

SW Council Meeting Summary - February 4, 2026

Key Discussion Points:

Age Group Changes & English Schools Crisis

- English Schools voted to maintain odd age groups for 2026 but adopt even age groups for 2027 championships
- Major concern: Schools implementing hurdles changes but not weight/implement changes, creating health and safety issues
- England Athletics has threatened to withhold licensing and reduced funding for non-compliance with UKA rulebook
- Significant confusion for athletes, coaches, and officials about what to train for, especially combined event athletes
- Council agreed to draft a letter to England Athletics highlighting concerns about athlete retention and clarity

Officials & Rulebook Issues

- New rulebook not yet published despite April 1st implementation date
- Officials frustrated by lack of guidance and technical information
- Widespread concern about competition permits and compliance during transition season

Road Running Championships

- No SW Road Running Championship planned for 2026 due to lack of county participation and calendar conflicts
- Cornwall and Devon unwilling to travel; existing Grand Prix series meeting athlete needs

Under-10s & Under-12s Athletics Offer

- New competition structure being developed by Dorset and Somerset for younger age groups
- Under-10s: Quad Kids format
- Under-12s: Full athletics events
- Pilot inter-county championship planned between Dorset and Somerset

Facilities & Club Support

- New facility rating system launching (similar to TripAdvisor) for track feedback
- Concern about negative feedback impacting council support for tracks
- Bristol facility progressing toward cabinet funding decision

Council Membership

- Holly and Sarah Massey resigned due to inactivity
- Succession planning concerns as multiple council members approaching 8-year term limits
- Discussion about whether 8-year term limit (from government sport governance rules) should be reviewed

Other Items

- Come and Try event scheduled March 29 at Exeter with coaching, officiating sessions, and competition
- England Championships moving to Bedford from Birmingham due to pricing issues
- UK CAU Cross Country 2027 moved back to March 13, 2027 (venue TBC)
- SW Cross Country Championships likely continuing at Merrifield with £3,300 profit
- Maximum Mileage (Wiltshire virtual running club) application pending approval after local club consultation

Next Meeting: April 14, 2026, 7:00 PM at Taunton AC (in-person with virtual option), preceded by club visit at 5:30-6:30 PM

Action Points from SW Council Meeting - February 4, 2026

Immediate Actions:

1. Age Group Changes Letter

- Paul to collect input from council members via email regarding age group concerns
- Paul to draft letter to Chris James/England Council highlighting athlete retention issues and lack of clarity
- Members to send specific examples (e.g., Charlotte's national-level athlete considering leaving sport)

2. Meeting Minutes Distribution

- Paul to circulate redacted meeting minutes to county associations and county schools for better communication
- Review historical practice of sharing council updates with counties

3. New Club Application

- Paul to contact local Wiltshire clubs (particularly Salisbury) regarding Maximum Mileage virtual club application
- Approve application after consultation to avoid duplication

4. Rulebook & Officials Support

- Keith to share his email to Dean Hardman with Paul regarding rulebook delays
- Monitor for rulebook publication and distribute to officials when available

Future Planning:

5. Under-10s/Under-12s Competition Structure

- Paul to share Robin James's paperwork with interested counties
- Continue developing Dorset/Somerset pilot championship

6. Council Succession Planning

- Identify potential new council members before April 2027 when multiple terms expire
- Consider co-opting interested individuals to attend meetings

7. Cross Country Venue Discussion

- Schedule closed meeting to discuss Merrifield alternatives and course variations
- Address athlete feedback about course repetition

8. April 14 Meeting Preparation

- Paul to send straw poll closer to date for attendance/catering
- Coordinate Taunton AC club visit (5:30-6:30 PM) before meeting

9. Devon EDM Donation Request

- Keith to obtain written request from Devon County
- Defer decision to April 14 meeting