



IT STRATEGIC REVIEW TASK FORCE SUMMARY OF MEETING ON NOVEMBER 3, 2020

BACKGROUND

The IT Strategic Review Task Force has completed the first step of its work: to immediately and directly canvass organisers, entries secretaries, entries agents, riders, owners and scorers in an open and transparent way to establish the true situation with regard to the effectiveness of the software combined with the supporting functional processes and the training of users.

With the targeted workstreams established and populated with direct end-users having finished their work, the next key milestone will be the production of the Phase 1 Report and its presentation to the BE Board. The summaries of issues produced by all the work streams and agreed with BE will form the basis for the Report and will be included in its contents. For that purpose, at its sixth meeting on November 3, the Task Force reviewed and approved the final summaries from the following workstreams: Entries, Substitutions and Withdrawals; Timetabling, Balloting and Waitlist Management; Stabling; Scoring and Results; Sectioning and Times; Membership and Registration; and Reporting and General Administration. Leaders and members of workstreams other than Task Force members (Jen Caley, Wendy Evans, Jacky Green, Jenny Levett, Jenny Meiklejohn and Tissie Reason) attended the November 3 meeting to present their work and respond to questions. The four remaining workstreams are expected to produce their final summaries within the next few days, and the review and finalising of the Phase 1 Report is scheduled for completion in the next two weeks.

The following is a summary of the November 3 meeting.

DISCUSSION

1. Di Brunsden as Chair welcomed everyone and reiterated her thanks for the time and attention of all the Task Force members and other workstream members.
2. She summarized the status of the Review and the focus of the meeting: to review and approve the final agreed summaries for purposes of incorporating them into the Phase 1 Report to the BE Board.

3. With the end of Phase 1 in sight, the Chair reiterated that the role of the Task Force is to identify the problems with the current IT system and determine the ones that are critical, so that fixing these can be prioritized, whilst still recognising that there are number of things that the IT system manages well.

4. She reminded everyone of the key principles of openness and transparency, and collaboration and forward-looking focus, upon which the Task Force began work in August. For the past 9 weeks, the Task Force has operated a constructive and open process where all of the end-users and the BE team have contributed time and expertise towards the common goal of understanding and assessing the current situation. We will be working with everyone involved to ensure that the Phase 1 Report delivers its findings and recommendations in the same spirit.

5. She referred to the updated workstream status report, updated Project Plan, and the outline of the Phase 1 Report circulated to members before the meeting, noting that all eleven workstream summaries are expected to be finalised shortly and that the Phase 1 Report, along with a cover letter to the Board highlighting its key points, will be circulated for review and approval during the course of the next two weeks.

6. She reported that the proposed policy for how information on sold, exported, retired and deceased horses should be handled within the BE system had been revised to reflect comments from BE. The Task Force approved the revised version (in the form attached) and recommended that it be implemented by BE.

7. Wendy McGowan reported that the business process design for refund functionality has been sent to Miranda Collett, Wendy Evans, Sarah Hadley and Alison Faulkner for their comments before circulating to other end-users, noting that one open point is the format for emails to refund recipients. Once the design is signed off by end-users, development will be finished in time for the start of next season.

8. Current versions of BE's high-level and detailed near-term milestones have now been provided to the Task Force. These are internal in nature and whilst some of the critical issues identified by the workstreams are scheduled to be addressed a full cross reference is still to be completed .

Reports from Workstreams

The Chair asked each workstream to present its final summary of issues and to take any questions.

Entries, Substitutions and Withdrawals

Elaine Tragett reported that 63 issues were raised, being 8 Critical, 23 High, 22 Medium and 10 Low. The key finding is that whilst the entries process works without major issues for grassroots riders entering one horse at a time it has some substantial issues for Entries Secretaries and Entries Agents. In particular the financial control around withdrawals and other changes to entries is a critical issue as is the validation of entries with a number of examples of horse/rider combinations being accepted for classes for which they were not qualified. Of all the workstreams, this one has the largest number of issues identified.

Timetabling, Balloting and Waitlist Management

In Tanya Adamson's absence, the Chair reported that 23 issues were raised, being 8 Critical, 9 High, and 6 Medium. The key finding is that whilst balloting and waitlist management can be completed within the system it is unnecessarily time-consuming and error-prone. Timetabling is error-prone and complicated and so is now primarily completed using ES and manual spreadsheets.

Stabling

In Helen West's absence, the Chair reported that 20 issues were raised, being 8 Critical, 2 High, 8 Medium, 1 Low and 1 Nice to Have. The key finding is that the stabling and hook-up functionality within the system is not currently fit for purpose and a number of events have chosen to manage the booking of stables outside of the system.

Scoring and Results

Wendy Evans reported that 11 issues were raised, being 2 Critical, 2 High, 4 Medium and 3 Low. The key finding is that the scoring functionality developed in EARS was not fit for purpose and is not in use. Eventingscores is providing all scoring functionality and passes the results to EARS.

Wendy commented that it was a phenomenal effort by the BE IT team to integrate Eventingscores with EARS and much appreciated by the event secretaries who had struggled in trying to use EARS during the first three weekends of the season, and that the use of Eventingscores had been very successful. Elaine Tragett commented that riders also appreciated the ease of using Eventingscores and its ability to deliver all the key information in one place.

Sectioning and Times

Jen Caley reported that 9 issues were raised, being 5 Critical, 2 High, and 2 Medium. The key finding is that the totality of the issues with the sectioning and times functionality within EARS make it not fit for purpose. All users now use Eventingscores to create sections and allocate times.

Jen commented that entries secretaries had struggled to use the EARS functionality because of the difficulty in gathering information from different reports and different screens, sometimes presented in different ways, and that the entries secretaries much preferred using Eventingscores.

Membership and Registration

In the absence of Michelle Maidment, the Chair reported that 13 issues were raised, being 2 Critical, 3 High, 4 Medium and 4 Low. The key finding is that membership and registration functionality works for initial horse and member registration but lacks functionality for joint ownership, lifetime members, multiple horse registrations and syndicates. The partial sale of horses is also not handled well.

Reporting and General Administration

The Chair reported that 15 issues were raised, being 1 Critical, 2 High, 5 Medium and 7 Low. The key finding is that the BE Head Office administration and reporting processes are quite well supported by the new IT infrastructure. Most issues relate to functions that are still manual that could be automated. There are some reports that still run from the old BE database and there are some time-consuming frustrations with the creation of event schedules. The critical issue concerns Equiratings ERQI ratings which could be reported in a more timely and effective manner—this is a safety-related point and hence marked Critical.

Tactical Architecture Review

The Chair referred to the final versions of the Technical Overview and Principles papers included in the materials, which reflect the work stream's findings and the agreed principles to be applied to the IT architecture.

The Chair then turned to the remaining work streams for status updates. As noted, as the papers from these work streams are finalised, they will be emailed to Task Force members for review and sign-off in the same way and for the same purpose as those presented to the meeting today, so that they can form the basis of and be included in the Phase 1 Report.

Financial Reconciliation

In the absence of Jenny Young, the Chair reported that the work stream is expected to wrap up its work shortly, after finishing Keysoe. To date some issues have been identified with the current reconciliation process, mainly due to its manual nature, but these have not been significant in nature.

Wendy McGowan commented that the new financial report being developed should address most of these issues, and she will work with the entries secretaries on sign-off for the report so that it provides what they need.

IT Running Costs Analysis

Terry Miller reported that a paper setting out the agreed findings was close to final. This will reiterate the view reported at the previous meeting, that maintaining the current structure and mitigating the key people and system risks would require a sustainable staffing model of 6 people plus a manager. Along with the costs beyond May 2021 for Eventingscores, this would mean increasing the annual IT budget (for 2021 and at least the next few years) to approximately £600k.

The ultimate conclusion is that the current IT system would be very expensive to operate, with a high cost per starter which cannot be recouped through user charges. Although revenues in the form of increased sponsorship and advertising are expected to be derived, to date these have not been significant nor specifically identifiable in nature

Change Control Process

The Chair reported that the work stream had identified a number of issues with the current process, which lacked formal structure and independent oversight. A key proposal was therefore to establish an IT Steering Committee which would operate much like the Task Force, composed of both BE executive and non-executive members with relevant competencies. There was general consensus on the work stream findings and she anticipated that a final version of these would be circulated shortly.

Future Role of Eventingscores

In light of the critical issues that had been identified, Martyn Johnson asked the Task Force to consider a possible “quick win” by immediately pursuing whether Eventingscores could take over all the key event management functions of scoring and results, timetabling, balloting and waitlist management, and sectioning and times for next season, with EARS continuing to manage entries. It was noted that stabling should remain with the EARS entries system assuming the stabling functionality could be made to work on a live, real-time basis.

After general discussion, and bearing in mind that pursuing this possibility now would allow necessary work to begin without delay, the Chair was asked to consult with the BE IT team and Miranda Collett over the course of the next week to reach a view on the role of Eventingscores going forward.

DECISIONS

Policy on Sold, Exported, Deceased and Retired Horses: that the Policy is approved as presented and recommended for implementation by BE.

Final Summaries of Agreed Issues: That the final summaries of agreed issues as presented to the meeting are approved for the purpose of using them as the basis for, and including them within, the Phase 1 Report.