

ESSEX COUNTY BOWLING ASSOCIATION GROUP 6

A.G.M. MEETING 8th OCTOBER 2026 at 7p.m.

Meeting opened at 19.00

Chairman Kevin Crowley welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. In Memoriam

A minute's silence was observed in memory of fellow bowlers who had passed away during the past 12 months.

2. Apologies for Absence

Gt. Wakering; Shoebury Park

Delegates Present

Belfairs; Bournemouth Park; Castle Point; Essex County; Fairwood; Hadleigh; Hockley; Memorial Park; Rayleigh; Rochford; Runwell; South Benfleet & Canvey; Southchurch Park; Thorpe Bay; Whitehall; Wickford

Delegates Absent

Chalkwell Park; Prittlewell; Southend

Officers Present

Kevin Crowley; Chris Flack; Mike Birch; Kevin Robertson; Ken Griffiths; Ray Woollard; Dave Starkey; Dave Birch

Officers Absent

Lee Watkins

3. Chairman Statement

I have thoroughly enjoyed my first year as Chairman of Group 6. Being new in the post, I have been on a steep learning curve, discovering how things work at both Group 6 and County level. I have come to realise how much hard work goes into the day to day running of our Sport. I will return to this later in my report.

Along with our Secretary, Chris Flack, I recently attended a Special County Executive Committee meeting, regarding the proposed merger of Bowls England (Outdoor) and EIBA (Indoors) Bowling Associations. This is likely to have a profound effect on the way bowling is organised, with potentially far reaching consequences. Chris will be reporting on this later in the meeting.

At last year's AGM, tribute was paid to the massive contribution the outgoing Chairman, Jim Bunce, made to bowling in our Group. This was not only as Chairman

but also as a very successful Ashford Cup Team Manager for a number of years. I would like to add my personal thanks to Jim. As he was leaving office, he stated that he was leaving the Group in the hands of an excellent team of Officers. After my first year in post, I have come to realise that he was absolutely right. They really are a great team. However, eventually officers will leave their posts. I am aware that Chris had circulated all Group 6 Clubs asking for nominations for officers and that none were forthcoming. It seems likely that, in the near future, some Officers might step down. I think that Chris will mention this again in his report.

The Team managers will be reporting on how Group 6 fared in Ashford Cup, Wally Ball and Inter Group competitions. I had the pleasure of being present for all of the Ashford Cup and Wally Ball games, albeit in the odd position of being both Chairman and player in the Ashford Cup. Unfortunately the first Inter group fixture coincided with a Wally Ball match and I had a Club commitment for the semi final. I would like to thank Rayleigh BC for hosting the Ashford Cup home games and South Benfleet BC for the Wally Ball home game. Rayleigh also hosted the Finals of the group 6 Singles and Triples competitions. Thanks to both Clubs for their hospitality.

Group 6 shirts are sponsored by 4 organisations, one of which is the MCA Trust. This is a Charity that supports childhood Cancer patients and their families in a number of ways. As Chairman, I felt it was right that we should, in turn, offer some financial support to this very worthwhile Charity. I am organising a Quiz night here, at Rochford BC on Saturday November 14th 2026. It would be wonderful to see a number of Group 6 Clubs represented at the evening. I will provide more information after the meeting has concluded.

4. Approval of Minutes of the 2024 AGM held on 10th October 2024

The chairman asked the delegates if the minutes of the AGM were an accurate record of that meeting.

Proposed - Bournemouth Park delegate

Seconded - Thorpe Bay delegate

There were no matters arising

5. Officer Reports

Treasurers Report

At the start of the year we had a bank balance of £2576.37 over the year we had a surplus of £503.19 giving us a closing balance of £3079.56.

As usual, by the end of the year we have received the following years affiliation fees and league entry fees. These, as usual will be included in next year's accounts. A couple of 2026 expenses were paid just after the year end. This means the actual end of year bank balance is £3544.66

Overall the picture is very much the same as last year. On our ordinary income and

expenditure we had a surplus of £569.18. Almost half of our income is from Essex County Bowling Association, a £440.00 contribution to help cover the Groups expenses, particularly the Officer's travelling to Group 6 matches. This year, as in the past no officer claimed for this travel.

Broadly our Affiliation Fees, League Fees and Competition fees cover our other regular expenditure.

In deciding to change the Group 6 shirts last year, we anticipated that the original sponsorship would enable us to cover the costs of the shirts for, at least the next 5 years. This year we have sold some shirts and purchased extra ones, to cover the size range. We are grateful for the continuing sponsorship from Ken Griffiths. We have sufficient reserves to cover the expected cost of shirts for the next 5 years.

Mike Birch

Secretary's Report

Firstly, I would like to thank every club for returning your 2027 Affiliation Fees & League subscriptions on time, this has allowed us to present you with some options for next year's League structure at today's meeting rather than later. Thank you

So next year, Group 6 league will be maintained at 21 affiliated clubs. with no further withdrawals

I would like thank those clubs who have returned their nominations for next year's Representative games, I have only received 20 nominations for the Ashford Cup. so far, so if you have forgotten, it is not too late, just email me your names please. None received from Rochford, Rayleigh and Prittlewell which is a surprise.

I would also like to thank the 17 clubs who returned their Green Testing Forms back to us at the beginning of the season, so they could be viewed on our website for everyone to see, hopefully next season will see the same response.

As last year, you will be receiving emails directly from the ECBA regarding your 2027 Affiliations Fees and your club contact details for next seasons County Handbook.

As last year, I will also be asking you to provide me your club contacts for 2027, once received I will forward to complete list to all club secretaries and delegates.

On the subject of County Affiliations I would like to return to the subject I raised last year, that of the proposed merger between the National Outdoor and Indoor governing bodies.

This have moved on quicker than I anticipated last year, we are being told that a vote on the merger will take place around February next year.

We have no information about what that vote will look like in terms of how many votes per club or even if the clubs will get a vote, only that it will probably be proportional based on a club's or groups membership numbers, but we really don't know.

Kevin and I attended a presentation recently given by the current chairman of Bowls England on the current status of the proposed merger.

We did put a summary of our observations in the minutes of our recent committee meeting (24th Sept) which I circulated to you all around 10 days ago.

I am happy to repeat those observations for those that haven't read the minutes or we can just take any questions you might have, what will it be.

Our Group 6 competitions were very successful this year, with 29 entries in the Singles and 23 in the Triples, a slight increase on last year which is a good sign.

All the rounds were completed on-time for which I would like to say thank you to all the players.

The SINGLES was won by Steve Gunnell (ECBC) who beat Duncan Barton (TBBC) by 21 shots to 15.

The TRIPLES was won by Gary Telling (sub-Ray Bone), Malcolm & Alan Eldridge from Essex County who beat John Cozens, George Reeves and John George from Rochford by 27 shots to 8

I would like to say a big thank you to Rayleigh Bowling Club for hosting the finals again this year, they proved excellent hosts and together with a lot of support for the players, (especially from Rochford) everyone had a very good morning, in which the weather also played its part.

Once again, I would like to encourage all clubs to use the Group 6 website for all the latest information about Group 6 bowling.

In addition to all the normal information on leagues, representative games, green testing etc. we are putting more and more information on our website

A lot of time goes into ensuring that it contains all the latest information about Group 6 bowls as well as bowls across the County, so please use it.

Finally I would like to draw your attention to some of the bowlers from Group 6 we must congratulate for achieving some outstanding results this season.

The list contains the same old names but those achievements should still be recognised at this meeting.

English National Championships

- Ed Morris (ECBC) on reaching last 16 of the Men's Two Wood Singles
- Ed Morris and Steve Gunnell (ECBC) on reaching the Qtr Finals of the Men's Championship Pairs
- Ed Morris, Steve Gunnell, David Dar, Michael Coulson (ECBC) on reaching the last 32 of the Men's Fours
- Ed Morris/Elaine Score (ECBC) winning the Mixed Pairs

County Competitions

- Ed Morris (ECBC) on reaching the final of the Men's Two Wood Singles
- Ed Morris and Steve Gunnell (ECBC) on winning the Men's Pairs (again)

- Zack Robinson and Ben Amos (ECBC) on reaching the semi-finals of the Junior Pairs
- Ed Morris, Steve Gunnell, David Dar, Michael Coulson (ECBC) on winning the Men's Fours
- Essex County on beating Grays and winning the final of the County Shield
- Aled Venables (Southchurch Park) on winning the Men's Unbadged Singles

London & Southern Counties

- Keith Emberson, Chris Morris Nick Rodwell and Steve Laver from South Benfleet & Canvey reaching the semi-final in the Men's Fours
- Essex County reaching the semi-final of the Challenge Shield
- Ed Morris (ECBC) winning the Gold Badge (Men's Singles)

Finally, we should celebrate that Ed Morris, a Group 6 bowler has been invited to represent England in the Hong Kong International Bowls Classic being held in November.

It should be noted that Bowls England do not contribute to Ed's expenses on a trip like this, so he has to generate his own, which he will be doing with the help of Essex County Bowling Club in the coming weeks.

It is worth noting that this is a notable difference between Bowls England and the English Indoor Bowling Association, who do contribute to a players expenses, when representing their country.

For all their cash reserves, they don't share it with their members. Something mirrored in the National Championships of the respective organisations, where BE only give prize money to a few competitions whereas the EIBA pay prize money to all the competition winners.

What will happen if the two organisations merge, who knows, even they don't know.

Finally, I would like to express my disappointment that we have had zero nominations for Group 6 Officers positions this year, I can't believe in what is the largest group (by membership) in the County no one has come forward.

Even with me trying a new approach this year and sending round an advertising poster for display in all your clubs, this still failed to generate any interest.

I don't know what else we can do.

All I know it is a problem that is fast approaching a pinch point, with a number of our current officers on the wrong side of 80, this problem will need solving soon or else Group 6 could have major problems

Any of you that know me, will know my glass is always half empty and on this subject I am fear-full that when we reach the point of losing officers, the group will struggle. We will struggle because bowlers don't seem to care. It seems to me that they will be prepared to give up bowls rather than help out, a sad state of affairs but one we see play out all the time in indoor bowls.

If the group struggles, the likely outcome would be a merger with another group and Group 6 would lose its identity, which would be sad because of the long successful history that we have.

I personally don't understand what the big problem is, we are not asking bowlers to take on a full-time job here. We only have 2/3 meetings a year, so it doesn't take up a huge amount of time.

I have one last throw of the dice on this subject, assuming most club communicate with their members by email and have a contact list of their members, if Group 6 were to send an email appealing for some new blood, would the clubs (you) distribute that email to your members ?

If anyone has any other suggestions on how we can move this forward, we would like to hear them, but I won't hold my breath.

Chris Flack

League Secretary's Report

The league ran smoothly this year with results being reported generally on time and with the league tables updated within days of the games. I was pleased to see that on very few occasions did teams play with only 3 players on a rink.

For next season, we have Castle Point re-joining the league in Division 5, with all other clubs entering the same teams. There is a slight restructure, to restore Division 2 back to 8 teams. I am now working on the fixtures for the 2027 season and hope to publish them as soon as possible.

I received an email during the season expressing concern about the flexibility that exists within the rules, in that clubs can move players from one team to another for a game, and there is no limit on the number. There is a concern that clubs could move players on a wholesale basis to help one of their teams get promoted or avoid relegation. Whilst the rules do allow this I think it is worth mentioning that to do this would go against the intention behind this flexibility, in that it is offered to help clubs ensure that all their teams are fully staffed.

The Officers are presenting a motion later in this meeting to change the league rules to ensure that any game which needs a postponement is played before the end of the Group6 League season. We have an anomaly within the rules which allowed rescheduled games to be played in the week following the season end, whereas games abandoned due to weather have to be played before the end of the Group6 League season.

Finally, congratulations to all the Divisional winners and I look forward to summer 2027.

Kevin Robertson

Match Secretary

We only had one friendly fixture this season, that was against Chelmsford Bowling Association., we had a very enjoyable afternoon with good food and weather to add to the pleasures.

Two fixtures have been arranged for next season, one against Chelmsford again and I have resurrected the game against Essex Vice-Presidents Association to be played on 20th May at Essex County with the Chelmsford game being played on 26th August at Essex County.

Two years ago we had a third fixture which was charity game in aid of our main Group 6 shirt sponsor M.C.A. which supports children with cancer and their families across Essex and East London, due to a clash of dates that fixture didn't take place this year but it is hoped that we can find a date next year with the help of Rayleigh B.C. who helps us with this game previously.

Sadly after 46 years being involved with Group 6 and bowls in this area I intend to step down from my position as Group 6 Match Secretary at the end of next season. If anyone is interested in taking this position please let me know and I can give them all the help they need, it does not involve a lot of work so hopefully someone will step forward.

I must voice my frustration with the response I get from certain clubs when I am trying to fill the rinks for friendly games. I am normally looking for 5 clubs to find four bowlers for one game and I don't select the same clubs every year, I mix it up.

There is normally 2-3 clubs who don't respond to my invitation unless I chase them, which is very frustrating, all it takes is a phone call or email. It is nearly always the same few clubs who cannot help us with players, now I don't know if that's because the secretary or delegate can't be bothered to ask their members or the members who can't be bothered playing.

I find it very strange that I have 2-3 clubs who are always willing to help and can usually find four players within 72 hrs of my asking. If anyone can tell me there is such a big difference between the club responses I would be happy to hear it.

In conclusion. I wish everyone a healthy winter and if bowling indoor, enjoy.

Ken Griffith

County Selector

I have been doing this job for a couple of years now and although we now have a new County Match Secretary , Dave King from Romford BC who replaced Pat Finney who had done the job for what felt like a 100 years, the process for selecting players to play in County Friendlies has remained the same.

Eligible players must have their County badge or in the process of gaining their County badge i.e. via the Ashford Cup games or reaching a County Final competition.

I normally get asked to nominate around 64 players during the whole outdoor season and this is split equally between front-end and back-end bowlers and I receive a list of eligible Group 6 bowlers from the County selector to choose from.

Group 6 are the largest group in the County and we have a large list of eligible bowlers but it is becoming harder and harder to meet our obligations to the County, whether that is due to the increased cost of travelling or rink fees or just a reluctance to travel I don't know.

I am appealing to the Secretaries and Delegates of Group 6 to help where they can and talk to their members and explain what a good day these are.

Also talk to me if you need my help to see if we can make this process run smoother.

Ray Woollard

Selectors

Ashford Cup - A good but slightly frustrating year

Our 1st game home to Group 8 a fantastic effort winning on 5 rinks +44 shots.

Game 2 away to Group 4 at Kings Chase another excellent result winning on 4 rinks +49 shots.

Game 3 home to Group 5 winning 4 rinks +57 shots over the 3 group games a shot difference of +150 this put us into the final against Group 2.

The Final at Braintree against Group 2 a very tight game rink 6 struggling and rink 3 winning extremely well Rink 1 was a win for us the three remaining rinks were close rink 4 were all square playing the last end holding 1 Group 2 skip has last wood hits a short wood which rolls in for shot lost by 1 rink 5 playing the last end 1 down holding 2 their skip fires it's wide but hits a wood and goes in for shot lose by 2 everything is down to rink 2 playing the last end we are 2 down, Roger has a shot to trail the Jack for 3 to give us the win, he gets it but it goes agonisingly too far by a foot and we lost by 1. Although we lost 4 rinks to 2 we had a +3 shot difference

A fantastic effort from the whole squad this year be proud of yourselves but the Bowling gods weren't with us this year.

5 players have received their county badge this year Chris Morris, Gary Tidd, Taylor Marshall, Rob Robins and Geoff Cope thank you for your contribution to the Ashford Cup squad over the past I wish you all well. As always this gives other bowlers the opportunity to get into the Squad.

Also, a massive congratulations to Aled Venables who we now lose from the Ashford Cup after winning the County unbadged singles.

I'm looking forward to next year's competition and I'm sure I will have as many headaches as I did this year, I'm confident that with the bowlers we have in Group 6 we will be challenging again to win the Ashford Cup.

Finally, a big Thank you to the Squad who turned up every Sunday for the games. I'm proud of each and every one of you

Selector – Dave Birch

Wally Ball

Group 6 v Group 9 venue Grays Town 7th June 2026

Very good start away from home 2 wins each. Gary Tidd after 9 end was 15 – 4 down came back and won 26 – 15 what a recovery. The top rink was Roger Perham 33 – 12 Unlucky on one rink going into the 19 end we were 18 - 13 up lost the last three ends by 7 shots 18 – 20 result 4 points each.

Group 6 v Group 2 venue South Benfleet & Canvey 17th June 2026

Made 3 changers & moved some players around what a win 8 points what a result with a combined shot total over 2 matches of 75 plus Well Done.

Group 6 v Group 3 venue Stock & Buttsbury 21st June 2026

2 changes in this match one forced the other to give the reserve a game. Came up against 2 rinks that this was their own green 2 wins each 4 points each. We needed a 3 to 1 to win to go through to the final no other group came near us with our shot difference.

Conclusion looking back, it was the last 3 ends at Grays Town that beat us

I would like to thank all those bowlers that supported the Wally Ball this year I do feel that we have a good selection of bowlers to go forward 2027 with one or two tweaks and we have the home advantaged.

I would also like to thank South Benfleet & Canvey for letting us use their green

Selector - Dave Starkey

Inter Group Knockout - Sorry I cannot be there tonight, my father is in hospital

Out first round game was against Group 9 away at Aveley BC

We won 137 shots to 97, well done to the winning rinks who were skipped by: -

Nigel Smith

Phil Brandon

Steve Gunnell

The semi-final was away AGAIN against Group 1 at Frinton BC on a very good green.

We were very unlucky to lose by 1 shot overall

The 3 winning rinks were skipped by: -

Ray Bone

Steve Gunnell

Mark Welton

I must thank all the players for their efforts in getting so close in two tough away games.

HOPE TO GET A HOME DRAW nest year

We go again next year

Selector - Lee Watkins

6. Motions/Proposals

Motion 1. Proposal received from Group 6 Officers

Change Group 6 League Rule 7.c (Rearranged Matches) to the following: -

Any re-arranged match must be played before the last match of the Group 6 league season, on a mutually agreed date proposed by the non-defaulting club.

i.e. All postponed or rearranged games must be played before the last game of the Group 6 league season

A hand vote was taken (delegates only) with the majority approving the motion

7. Election of Officers

With no nominations received from the clubs or the floor, the following Group 6 Officers are standing un-opposed for next season: -

<u>Chairman:</u>	Kevin Crowley
<u>Secretary:</u>	Chris Flack
<u>Treasurer:</u>	Mike Birch
<u>League Secretary:</u>	Kevin Robertson
<u>Match Secretary:</u>	Ken Griffiths
<u>County Selector:</u>	Ray Woollard
<u>Selector:</u>	David Birch
<u>Selector:</u>	David Starkey
<u>Selector:</u>	Lee Watkins

8. Presentation of Group 6 League Trophies for the season 2026

Kevin Crowley (Group 6 Chairman) presented the winners Trophies to the club representatives from: -

Division 1 – Rayleigh ‘A’

Division 2 – Rochford ‘A’

Division 3 – Shoebury Park

Division 4 – Wickford

Division 5 – Rayleigh 'C'

Congratulations to all the above clubs

9. A.O.B.

The Secretary asked the meeting to remember a very dear friend of Group 6 and past Group 6 Officer, Kevin Watkins who passed away earlier this year.

Kevin was a very good bowler who represented Essex County Bowling Club for many years, he also played for the County in over 100 games, a significant achievement.

Kevin was the Group 6 Ashford Cup selector for many years and also a member of the winning Wally Ball team in 2013

He will be missed by all those that knew him

10. Close to Meeting

There being no other business; the chairman thanked Rochford B.C. for the use of their facilities and opening the bar this evening, he subsequently closed the meeting at 8:15pm