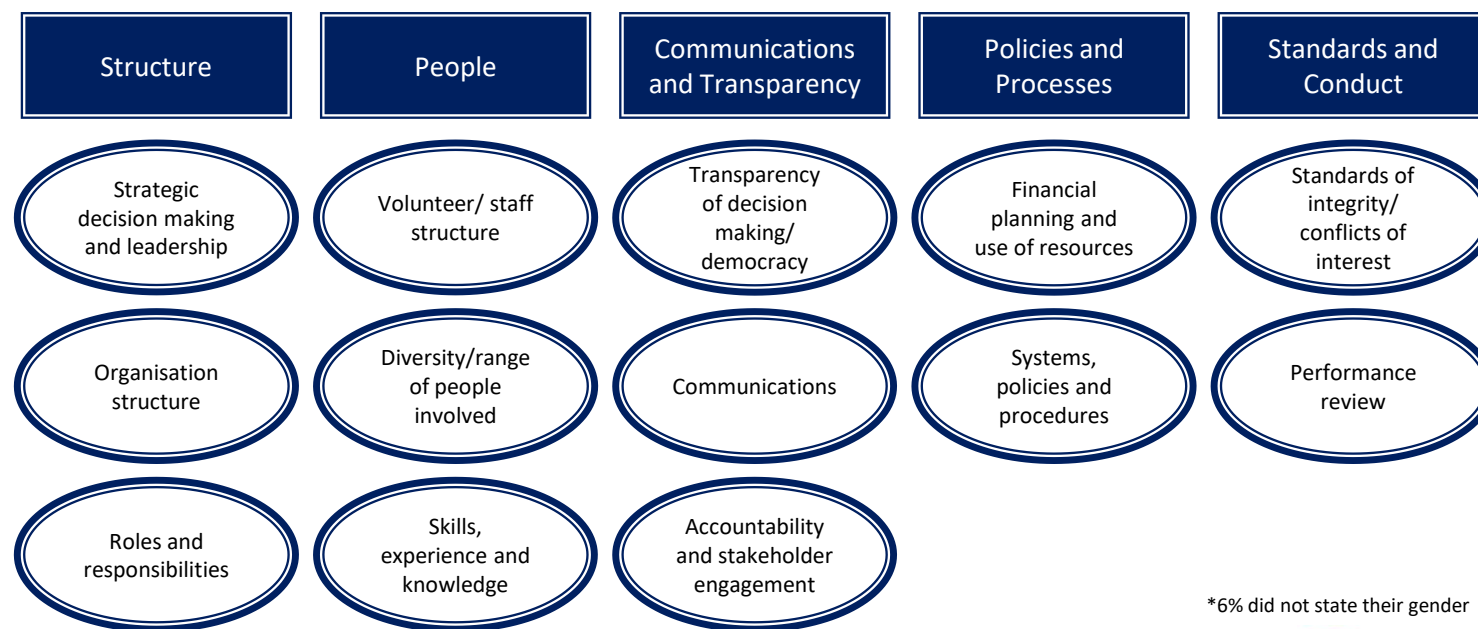
The Consultation Process *(continued)*

6. To maximise input to the consultation process the survey and consultation meeting were actively promoted on England Hockey's website and social media platforms, by England Hockey regional staff and cascaded via regional and county governance bodies.
7. 490 responses were received to the club survey from just under a third (31%) of all hockey clubs. Half (53%) of all survey respondents were club administrators/committee members and 30% were playing club members with the remainder non playing club members, umpires/technical officials, coaches and parents. More men (61%) than women (33%)* responded to the survey and young people are under represented in the survey responses, with only 17% of respondents aged 30 or under.
8. 113 responses were received to the governance bodies survey from administrators in all 5 regions, half of counties and umpire associations and 17% of adult leagues.
9. The consultation meetings were attended by 75 people who were a mix of club and governance body representatives.

The Report

10. This Executive Summary provides a high level summary of the findings and evidence from the research and consultation. It presents the:
 - overall conclusions;
 - findings and evidence grouped under five key aspects of governance that research shows contribute to good governance – diagram 1; and
 - possible solutions identified from the research and consultation.
11. Any conclusions drawn and views expressed in this report are those of the consultants.

Diagram 1 – Elements contributing to good governance



*6% did not state their gender

Overall conclusions

12. The governance of hockey is not currently in crisis. Multiple playing opportunities every week are supported by the current governance bodies and by thousands of committed volunteers.
13. There are differences in view on the effectiveness of the current governance bodies and the impact of their decisions and actions on clubs and players. However, there is clear evidence of inconsistencies in governance across the sport and a need to strengthen governance leadership. The research and consultation has identified several governance issues needing to be addressed and opportunities that could be taken that would have a positive impact on players and administrators, reduce dissatisfaction and help hockey to grow.
14. Out of the five key elements that contribute to good governance (see diagram 1) three in particular emerged as the areas in need of greatest improvement:
 - Structure;
 - People; and
 - Communications and transparency.
15. The consultation process reinforced the point that hockey's governance bodies are autonomous bodies and, whilst England Hockey has some influence, it is not able to 'tell' the governance bodies what to do. However, among a majority of people who participated in the consultation process there is recognition of the need for some or significant improvement in governance and there is evidence that a number of individuals and governance bodies across hockey are willing to work to make that happen with England Hockey leadership and support. If improvements are to be implemented an open and consultative process should be followed, ideally volunteer driven with professional support, and with widespread engagement from across the sport.
16. If some of the concerns and issues identified are not addressed then it is likely that the governance of hockey will diminish in effectiveness over time, to the detriment of the sport.
17. As outlined in the introduction the role of England Hockey is outside of the scope of this report. However as the National Governing Body its role in the leadership of governance and its relationship with the volunteer led governance bodies is critical. As the review working group decides on the actions to take following this report it will be important that this is also considered.
18. Further detail on the issues identified and priority areas for improvement are summarised in the following sections of the report.

*57 votes to 1, with 3 abstentions

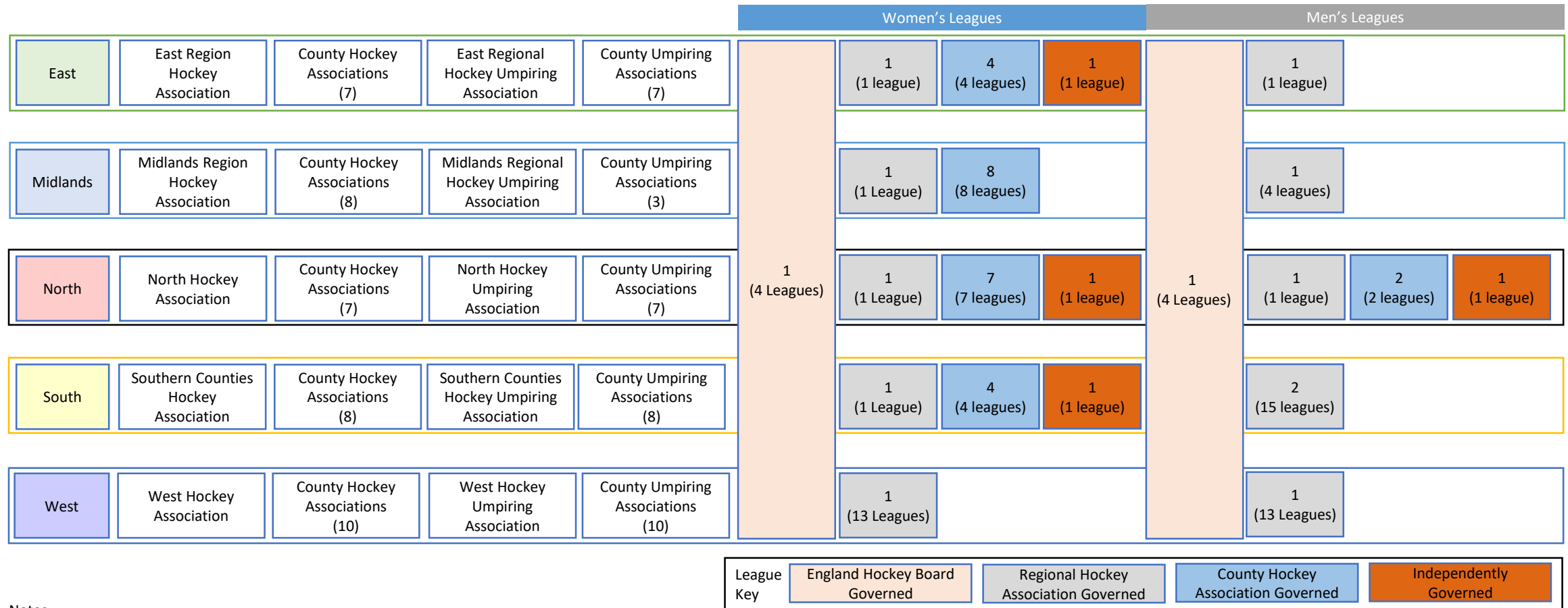
Key findings

19. In the following pages we have drawn together the headline findings and key messages based on the evidence provided by the two surveys, consultation meetings and desk research followed by a summary of possible solutions and opportunities. Whilst some survey results are referenced, further detailed evidence to support the conclusions is available in the full report and supporting data.

Structure

20. Hockey currently has a multiple layered governance structure below national level, diagram 2, which varies across each region. 79 Regional Associations, County Associations and Umpiring Associations and 40 league management committees (adult men's and women's hockey only) are involved in hockey governance and take decisions that have an impact on clubs.
21. Where the leadership of governance sits along with the purpose, roles and responsibilities of all of the governance bodies is not clear or understood by many clubs. 50% of club survey respondents stated that they are not clear about the roles and responsibilities of regional associations, 47% county associations, 29% umpire associations and a quarter leagues.
22. The picture is mixed with respect to the operational effectiveness of different governance bodies and the extent to which they support clubs to achieve their objectives. Between 35% and 44% of club survey respondents stated that Regional and County Associations, Umpiring Associations and Leagues currently do not support them to achieve their objectives.
23. Lines of accountability and relationships between different governance bodies working within the same geographic area are not always well defined, in place or effective. 45% of club survey respondents believe that the governance bodies they are affiliated to do not work well together and more than half of governance body survey respondents agreed that they needed to improve relationships with other hockey organisations with governance responsibilities.
24. Inconsistencies exist in the league and umpiring rules and regulations and in the way in which some governance matters, particularly related to league rules and discipline, are applied to clubs. Geographic areas for league play, league regulations, league promotion rules and player registration rules were identified by at least a quarter of club survey respondents as having a negative impact on their club and were also identified as key issues in the consultation meetings. Many clubs find the inconsistencies, particularly in league and umpiring rules and regulations, confusing, difficult to manage and believe it is not in the best interests of the game.

Diagram 2 - The current governance structure of adult men and women's hockey



Notes

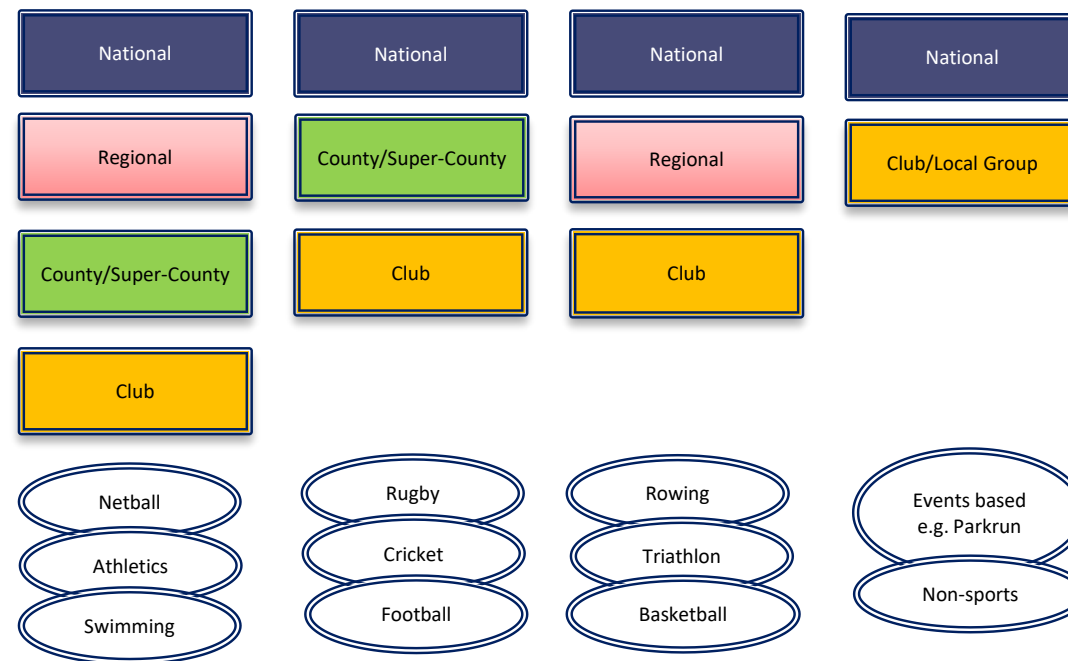
1. This is based on a desk top assessment and has not been verified by each area's governance bodies. The governance structure and leagues shown are for adult men and women only. Additional leagues and/or governance bodies exist for Juniors, Masters, Mixed, Schools, Universities, Indoor
2. The first number for the leagues shows the number of bodies overseeing the league governance and rules. The second number is the number of different leagues governed by that body. The categorisation of league governance body as England Hockey, Regional, County or Independently governed is based on a desk top assessment of the appointment process for the Management/Executive Committee and any accountability to another governance body as stated in the constitutions/rules of the leagues and/or other governance bodies. In reality some categorised as independent may in practice be associated with a County or Regional association, even if their rules or constitution does not state a formal relationship or accountability.
3. Each league has only been counted as within a single geographic area, though it is recognised that some may have clubs from more than one geographic area as league members.

Key findings

Structure (continued)

- 25. There are differences in view on whether the current governance structure is fit for purpose now and for the future. Within both clubs and governance bodies some consider the current structure to be unnecessarily complex and that there is scope to streamline, though no clear preferred streamlined structure was identified.
- 26. 59% of club and 62% of governance body respondents stated that 'some or significant improvement' in hockey's governance structure is required, with a further 23% and 22% respectively saying that minor improvement is required.
- 27. The review of structures in other sports did not identify any single preferred or 'best practice' model. The research did identify four models of governance structure currently being used across a range of sports, diagram 3, and an example of a governance improvement initiative in the RFU.

Diagram 3 – Governance models in other sports



Examples of other sports with each type of governance structure

People

- 28. Across hockey there are many committed volunteers involved in governance who support the delivery of multiple playing opportunities every week.
- 29. However recruiting new and diverse volunteers with the right skill set is difficult for most governance bodies. 79% stated it is very or quite difficult to fill vacant posts and 44% currently have unfilled posts. People under the age of 30 years are not well represented on governance bodies.

Key findings

People (continued)

- 30. The consultation identified that some people currently have roles on more than one governance body. This can be an advantage in that it can help facilitate communication and the sharing of knowledge. It can also be a disadvantage in that decision making sits with just a few people, which may make it difficult for those with a different view to implement change or challenge any decisions taken.
- 31. Active succession planning is not taking place or working for many governance bodies and only some of the activities that may encourage clubs and individuals to volunteer for governance bodies are in widespread use, for example directly contacting clubs and individuals, producing role descriptions and advertising roles openly within hockey. However, there are some examples of good practice where governance bodies are using a range of methods to recruit and retain volunteers and examples of succession planning that could be shared.
- 32. There may be opportunities to implement new working practices that may make volunteering more attractive and/or different approaches to recruiting volunteers that governance bodies could try. Club survey respondents identified having role descriptions, seeing roles openly advertised, seeing an action plan that sets out what the governance body is going to be doing and the use of video or telephone conferencing as some of the activities that could encourage greater involvement.
- 33. Among many governance volunteers there is a perception that limited support is provided by England Hockey to help them recruit volunteers or deliver their roles as governance leaders. There is no hockey governance leadership or support programme in place.
- 34. Clubs are finding it difficult to find enough qualified umpires to meet the umpiring requirements set by some league rules and regulations with 30% of club survey respondents stating that the umpiring rules have a negative impact on their club and players. There are also some concerns over the standards of umpiring and inconsistent application by umpires of rules and discipline.
- 35. There is a majority view across both club and governance body representatives that improvement in the people aspects of governance is required. 51% of both club and governance body survey respondents stated that some or significant improvement is required and a further 19% and 25% respectively that minor improvement in the people involved in governance is required.

Key findings

Communications and Transparency

- 36. The transparency of governance bodies decision making and their accountability to each other and to their stakeholders is variable.
- 37. Hockey's Regional and County Associations are autonomous bodies. They are not systematically funded by or accountable to England Hockey, though may receive non financial support. Whilst England Hockey has some influence, it is not able to 'tell' the Associations what to do. It is the stakeholders of each organisation i.e. their affiliated members and clubs, who have voting rights and can influence their direction of travel and decisions.
- 38. Whilst the majority of governance bodies currently have an annual general meeting and occasional committee meetings which stakeholders can attend, a minority do not. In some areas clubs do not feel that they are able to hold their governance bodies and/or their representatives to account and it can sometimes be difficult to identify who makes decisions, when they are being made and how the resources of the governing bodies to whom they pay affiliation fees are being used. Almost a third (31%) of club survey respondents did not know if governance bodies were using their resources effectively.
- 39. There are multiple websites across the governance bodies which are extremely variable in content, currency and accessibility. There are some good examples of governance bodies who actively seek to engage their stakeholders and share information, but items such as meetings agendas and minutes are not available on many governance body websites.
- 40. Governance bodies within a common geographic area not always communicating effectively with each other or with clubs.
- 41. There is a majority view across both club and governance body representatives that improvement in communications and transparency is required. 57% of club and 56% of governance body survey respondents stated that some or significant improvement is required and a further 27% and 22% respectively that minor improvement in governance communications and transparency is required.

Policies and Processes

- 42. Administrative processes and requirements from leagues and other governance bodies are seen by some clubs as complex and involve what many feel to be unnecessary duplication of effort. There is a widespread view that existing I.T systems and infrastructure could be improved.

Key findings

Policies and Processes (continued)

- 43. Many governance bodies are not yet using modern technology to good effect either to improve communication, engage new volunteers or reduce administrative workloads.
- 44. Information on the financial position of governance bodies and how resources are being used by governance bodies is not always transparent. Only a third (34%) publish their accounts.
- 45. Some club and governance body representatives have challenged whether the affiliation fees paid by clubs to regions and counties could be put to better use. 40% of club survey respondents stated that they do not feel that governance bodies use their resources effectively.
- 46. Both club and governance body representatives identified that there is a need for improvement in governance policies and processes. 25% of club and 31% of governance body survey respondents stated that some or significant improvement is required and a further 26% and 37% respectively that minor improvement in the governance policies and processes is required.

Standards and Conduct

- 47. Standards and conduct did not emerge as a major issue in the consultation but a small number of clubs do have concerns over:
 - perceived conflicts of interest
 - an inability to influence what happens within governance bodies
 - inability to have a fair hearing at appeal
- 48. Good governance practice to ensure bias and conflicts of interest are avoided is not always in place. Only 23% of governance body survey respondents stated that a conflicts of interest policy was available either on their website or on request.
- 49. Some governance bodies are not seen to be listening by clubs when they raise issues or concerns or suggest things could be done differently.
- 50. There is a lack of evidence of governance bodies reviewing their performance to ensure they are delivering against objectives and meeting stakeholder needs.
- 51. Both club and governance body representatives identified that there is a need for improvement in governance standards and conduct. 38% of club and 34% of governance body survey respondents stated that some or significant improvement is required and a further 28% and 40% respectively that minor improvement in governance standards and conduct is required.

Possible solutions

52. A number of possible solutions to address governance issues and concerns and realise new opportunities for hockey were identified through the surveys and consultation meetings. Those with the greatest levels of support are identified below. The practicality of these solutions will be considered by the England Hockey Governance Review Working Group.

| Theme | Possible solutions |
|-----------|---|
| Structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clarify and communicate the purpose, roles, responsibilities and accountability of all governance bodies ➤ Streamline the governance structure. Although no preferred or 'best practice' model for the future of hockey emerged some options which could be considered have been proposed including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ league bodies streamlining (linked to the standardisation of rules) ○ Umpire Association streamlining ○ Regional Association/County Association streamlining ➤ Undertake a geographic review of leagues |
| People | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Explore and implement changes to ways of working within governance bodies to make volunteering more attractive and raise awareness of opportunities. This may require support from England Hockey to be realised ➤ Use paid administrators to undertake roles that previously may have been voluntary and to support governance bodies ➤ Develop a volunteer pathway and governance support programme to strengthen governance leadership, implement good governance practice and improve operational effectiveness ➤ Support clubs to recruit and develop more umpires and make changes to the assessment process for umpires ➤ Actively engage younger people in future governance, who may be the key to driving change and implementing new opportunities |

Possible solutions *(continued)*

| Theme | Possible solutions |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Communication and Transparency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Create more opportunities for stakeholder and governance body engagement, though the means to achieve this were not clearly identified ➤ Streamline the number of websites and pool resources to modernise them, improve their accessibility and to keep them up to date ➤ Make it easier for governance bodies to share information, for example by providing standard templates and platforms on websites ➤ Make more information available on governance body finances and decision making |
| Policies and Processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Create a more aligned approach to technology and administrative systems across governance bodies to reduce the administrative requirements on clubs and improve their experience of engaging with governance bodies ➤ Develop a single central I.T system and database ➤ Engage (young) people with digital skills in governance bodies with a view to improving/streamlining systems and processes ➤ Train and upskill volunteers to ensure they are computer and technology literate and put in place technology systems e.g. telephone or video conferencing facilities, that all governance bodies can use |
| Standards and Conduct | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adopt and implement governance principles and/or standards across the whole of hockey |