

It was a pleasure and honour as the new President of UK Athletics (UKA) to Chair my first UK Members Council (UKMC) Meeting on the 28 February.

Mark Sherman the most famous photographer in British Athletics history, having covered a staggering 12 Olympic Games, kindly popped by to capture a picture of the UKMC.

Apart from apologies from Ed Warner, Chairman of UK Athletics, there was a full house for what was a jam-packed meeting ahead of us. Observers included Niels de Vos (UKA CEO) Kevan Taylor (UKA Finance Director and Company Secretary), Nigel Holl (Scotland Athletics CEO) and Sarah Coffey (UKA Executive Assistant).

New members attending their first meeting on the UKMC were former GB Captain and Olympian Donna Fraser (Vice President), Tony Shiret who was successfully elected as the Track and Field Clubs representative and Athletes representative Lawrence Clarke.

Special thanks and acknowledgment was given to my predecessor Legend Lynn Davies, aka "Lynn the Leap" for his marvellous Olympic gold victory at the Tokyo 1964 Games, for his long and outstanding service as President of UK Athletics.

With the Indoor British Championship trials taking place in Sheffield and our meeting closely located in the town of Rotherham I was keen for the first UKMC meeting to be chaired effectively and on time to enable everyone to watch some exciting performances as our athletes battled for selection to compete for honour to represent GB and Northern Ireland at the World Indoor Championships in Oregon. Wishful thinking as the meeting over ran significantly due to passionate agenda discussions from members committed to improving the development of the sport. On that note I must add that it amazes me the depth and breadth of our sport and the areas of expertise representing the council such as the Home Countries members, members from clubs, road running, track & field, off track, officials, coaches and athlete representation. Despite the timetable challenges fortunately the UKMC was able to get down to the Indoor venue to enjoy the competition and mingle with people involved in our sport.

In terms of agenda items covered this ranged from the adoption of a Code of Conduct, fulfilling vacant membership places as well as adopting a specific Track and Field Celtic Nations representative, discussing how best to ensure that UKA and the Home Country policies and programmes deliver on behalf of grassroots athletics, the process for ratification of records, to probing the short and long term financial position of the sport in light of the challenging commercial times and obligations of delivering the London Athletics World and IPC Championships in 2017.

There is a real concern about the constant negative and damaging news constantly flowing through the media platforms negatively about athletics, largely focused on the corruption at the IAAF. With newly appointed IAAF

President & British Legend Lord Sebastian Coe, whom is also under scrutiny this has not been helping British Athletics to capitalise and positively promote what we hope will be a fantastic World Athletics Championships. The recent 2017 governance challenges and demanded changes of the Board have slowed down progress, but hopefully in the long term the benefits of these changes will come to fruition.

Despite challenges at the top end of the sport it is reassuring to hear the positive work, largely being delivered by the “back bone” of the sport - the volunteers and the growing numbers of athletes participating from within the Home Nations Countries.

It was also reassuring that the executive representing UKA and the Home Countries listened to the UKMC desires to maintain appropriate strategies to support Grass Roots athletics, in particular supporting clubs in recruitment, training and licensing of coaches and officials, and in the development of IT solutions to reduce the challenges identified with club and competition administration.

More information will be updated on the website shortly.

Jason Gardener MBE
President of UK Athletics