

COSC Coaches – Response to statements made about them to membership

As the professional coaching staff of COSC, we have been suspended* from our posts since the 5th March 2021, thus silencing our voice further whilst we are aware that the Club officers have perpetuated a propaganda exercise against us and the basis behind the actions we have taken.

We therefore hope that through this simple Q&A document, we can give our side of the misinformation which we are aware has been spread, which is for you to consider & most importantly, make your own mind up over, in advance of the SGM being held on Thursday 1st April 2021 at 8pm.

1. Serious Welfare Concerns

We would like all the membership to be aware that Swim England have a clear process for the management of any welfare complaint or concern, which can be accessed here <https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/child-welfare-complaints-procedure/>.

As coaches we encourage all swimmers, parents, carers and those involved in the sport, to read this information and act upon it where they feel it is necessary.

It should be remembered also that in the last 12 months we have been out of the water for almost 8 months of it and have not competed in a pool for over a year.

We have not been made aware of any welfare concern against any of us as a member of the coaching team, either individually or collectively, by the Club Welfare Officer, Swim England, or the police/social services as is stipulated within the above link.

This therefore suggests that if there have been any such concerns, the person or persons with them have themselves breached Swim England rules by not reporting them correctly to ensure the health & safety of all involved.

Can we therefore suggest as a result, if anyone has suggested to you, that we as coaches or any one of us coaches, are the subject of serious welfare concerns, then they are lying, as this is simply not the case.

2. Invitation to the SGM*

We wish it noted that at the time of writing, no coach has been invited to the SGM. We are members of the COSC separate to being employees and we have the right to be invited, attend and vote. We therefore wrote to the Club on the 23rd March 2021 as a group requesting an invitation and have not received a response or even an acknowledgement. We therefore wrote individually on the 28th March 2021, and this was rebuffed by Club HR.

There is a clear misunderstanding that whilst we are suspended as employees, we are not suspended as members of the Club. If we are not suspended, we should be allowed to attend & vote; however, if we are suspended as members then the Committee have breached Swim England rules in doing so. This matter is being raised with the relevant authorities.

3. This is just a local internal dispute and has nothing to do with the membership

The coaches work together as a team and have developed a plan, which delivers the best results for the Club as a team but also helps with the development of each individual swimmer so that they learn to cope with the challenges of life, as well as the challenges of the sport. These plans are based upon our up to date knowledge, experience and qualifications, and are designed to fit the infrastructures of the sport locally, regionally & nationally, with some even benefiting internationally. This has been possible because as a team of coaches we were supported by an enthusiastic team of Committee volunteers. These volunteers managed COSC so that we coaches could provide the best service to you & your child/children as members of the Club.

Almost 18 months ago, this support ethos within the Committee began to change as it became populated with individuals with their own agendas which did not support the partnership which had brought such success to COSC over the previous decade. This new hierarchy have

sought to undermine us coaches, our experience, abilities and dictate to us, how we should structure the squads, squad criteria, dumb down training expectations and impose a change of performance ethos.

This change came via a process of bullying and harassment of us as a coaching group directly & indirectly, where it got to the point over a period of months that anyone on the Committee who inferred support for us were driven out and the pressure upon the coaches intensified. Through February, the Coaches considered their options.

One was to simply walk away en masse, however our loyalty to you and your children stopped us from doing so and decided to attempt to fight back – a decade of hard work was too much to just throw away.

In short, this is not a simple employment dispute, it is a problem that directly affects you and your child or children and as such impacts upon you too.

4. This is just a difference between two strong female characters

Nothing could be further from the truth. The actions of the Committee involve numerous members of that body and we are as one as a coaching team. All the correspondence we have put out that you have seen and have not seen, come from us as a group and this most certainly is not co-ordinated by Amanda alone on this side. We think you know us too well to recognise that.

5. Why write to the membership and not just the Committee?

Prior to the 5th March there were internal employment disputes that we did not share with you. However, as part of these, the behaviours of certain Committee members breached the Clubs own procedures and the ACAS Code of practice with some of these disputes not being completed (and are still outstanding) as a result. These behaviours became part of the bullying & harassment complaint. These Officers were attempting to simply bury the concerns being raised. As a result, with the help of our professional association the BSCA, we believed that it was important that you as the membership were informed of the strength of feeling of us as coaches and of the health & safety complaints that we had.

Please remember, these behaviours were affecting our ability to deliver the appropriate service to the members of COSC, ie the swimming members.

It is important to note that this behaviour has continued, our concerns have been ignored, we have continued to be harassed and the methods have become more desperate with emails to private addresses being used without permission, confidentiality breaches and incessant calls being made, often from unrecognised numbers instead of the numbers known for respective individuals (a bit like burner phones on Line of Duty!).

6. GDPR breach

All coaches had the authority to use the COSC Swim Manager system at the time of sending said email. We also hid the emails addresses of all those receiving it hence there was no disclosure of private addresses or the names of individuals. There was no GDPR breach.

7. Financial concerns

We understand that some have been informed that the Committee were concerned that the Coaches plans (or Amanda Booth's plans) would bankrupt the Club. Can we state that the plans produced were based upon information provided by the Committee and was a 'wish list' as requested by them. It should also be noted that it was not the coaches who decided to employ a new professional coach, in the middle of a pandemic, at a time when no fees were being collected by the Club.

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