

Executive Council Meeting

Friday 11th September 2026

Minutes

In attendance:

Jonny Pearson	(JP)
Stew Fowlie	(SF)
Ben Graham	(BG)
Ian Lowe	(IL)
Mark Munro	(MM)
Julia Stenhouse-Walton	(JSW)
Bob Wyllie – sportscotland	(BW)

Apologies:

Chris Sellar	(CS)
Savannah Antoine	(SA)

Online:

Tilly Galvin	(TG)
Eilidh McQuillan	(EM)
Hamza Siddiqi	(HS)
Will Roberts – BUCS	(WR)

Approx. Timings

- **Welcome, intro and scene setting** (5 min)
 - JP welcomed everyone to the meeting
- **Homologation** (5 min)
 - Apologies for absence
 - As above
 - Conflicts of interest
 - None
 - Minutes of last meeting(s) & matters arising
 - The minutes from the previous meeting in June 2026 were accepted as a true and accurate reflection. The outstanding actions from previous meeting were discussed.
- **What is Exec for and how should it work? (SF/JP) (*see terms of reference*)** (20 min)

SF welcomed comments on the Exec Committee Terms of Reference (ToR). BG asked if TOR listed no fewer than x3 executive committee meetings to be held, why have we landed on current structure, and how does it work with the other SSS Committees? SF noted that we have x4 in season to line up with the business quarters. In the last few years, there tends to be another meeting end of June to lead into the AGM. Comps & dev meetings, there should be x1 between each exec meeting. Exec committee members requested when comps & dev minutes are published, a note around exec would be good.¹

▪ Dates & Venues

Exec discussed the arrangements for the committee meetings for the year, including the possibility of taking meetings to partner locations such as the sportscotland offices in Glasgow.²

¹ Minutes to be shared of other SSS Committees to SSS Executive

² JSW to inform the committee of the hosts for each committee meeting

- Ways of working

EM asked about definitions of officers/ staff members. BG noted about content of sharing minutes of the meeting and/or video summary, making people more engaged and possibility more interested in going for future roles.

JP noted the purpose of the committee being the most senior committee. Three years ago, when SFC withdrew funding, the environment changed. The decisions that were made at the time by the exec committee have made SSS strong today. To continue good function, JP would like to see more communication between the committee outside of meeting times, particularly the student involvement when decision making is happening this is crucial. SF noted the committee should look at the work areas on offer are and see what fits in with interest areas. One large scale piece will be the SSS Strategy 27 + will need to be put together by March '27.

- Themes/ Guests

The committee discussed guests to attend exec committee with Waiyin Hatton, Chair of SSS Equality Action Group, being listed as an invitee for one meeting.

- SSS Family (JSW)

JSW reminded the committee about the volunteering forms that are required to be completed by the committee and requested the committee to complete as soon as possible³.

- **Current Context**

(30 min)

- Around the network – verbal updates
 - Around the table responses to:

‘What new developments or issues are you working on this semester?’

TG (Strathclyde) noted about trans inclusion in sport, this is a main focus for the SU this year. Working with Neil Brown (NB) on Stepps playing fields improvements. Students have been turning away from clubs due to negative experiences. Shared about committee training regarding negative club culture, and making students aware of what support there is through the SU. JP asked by 2027 what would a successful year on Exec committee look like for TG? TG would like to give input & her perspective and be an active participant. TG will also be attending BUCs Advisory meetings. Discussion had about methods of clubs training around culture & what has & hasn't worked with students. Noted about training which engages students within the disciplinary processes. Strathclyde looking to have monthly drop-in sessions to highlight a safe space to raise any disciplinary concerns.

HS (Glasgow Cali) notes that sport is part of a wide remit for him. HS notes that this year they will have a joint strategy with the university, and looking at the Wednesday afternoon policy for sport. Education is included in HS remit as well as well-being services & University court etc.

EM noted that currently Glasgow University are going through some structural change, especially within ways of working. For students, will be working with a new access to sport fund. Real interest within inclusion & culture, and focusing more on the coaching and staff cohorts, dispersing the knowledge through the students that way.

³ All committee members to respond to volunteer registration process email asap and by 30/9 latest

Noted focus on more EDI works including trans inclusion. GUSA looking to have more contact time with the senior leadership at the University. SF notes that if SSS can support any discussions internally happy to support. EM notes good levels of support from senior advisors on GUSA senior committee. EM is really passionate about student sport, and excited to be involved in strategy development to help support improving student experience.

IL (RGU) notes looking forward for the students returning next week. Dennis Law Institute of Sport launching next year. Institute will be an umbrella organisation engaging wider RGU SPORT and the relevant academic services. Initial focus will be to understand student experience, data specific outcomes. Equality is a big part of the work, with RGU Sport continuing to be free for students. Have had quite period with student behaviour, but learning from colleagues will be important across the year ahead. JP asked about Dennis Law Legacy and its impact with students, and IL notes that Dennis Law was a local figure who demonstrated overcoming adversity with an inspirational story.

BG notes regarding student behaviours, and asked to the student officers on the committee to continue to speak up about behavioural issues as they are closer, 'on the ground' in regard to these issues.

MM (Edinburgh University) notes that student disciplinarys are discussed at BUCS senior managers meeting. Conduct cases come from better engagement and trust within the system. Some positivity that comes from this, regarding better education around reporting systems. MM notes delighted to be involved in exec this year. Notes UoE are modernising their leisure management system and the website. Noted about branding changes regarding the Edinburgh Wildcats. MM notes that UoE have done lots of work around academic attainment and retention of students through sport. Notes about 'why sport matters' as standard in international presentations. Some success in investment from the University, and notes the support from the 'why sport matters' work to make this happen. SF asks whether there has been data chunking which allows other conclusions to be drawn from the same data set. MM notes there has been some work with that, but methods are still being worked on. Discussion had about attainment vs retainment and sharing data for better outcomes.

BW (**sportscotland**) noted he is currently looking to get confirmation of funding commitment for the Active Campus Programme, as it comes up to the 4th year of the programme. Discussion had around investment and negotiating funding of the programme for future years both with **sportscotland** and with the colleges. A company will be doing a review on the ACC programme and hope the outcomes can be shared end of Feb '27. BW continues to lead on the tertiary education brief within **sportscotland** and is currently engaging colleagues for feedback on current connections and what can be improved. Wishes to have a meeting with **sportscotland** senior leaders & SSS in autumn regarding review of past cycle and discussion on future ones.

BG (Heriot-Watt) noted there has been some staffing changes across HW which has left the org a little stretched. New membership system this year, and taken time for this to be implemented, and hope this makes taking part in sport cheaper for students than it has been previously. Active wellbeing programme continues to do well, and seeing wider impact from the programme. 10 years in August since Oriam opened, so looking to share stories on this and looking back to involve alumni. Oriam released a new strategy also to 2025 which focussed a lot on partnerships and as a destination facility. Will be looking a sports review in the short-term also.

- **Strong Organisation** (30 min)
 - **Finance (JSW)**
- Budget 26/27

A

26/27 Budget approved by the committee

- Year End Accounts 25/26

JSW provided the committee with an overview of the final accounts.

- Reserves policy

The committee discussed the current reserves policy (which dictates minimum reserve at circa £125k) and SF noted that the committee may look at redistributing some of the reserve funds in relation to future strategy planning.

- Aug figures & updated 26/27 forecast

JSW provided an overview of the current financial position of the organisation for 26-27. We are currently tracking slightly above budget.

- Membership Payment Overview

JSW provided an overview of the current status of membership payment, and asked the committee to support with payment processes where possible.

- Aged Receivables

JSW highlighted aged debt. Noted some issues recouping payment for some national squad activity for 25-26. JSW highlighted for national squad activity the host institution has accepted the risk and the hassle of recouping costs due from the students.

- **LUNCH (60 mins)**

On return from lunch the committee welcomed Will Roberts (BUCS) as he joined the meeting via Zoom. JP thanked Will for the BUCS paper supplied for the committee and asked if anyone had any supplementary questions for Will.

BG asked regarding turnover of BUCS staff. WR noted that there was unprecedented no turnover of staff across 2 of the 4 quarters last year. Recruitment is underway for the vacant positions. BW noted about American Football League meeting, and expect some actions involving BUCS to come from this. WR noted attendance at the home nations supported Muslims Sports Foundation National Conference in Birmingham which went very well. SF asked about interviews for member trustee, which Will noted process is going well with second phase interviews (with BUCS Chair) for three shortlisted candidates from across the UK.

- **SSS Exec Plan of work 26/27 (60 mins)**

- Project areas, roles and responsibilities
 - Strategy development

MM noted about staffing structure, plans for future, and asked whether this is linked into the development of the strategy. Noted about the value of student sport, and whether this needs to be a

category of work that this committee looks at? Discussion had around working in partnership with BUCS around this. WR noted that hoping sport England funding for this work will continue into 2028. Noted that will consider integrating BUCS resources with the data & insight support with the work. BG asked around club culture involvement in work areas & SF noted that this may play into the strategy development.

SF noted that we last looked at this strategy in 2025, but weren't optimistic about funding avenues at the time. This strategy was intending to get us to summer 2027 with a hope that the funding landscape looked more positive, which SF believes is now true. Committee were asked to consider themes and duration of strategy coverage.

IL noted that he doesn't believe the core messaging doesn't need large-scale change, apart from language changes. MM asking for clarity on whether the strategy is for the business or for student sport across Scotland. Also asked around the committee to consider what we can control and what we can regulate, and should be key points when considering strategy writing. SF notes that the strategy has to be both for the business and for the network. Strong org component is for the business, whilst all other areas of work are for the network.

JP believes that we can more aspirational with our new strategy, be more bullish within the role of SSS in the reorganisation of sport across tertiary education. BG notes that writing previous iterations of the strategy, things have changed quite a lot. He asks the committee to review how we are achieving against each areas of the strategy as a starting point. SF notes that would need others outside of the staff team to help us rank how well we've achieved our operational goals. Discussion had about how we utilise the membership to help us achieve what we are trying to in the strategy.

IL notes, how do we measure that we have achieved what we wanted to in the 27 strategy? Do we need more tangible outcomes with the strategy? JP notes that the network has expanded and they have stepped into spaces where SSS had to move away from formerly staff-filled positions. Discussion had about control, regulation & influence.

BW notes that **sportscotland** funding does focus on strategies delivered by partners & governing bodies. He notes that aligning the strategy with **sportscotland** funding cycle is the traditional way to do this, despite two-year cycles working well. Suggest this is the time to shoot higher than we have done before. Suggest holding a summit of leaders to come together to bring wider thoughts about the SSS strategy cycle and the wider landscape as a whole. BW notes the current cycle in 27-31. WR noted from his experience with BUCS on working out how to add targets on the current strategy. He noted that BUCS strategy was set at 2030 due to numbers of 18-year-olds attending tertiary education. Membership income is relatively stable, but with public funding can be unstable. He notes that if BUCS can be listed as resource partner in the next strategy period, would be welcome to.

EM asked about timeline for publication of the strategy. SF notes that we need a strategy in place by 1st August. In spring '27 is our consultation with **sportscotland**. We will likely look to engage our different member groups on their opinions. Not clear if we have the capacity have to do this ourselves or if we need some external help. EM notes more of a plan with student attainment/retainment should be involved in the strategy, should be used not just for our membership but for externals also. SF notes that there are still some important topic areas such as inclusion, club culture and issues that come up that require support at club level. As such we should try and look at doing this collectively, rather than individually but there are challenges with the tools used. EM noted that there is a want for this nationally. EM notes that there are specific requirements for people who are delivering the training - need to be engaging. Also shares about the challenges which are expected to come around culture and new students coming to institutions. TG notes the difficulty about getting past committee members, to the students who need this.

MM notes we can be more involved in 'why sport matters'. Notes about the widespread continuum of members that we have, so do we need a stronger strategy about how we develop sport across smaller institutions. Notes that the Director Group, where there's good conversation, but it's not always relevant to the wider sector.

WR notes that club culture, within England there is different mandatory training around sexual harassment for all students. Club culture resources, hard to centrally deliver and mandate things as the sanctioning body is the institution. University of Surrey are moving to develop supporting resources which could be rolled out. Research suggests 8/10 Universities are providing training, but should focus on the 1/5 of those who aren't training.

BG notes that the degree cycle is every 4 years, so that does work well for us getting new student input them. Notes there is a lot of duplication within bands of our members, and how can we collaborate more. As we try and grow more into the college spheres, we want to try and eradicate this before it's even introduced. JP notes there is a clear desire for people to be involved into a new SSS strategy. How could we get more people involved in this process? Everything else comes out of these discussions, so are really important to receive these options.

SF notes that he will put a short paper together, with issues and the short time we have, as well as some simple hypotheses for committee members to feedback on⁴. Discussion had on strategy creation being internal or external and options for consultancy. JP notes that we need to commit to some tighter work between meetings, which the committee agrees to. MM notes that as part of the wider strategy discussions regarding job titles across the business with what are looking to try and achieve.

- Governance Review

SF noted CS & JSW involvement would be beneficial.

- Advocacy and Influencing

SF asked MM and a sabbatical officer to join in this group, and noted that the SSS Awards brief could be included here.

- SSS Awards

See above

SF will create the groups and will share group make-up.⁵

• Discussion on sportscotland Club Support Fund (20 min)

SF notes there is £60K left in pot for club support fund money to bid on. Deadline is two weeks' time. From previous discussions two areas which are in our sights are Club Culture and Online Training and Education resources. SF sought exec's permission to delegate the exploration of these projects areas further which was agreed. IL may be available to support as a sense check and second pair of eyes ahead of bid submissions prior to the 25/9 deadline.

JP notes that there is a lot of excitement around building a new strategy and there is a lot of momentum behind what we are trying to do. JP extends his thanks to BW for being so candid with his support across executive meetings and wider work.

⁴ SF to build a strategy timeline that goes on no longer than March.

⁵ SF to create & share the make-up of the exec project-groups.

- **AOCB**

(5 min)

JSW noted that the SSS Events Coordinator role is currently vacant and asked members to share the JD to any interested parties.

- **Closing remarks, future meetings and actions**

(5 min)

JP thanked all for attending. The next meeting will be held on Friday 20th of November 2026.

Decisions

^A The committee approved the final budget for 26-27

Actions

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