



## *Essex County Athletic Association*

Minutes of the Essex AA Executive meeting held in the clubhouse of Chelmsford Athletic club, Melbourne Park, Chelmsford on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at 19:30 hours.

### **Participants:**

Andy Catton (Chair), Gerry O'Doherty (Vice Chair), Allison Gillan (President), Malcolm Bailey (Secretary), Claire Levey, John Weir, Chris Akehurst (President Elect), Scott Darney, Elaine Forrest, Rick Thompson, Diane Wooller, Peter Bates, Paul Mingay, June Cork, Jean Tierney, Mike Wilson

### **1. Condolences to families who's loved ones who had been active participants in Essex Athletes over the years.**

Andy Catton sadly advised the meeting of the death of long time club member of Basildon AC and Essex County AA, Dave Evans.

Dave was a long term coach and club Chairman of Basildon AC for 13 years. He was a qualified starter and a regular attendee at Essex County committee meetings and Championships. He will be sadly missed and fondly remembered.

Also, sadly passed away in recent months Keith Hobson and Don Blackett (both Woodford Green)

Our sincere condolences were sent to the families of Dave, Keith and Don.

A minute's silence was held in remembrance of them by all those present.

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Gary Chandler (Treasurer), Kaye & Paul Merrywest, Linda Bates, John Clarke, Ray Pearce, Ron Dawson.

### **3. Minutes of the last meeting of Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023.**

The minutes of the meeting on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023 were **approved** as a true record of that meeting.

Proposed: Claire Levey

Seconded: Gerry O'Doherty

#### 4. Matters Arising from last meeting.

Agenda Item	Matter	Action required	Update
4	Representative required to fill the position of Essex rep on the EA East Regional meetings	Volunteer sought	Vacancy still outstanding
4.	County Trophy Secretary	Volunteer sought to fill this vacancy; Job Description to be written	Vacancy still outstanding – Andy Catton has written a Job Description which will be circulated to all clubs.
10	Outdoor Track & Field Championships	Monitor position re the refurbishment of the track at Chelmsford. Will it be available for the weekend of 13/14 May. Otherwise alternative venue needs to be arranged	Championships have now taken place at Thurrock. Please see agenda item 9 for a full report.
10	Track 5k and 10k championships	Entries to be set up on Roster. Once open, notification to be sent to clubs	Entries are now open. For updated report please see agenda item 9 below.
10	County Press Secretary	Should we create a post	Discussed under Any Other Business – see below.
15	Walking Secretary	Volunteer sought	Vacancy still outstanding
16	Officials and volunteers day at Havering	How successful was this day?	Report received from Rachel Kerr, Havering AC. See appendix 1
17.	Volunteers needed to support the Outdoor Track & Field Championships taking place 13/14 <sup>th</sup> May	Volunteers need to support either both or either day.	Championships have since taken place.
22	Track & Field committee meeting	Date changed from 31 <sup>st</sup> July to 26 <sup>th</sup> May	See agenda item 9 below.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

Gary Chandler was unable to attend the meeting.

He sent in a report to advise:-

- Grant from England Athletics to cover costs arising from the Outdoor Track & Field Championships of £500 has been received and paid into the Essex AA bank account.
- Still waiting for a couple of invoices before he is able to calculate profit from the outdoor championships
- Profit retained by Essex AA from the combined Road Relays championships with Suffolk AA held at Northern Gateway Colchester on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2023 was £1,557.

## **6. a) Correspondence**

Resignations have been received from officials holding the following posts:-

- Susan Edwards U20 men's team manager
- Keith Palmer U13 girl's team manager
- Hayley Hemmings – Track & Field Secretary

Andy Catton has written to all three to thank them for their support of Essex AA during their time these roles supporting the County.

## **b). Club & Committee Changes**

One change – new club secretary at Basildon AC, Fran Trotter. Updated club secretary list will be sent out with these minutes to all club secretaries

## **7. Networking**

Nothing to report.

## **8. Regional Reports**

**London** – Next meeting taking place, virtually on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June. Andy is unable to attend and has written to raise concerns about the decline in senior athletes taking part in County Track & Field Championships. Is this a common theme at other County Championships?

**East** – We still have a vacancy for an Essex representative to attend these meetings. Despite chasing for minutes from previous meetings, these have not been received.

## **9. Track & Field**

The virtual Track & Field meeting that took place on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May, did not proceed as well as we had anticipated. There were a number of reasons for this:

- Some people had trouble logging on to the meeting;
- There was some confusion about the start time. The meeting was due to start at 7pm although some thought it was 7.30pm.

A limited amount of discussion took place that evening but it was agreed that we would cover all the matters that were on the agenda at this meeting.

- **Main Track & Field Championships held at Thurrock AC over the weekend 13/14 May 2023**

Firstly, we wish to record our sincere thanks and gratitude to everyone at Thurrock Athletic club who stepped in at very late notice to hold these championships. They were originally scheduled to take place at Chelmsford but unfortunately the track refurbishment had not been completed on time.

In addition, offers to host were received from City of Southend AC and Woodford Green with Essex Ladies – both of which was greatly appreciated.

Overall the weekend went well.

Rick Thompson (Essex Officials Secretary) submitted his report to the committee (reproduced below for ease of reference):

**“This year we had to have a change of venue from Chelmsford to Thurrock because of the ongoing refurbishment of Chelmsford track not being finished in time. Many thanks to Thurrock Harriers for their sterling work in accommodating us and making the switch of venue that much easier.**

**Over the weekend we had some 90 officials working the championships, many of them working both days.**

**On Saturday we had 47 officials and Sunday we had 43. Having said that we were about 20 officials short on both days.**

**Were very short on the track stand and timekeeping, but on the field, it was bordering on being dangerous. On Saturday we had fifteen field officials, including the referee. And on Sunday we had thirteen, including the referee. The impact of this was that there were no officials available to start the warm-ups of events so the competition could start on time. On the throws and horizontal jumps you normally assign five officials, and on vertical jumps a minimum of three. So, you can see how short the field was on Sunday.**

**We put out a call to the clubs in the week before the championships asking for unqualified help to do tasks such as raking the sand pit, or returning implements, thus freeing up qualified officials to concentrate on what they are trained to do. Thankfully we had six or seven helpers turn up to help. Thank you to those people.**

**The other impact of being so short on the field is that the officials did not get much of a rest between events they were working. It seems we are putting on an increasing number of events, using a decreasing number of qualified officials.**

**Essex, as a county, only has one starter who is level 3 or above. A requirement for us to obtain a level 2 licence for the championships. This starter withdrew because of the change of venue to Thurrock because of the distance he would have to travel, and the discomfort he would be in after officiating all day then driving home. Our other three working starters are either level 1 or 2, making us only eligible for a level one meeting.**

**On the track stand, we had several judges who are new to officiating, either at level 1 or doing their first four events to qualify as a level 1. This makes the job of track referee difficult as you need to ensure the new officials are sufficiently supported and know what is expected of them when doing their duties.**

**Timekeeping was equally short with a chief and four timekeepers on each day. This again makes it difficult for breaks for the officials, so we need to build a track break into the programme to enable them to get comfort breaks and refreshments during the day.**

**The timetable was unnecessarily tight due to an inexperienced official, me, doing the timetable. We tried to run the 100 metre heats to a too tight a schedule and we need to adjust the timings of these in future years. The entry system needs to close at least fourteen days before the date of the championships as you cannot set the timetable until you know the number of entries you have in each event. Having less than this makes the job harder as you rush the process because the chief officials are waiting for the timetables before they can start their work is assigning their respective officials to their tasks.**

**We used Roster for the first time outdoors, after successfully using it at the indoors in March. This worked fine, with one problem we needed to overcome early on the Saturday. This problem arose because we did not fully appreciate how Roster and the Finish Lynx photo finish system interacted. Once we overcame that problem the system worked fine. On Roster there are certain jobs that could be undertaken by people who are not officials, thus freeing up more qualified officials to work the events on the track. We used qualified officials to do athlete registration and field events results entry; these could be done by ancillary people. The only Roster job needing an official would be the seeding procedures. If we are going to continue to use Roster, we are going to need to purchase a printer for seeding sheets and a decent Wi-Fi Hotspot, so all systems can tap into the same Wi-Fi feed.**

**As a county, we need to seriously look at what level of County championships we can provide with an ever-decreasing number of officials. If we continue to try and run as we are, we are not going to recruit the higher-grade officials we need to instruct and mentor the newer officials.**

**Rick Thompson  
Official Secretary”**

**The shortage of officials/volunteers was an issue and this is causing concern.**

Rick reports that the total number of officials for the championships was as follows:

	<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>SUNDAY</b>
Starters	3	3
Starters assistants	3	3
Track Judges inc. Referee	9	8
Track steward	1	1
Time keepers inc Chief	5	4
Photo finish	4	4
Field inc Referee	6	15

On Sunday because one field official was competing in the discus so was unable to officiate until that competition had completed and there was another who was not available until 12. This meant that there were insufficient officials available to meet the demands of the planned timetable and events were delayed. To support the events one of the starter's assistants went to help at the field events but had to return to the track to help with the 200m races. A call was put out to clubs to help with some unqualified officials to help booster the numbers. Some help was received.

A debate took place about the reasons for the shortage – time commitment was cited and other life commitments is probably an issue. A suggestion was made that we should consider remunerating officials but it would be difficult to set what level this should be and indeed would it make any difference?

Some of the events were poorly supported (especially senior events). The timings of the County Championships events are determined by UKA so we are unable to change the weekend. Officials are also supporting other local County events so we are unable to call upon them to support our championships.

Could we condense the timetable and hold the champs over one day? This would not be possible as some events must be held on different days to each other.

Could we hold the events over say two half days?

Clubs are organising Official courses but a lot of people who reach Level 1 status do not want to move up the levels any further. They are happy to support their own clubs.

In addition to club courses, it is possible to gain accreditation through virtual courses, run by England Athletics.

The overall number competing at these championships was up from around 700 to 1,000 but this was mainly due to increased numbers in the U13 and U15 age groups. Numbers in the senior events have been in serious decline for a number of years.

In response to this Andy Catton sent out the following email to all track & field clubs. So far only two clubs have responded.

**“Dear club secretary,**

**The attendance of senior athletes at the Essex County AA track and field championships has been in serious decline for many years now.**

**The attached document, kindly prepared by the Essex vice chairman (*item sent as an attachment to all club secretaries with these minutes*), shows the actual number of senior and masters participants over the weekend of 13th/14th May.**

**As you can see this year in an alarming number of events athletes walked away with county medals just by turning up!**

**Could you please discuss with your committee and coaches and senior athletes to seek feedback on reasons why athletes in your club no longer compete or value county champs.**

**I, like many others on the Essex committee have a fair idea of some of the reasons but would be very valuable to have your input as a leading track & field club.**

**In addition please provide constructive views on how Essex AA and clubs could improve the situation and whether a totally new format for the champs is required.**

**We are stuck with dates for the champs as mandated by England Athletics.**

**In any discussion for changes to the format of the champs one must take into account the huge time and commitment made by the 51 officials who attended on day 1 and 47 on day 2.**

**On the plus side regarding the champs, the numbers of young athletes participating, particularly in the U13 and U15 age groups continues to grow substantially year on year.**

**There were also some excellent performances and outstanding championship best performances last weekend.**

**The County T & F Officials Officer would like to hold a face to face meeting with all those interested later in the year to discuss the sustainability of the event due to the combined effect of a dearth of officials and lack of senior participation.**

**Looking at the results of other counties champs this, of course, does not appear to be just an Essex problem”**

**A suggestion has been made that we only offer a County Track & Field Championships to the following age groups U13, U15 and U17 and not hold any senior events.**

**It was agreed that we need to arrange a further meeting inviting all Track & Field clubs to discuss these issues. It is proposed that this will be a ‘face to face’ meeting at Chelmsford – date still to be arranged**

**- 5,000m Track Championships at Ilford on 16<sup>th</sup> June**

**So far, 45 entries (which include 7 ladies) have been received. Based upon these numbers there will be three races; Senior Men, Vet Men and a Ladies race.**

**- Relays at Chelmsford 14 July.**

Due to the poor support last year from seniors it has been agreed that there will only be events for U13, U15 and U17's. Cost will be £16 per team. It is anticipated that the entry form will be sent to clubs by 10<sup>th</sup> June. Entries will close 10 days before the championships.

- 10k track championships at Braintree on 28<sup>th</sup> July

So far only 12 entries received. Still plenty of time to enter but perhaps another post on Facebook could be made to increase awareness to generate further interest. If numbers remain this low, all athletes will compete in the same race.

- Miles of Miles which is being held at Chelmsford AC on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June.

We had agreed to support a senior championship event on a trial basis for one year. Unfortunately, there appears to have been a misunderstanding and the event has been advertised as a County Championships for all age groups. As the event has been advertised it would be difficult to make any changes now!

If we support next year, agreement will only be given to host a County Senior Championship event.

- Inter Counties Championships

SEAA U20's and Senior is taking place on 2<sup>nd</sup> July at Oxford

CAU Senior – 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> July at Chelmsford (includes England Championships)

SEAA 15/U17's – 10<sup>th</sup> September at Oxford.

U13's (Derek Crookes meeting) – 29<sup>th</sup> July at Walton on Thames.

The U13s event is an unofficial championship and we have only just been advised on the date. Last year, as not supported by SEAA we did not send teams; we have agreed to enter a girls and boys team this year.

With the U20 Men's and U13 Girls team managers both stepping down we were in urgent need of a volunteer to cover these positions.

June Cork has very kindly agreed to select the Men and U20 Men's team and at this meeting, Elaine Forrest agreed to select the U13's girl's team. Our thanks goes to both June and Elaine.

- Trophies

After the track & field championships we received an email from Gary Floate (Ilford AC) asking why there was not a senior women's 800 metres trophy when there is a senior's men's trophy.

The trophies that are awarded are very historic, invariably donated to County by an individual. At one point there were 36 trophies but only 11 are still in our possession and awarded at the championships. A considerable amount of time and effort has been spent



trying to locate these missing trophies (thanks to Susan Edwards and Andy Catton) but this has not proved very successful.

As far as the issue that has been raised it does raise further questions:-

- Are trophies valued by the current generation of athletes?
- Is there a case for dispensing with them all together?

If we do retire the trophies this then leads to the question, we do we store them?

To be discussed at the forthcoming track & field meeting.

Comment was made that the standards of track discipline from both coaches/parents is in decline. People were seen to be walking across the track during events and this is not acceptable. This must improve and clubs must reinforce this message to its athletes/coaches/parents.

There was an incident reported by the field referee of an incident involving an U15 athlete and their father. The athlete was excluded from the Discus event for failing to register properly and report on time. Subsequently, the father became very aggressive. The matter has been dealt with by an internal disciplinary meeting by the athletes club.

## **10. Cross Country**

Allison Gillan reported that dates have been fixed for the XC Championship events:-

Weald Park (Relays)	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2023
Writtle (Vets)	2nd December 2023
Main Champs (all age groups)	6 <sup>th</sup> January 2024.

There will not be a mixed relay event on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September – this is being replaced by a Vets team event.

Chris Akehurst reported that the fixtures meeting for the Essex XC league has taken place and he will be sending out minutes to all clubs. Five clubs have volunteered to host an event during the 2023/24 season.

## **11. Road Running**

Feedback was provided covering the Essex & Suffolk Road Relays Championships and the Halstead & Essex Marathon

Road Relay Championships

- Day went well. Although it was considered that it was a long day for officials/marshals and volunteers and changes are being considered to make it shorter.

Possibly starting the day earlier and compress the race start times are options that are being considered.

- For 2024, clubs will be asked to submit names of the athletes that could take part in the championships so that we can check eligibility to compete before the day. After the event, club team managers will be asked to submit names (from the pool of names advised pre race) of those that took part (within 24 hours of event).
- Agreed that we would reduce the price of juniors taking part by £2 per athlete. Senior race entry costs to remain as 2023.
- Date for 2024 championships. Still to be decided but we are considering various options including moving the event to a Saturday.

### Halstead & Essex Championships

- Numbers down on previous years with only 104 entering the Essex Championships. Of those 83 completed the event.
- Essex Championship Winners  
Female – Ellie Baverstock (Orion Harriers) 2:53:22  
Male – Conor Culham (Braintree AC) 2:39:41
- Halstead RC has confirmed that the event will take place in 2024.
- Noted that the 5 year age bands for County medals meant in some age groups there were very few runners taking part. As a discussion point for the next Endurance meeting – Do we need to consider reverting back to 10 year age groups?
- Also, with the Grand Prix with 5 races out of the 7 counting towards this series (now that the 5k has been added into the series) a question has been asked whether runners have decided to drop the 20 mile and marathon races and concentrate on the shorter distances.  
Endurance committee to consider whether we increase the number of qualifying Grand Prix events to six out of seven or that one of the five must be either the 20 miles or Marathon?

The next event is the Pleshey 5 which is being hosted by Springfield Striders on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023. This race has now sold out and there is a waiting list.

2024 – Grand Prix. Martin Clarke (Ilford AC & Harwich Runners) has very kindly volunteered to create an IT programme to work out Road Race GP points. This is work in progress at the moment. Ongoing discussion Gary Chandler/Martin Clarke

### **12. Grand Prix Awards – 2022**

Commemorative awards for the first three in each age group have been sourced for 2022, 2023 and 2024. Most of the 2022 awards have been given to the winners and it is anticipated that the remaining ones will be presented at the forthcoming County Championship events. As we have purchased awards for 2024 we need to bear this in mind when considering reverting back to 10 year age groups (see Road Running above).

### **13. Fell running**

John Clarke was unable to attend the meeting. The Senior British Inter Counties Mountain Race has taken place. Essex fielded both a female and male team. John will provide a full report at the next County committee meeting.

#### **14. Trophies**

Nothing to report

The role of County Trophy secretary remains vacant and a volunteer is urgently sort for this position.

25 Essex Outdoor Championship trophies are missing. A plea has gone out to clubs and its members in the past to request that a search is undertaken to see whether these are still in their possession.

**CLUB SECRETARIES** – please can we request that a further message is sent out to its members to ask whether they have any of these trophies in their possession.

#### **15. Walking**

This post is vacant on the Executive committee and a volunteer to take over this role is sought.

#### **16. Officials**

Report covered under agenda item 9 – Track & Field.

#### **17. Proposed new County website**

Good progress is being made and the site is ready for content to be added. All committee members are encouraged to send any contributions/articles/information that they would like to see on the site to Scott Darney. It is hoped that a ‘mock’ website will be sent to all committee members by the end of this month, prior to an official launch later in the year.

#### **18. County Kit**

So far, Andy Catton has not been very successful trying to source some new Essex team tops for the Team Managers. He has tried various companies without success; most are not interested in a ‘small’ order. There was a suggestion that team managers could try and source their own tops but this had limited support as we need to keep the kit, uniform in colour and design. Another potential contact has been given to Andy to contact.

#### **19. Updating the Essex County Constitution.**

Work has started on this and it is hoped that a revised Constitution will be presented to the Committee shortly. It is our aim to adopt a new updated Constitution at the 2023 AGM.

#### **20. Schools Liaison**

Hayley was unable to attend meeting although we are unsure whether she is happy to continue as the School Liaison committee member. Andy Catton to contact Hayley Hemmings to enquire. If not, Elaine may be able to suggest a possible volunteer to cover this important role.

#### **21. Any other business**

At the last meeting there was a suggestion that we should consider seeking a volunteer to take on the role of our Press Secretary. There was a view that someone could take responsibility for each of the disciplines. Since the meeting, Elaine Forrest has set up an Instagram account – which has been well received. We continue to post on our Facebook site items about forthcoming events and results from County races.

Suggestion was made that could discuss this further at the 2023 AGM.

Travel expenses were raised – when these should be paid? This was previously agreed upon as requested by the Treasurer to reduce admin.

## 22. Date of next meeting

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 at Chelmsford AC Clubhouse, 7.30pm start.

Time meeting finished 9:10 pm.

### Summary of Actions

Agenda Item	Matter	Action required	By whom
4	Representative required to cover the position of Essex rep. on the EA East Regional meetings	Volunteer sought	All clubs to approach their membership
4	County Trophy Secretary	Volunteer sought.	All clubs to approach their membership. A Job Description has been prepared and this will be sent out to all clubs.
8	Feedback from the EA London Council re decline in Seniors taking part in County Track & Field Championships events	London Council has been contacted	Response sought.
9	Track & Field Sub Committee meeting	Arrange a date for the next T&F committee meeting to cover points raised at this meeting – see minutes	Date to be arranged at next Executive meeting
9	Letter sent to all clubs from Andy Catton seeking their views re the reasons why there has been a reduction in the number of Seniors taking part in the County Champs.	Only two clubs have responded. Contact those clubs that have not responded	Secretary
11	Future structure of Grand Prix events	To raise an Agenda item at the next Endurance subcommittee	Secretary

		meeting	
14	Missing County Track & Field trophies	Club Secretaries to contact their membership to ask whether they have any of the missing 25 trophies	All club secretaries

**Draft Agenda for the next Executive Committee meeting to be held at the clubhouse Chelmsford Athletic Club, Melbourne Park, Chelmsford on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 Start time 7.30pm**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the previous meeting – Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023
3. Matters Arising
4. Treasurer’s Report
5. Correspondence  
Club & Committee Register Changes
6. Networking
7. Regional Reports
8. Track & Field
9. Cross Country
10. Road running
11. Fell running
12. Trophies
13. Walking
14. Officials
15. Update on new County website
16. County Kit
17. Updating the Essex County Constitution
18. School’s Liaison
19. Any other business
20. Date of next meeting – Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

## **Appendix 1 for full report from Rachel Kerr – Havering AC**

It was a success day and we had 22 attend despite it being Mother's Day and the tri county meeting at Lee Valley. I feel that without these two clashing on the same we would have considerable more people attend. It is also worth noting that we had about 5-6 drops out within a couple of days build unto the day.

The key theme/feedback was that everyone liked the face to face element of the day and that it was away from the competition environment where there was time to ask questions that they had. It also gave people the opportunity to use the F2/Simon Wright's photo finish equipment without the pressure of having to put it up quickly like would be the case at a competition. I have included some feedback from the attendees below.

"Thank you for organising the day. I am a Level 2 field official and it was an excellent opportunity to refresh my understanding and interpretation of throws and jumps; including the current rules relating to the take-off board; now that there is no plasticine."

"On the plus side, good numbers for the sessions. Both trainers were excellent."

"I thought the session was a great advert for athletics and was very impressed by the level of effort that all the officials went to present.

Being down at the trackside definitely beats online presentations, particularly for people like myself who had only been to 1 previous track event."

"I think it might be helpful if the time keeping session could perhaps involve taking the times of some athletes (as well as watching the video), even if they are just running at a very relaxed pace.

Perhaps not surprisingly, I seemed to find judging the finish (when the torso crossed the line) much harder than starting a stop watch against the flash of the gun.

However I will try the timekeeper video a few times to see if I can improve my accuracy on timing specific positions."

"Thanks again for all the organisation. It was clear that both Havering AC and Essex Athletics had gone to a lot of effort to put the session together. It was also good to put the session on at the start of the season. I had done my on line timekeeping course back in December, and was very grateful of a chance of a refresher of the key points."

In regards to your second question. Quite a few people who attend had either attend a course already or was booked on to one, so we won't be following up any further. However, we will be adding them to our list of officials who we contact when we would like support at our home meetings.

