

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

## REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2641

### Title: World Team Table Tennis Championships 2026

#### Executive summary:

Table Tennis England (TTE), supported by UK Sport, is bidding to host the World Team Table Tennis Championships in 2026 (WTTTC26).

This event will mark the centenary of the first official World Table Tennis Championships, staged in London in 1926.

The OVO Arena Wembley is the preferred venue for the championships, with an area of Wembley Stadium used for training. TTE has made a formal request to the GLA as representative for the main host city for funding to support the delivery of the event.

This Decision seeks approval to commit £100,000 from the Major Sports Events budget to the staging of this event, should the bid be successful.

Without GLA funding, the WTTTC26 is not financially viable; and so this must be confirmed prior to the International Table Tennis Federation decision to award a host for the event on 24 August 2023.

#### Decision:

That the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications approves expenditure of £100,000 from the Major Sports Events Programme budget towards the staging of the Table Tennis World Championships in 2026, should the bid be successful.

#### Authorising Director

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

The above request has my approval.

**Name:** Niran Mothada

**Position:** Executive Director  
Strategy and Communications

**Signature:**



**Date:**

31/07/2023

## **PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR**

### **Decision required – supporting report**

#### **1. Introduction and background**

##### Major sports events in London

- 1.1. London has created a lasting legacy from the 2012 Olympics by delivering a huge portfolio of major sports events in the 10 years since the Games. Events have included the 2015 Rugby World Cup; the 2015 EuroHockey Championships; the 2016 European Swimming Championships; the 2017 IAAF World Athletics Championships and IPC World Athletics Championships; several 2020 UEFA European Championship matches (staged in 2021); the Women’s UEFA European Championship in 2022; and the Rugby League World Cup 2021 (staged in 2022).
- 1.2. In order to maintain its position as the ‘Sporting Capital of the World’, London must continue to secure and deliver a strong portfolio of major sports events in the next 10 years, following on from the success of the Olympic Games.
- 1.3. London has already secured events including the Major League Baseball London Series in 2023, 2024 and 2026; and the 2024 UEFA Champions League final. Looking ahead, there is a need to secure further international major sports events – particularly in sports featuring in the summer Olympics – post-2022.

##### Table tennis in the UK and London

- 1.4. Table Tennis England (TTE) has a successful history of engaging people in table tennis across the UK and London. It has done so through ground-breaking programmes such as the Ping! Project, which has installed 700 free-to-use tables across the UK, including 228 in London.
- 1.5. Table tennis is a popular sport in London with affiliated clubs and members located relatively evenly across the city. London statistics are as follows:
  - 2,906 members (11 per cent of the national total)
  - 33 affiliated clubs (8 per cent)
  - 367 qualified coaches, of which 75 are licensed (11 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively)
  - 34 qualified umpires and referees (8 per cent)
  - 29 qualified tournament organisers (13 per cent)
  - two affiliated schools (25 per cent)
  - five leagues (5 per cent)
  - 161 teams (6 per cent)
  - 228 public tables (37 per cent).
- 1.6. In 2018, London successfully hosted the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) World Team Cup in the Copper Box Arena. This was the first stand-alone international table tennis tournament to be hosted in London since 1954.
- 1.7. The GLA Major Sports Events team (MSE team) contributed £75,000 towards the staging costs of the event. This was based on an assessment of the event’s predicted direct economic impact; exposure of London through domestic and international partnerships; and delivery of a community engagement programme.

1.8. In addition, the GLA’s Civic Society and Sport team provided a grant of £24,749 to TTE to support activity in Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Waltham Forest, and Barking and Dagenham. This included funding for coaching in schools and tables installed in public spaces within these communities.

2026 World Team Table Tennis Championships

1.9. The ITTF holds an annual World Championships. The Championships rotate each year between singles/doubles held in odd-numbered years, and team Championships held in even-numbered years. The recent and future schedule is included in the table below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Event</b>
2017	Düsseldorf	Germany	Singles and Doubles
2018	Halmstad	Sweden	Team event
2019	Budapest	Hungary	Singles and doubles
2020	Busan	Korea	Team event (cancelled)
2021	Houston	USA	Singles and doubles
2022	Chengdu	China	Team event
2023	Durban	South Africa	Singles and doubles
2024	Busan	Korea	Team event
2025	Doha	Qatar	Singles and doubles
2026	TBC	TBC	Team event

1.10. The period from 2019 to 2026 will be the longest gap ever between World Championship events staged in Europe.

1.11. On 30 June 2023, UK Sport and TTE submitted an international bid for the 2026 World Team Table Tennis Championships (WTTTC26) to take place in London for 14 days between 18 April and 10 May 2026. A host is due to be named by the ITTF on 24 August 2023.

1.12. TTE and UK Sport have selected the OVO Arena Wembley as the venue to be part of the international bid. A feasibility study, conducted in 2022, looked to identify the most appropriate venue for the tournament. ExCel London, the O2 Arena and the Copper Box were all considered.

1.13. The OVO Arena Wembley was selected for the following reasons:

- seating capacity, at circa 6,500, is the most appropriate based on current ticket projections
- the warm-up courts and practice facilities can be accommodated within the Arena and adjacent stadium, with hotels for the players and match officials five minutes away
- existing infrastructure and walkable facilities for players and match officials make the venue one of the most sustainable and cost effective
- here is sufficient back-office space.

1.14. A breakdown of activity for the event at the OVO Arena Wembley is as follows:

<b>Number of days needed</b>	<b>Activity</b>
2	Build
2	Training days
10	Competition
1	Derig

- 1.15. If the bid is successful, the event will sit at the heart of TTE’s new strategy, launched in 2022, called Table Tennis United. The strategy sets out four pledges:
- table tennis will be a thriving community – a sport for everyone with no barriers to taking part
  - culture change across the pathway that inspires world-class performances and medal success
  - connection across the table tennis community
  - a high-performing organisation that is not just fit for today but is fit for the future.
- 1.16. The WTTTC26 will be the cornerstone of a long-term event strategy that will be delivered in partnership with the ITTF. TTE is due to receive significant investment from the ITTF to support its long-term event strategy, details of which are outlined above, at 1.15.

#### Funding proposal

- 1.17. TTE has made a formal request to the GLA for funding to support delivery of the WTTTC26. Contribution from the GLA is integral to TTE’s bid; without it, TTE will struggle to make a good enough case to receive UK Sport investment and balance the budget.
- 1.18. The GLA will be one of several funders. The ITTF will contribute approximately £750,000; and UK Sport has been requested to invest £1m, with the decision to be made at its August panel meeting.
- 1.19. The remaining £2m is projected to be secured through ticket sales, commercial revenue, digital rights and athlete entry fees.
- 1.20. Following a review of the TTE proposal, the MSE team is recommending that the GLA contribute £100,000 to the staging of this event. This funding will not require a request for additional funding outside of the pre-existing MSE Programme Budget.
- 1.21. Funding will be used to support delivery of the event and ensure strong community, spectator engagement and marketing engagement to support the event in achieving ambitious ticket sales, community impact and high levels of public awareness – both nationally and internationally.
- 1.22. This proposal splits the funding across two financial years: the first tranche of £25,000 in Q1 of 2024-25; and the second tranche of £75,000 in Q1 of 2025-26.

#### Project governance

- 1.23. The ITTF and TTE are progressing discussions that will put in place a structure to underwrite the event. This will be part of a wider commitment to create a special purpose vehicle (SPV) that will be co-owned by TTE and the ITTF. The agreement to establish the SPV will include an investment from the ITTF, projected to be £2.5m, to support a long-term programme of events in the UK.
- 1.24. From this investment into the SPV, it is expected that a cash contribution and underwrite will be confirmed to ensure the successful staging of the 2026 event. Subject to approval from the ITTF Board, the SPV will, if required, be the full underwriter of the event.
- 1.25. If the bid is successful, a steering group will be established and led by the SPV. All funding and strategic stakeholders will attend this group, including the GLA. The group will monitor and measure project progress, risks and finances.
- 1.26. An update on project progress will be shared by the lead officer from the MSE team with their senior manager on a regular basis.
- 1.27. The GLA will also attend any sub-groups relating to marketing and legacy development. The lead officer from the MSE team will ensure relevant GLA teams, and London & Partners, are included in these meetings to offer project advice and support, as well as to ensure project outcomes where feasible, align with mayoral strategic priorities.

## 2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1. The MSE team has evaluated the potential impact of the event and alignment to the team's strategic priorities:

- economic impact – ensure financial benefit to London, and return on any investment made by the GLA
- global reach – showcase London to the world, and reap promotional benefits to the city
- sustainability – highlight and encourage sustainable activities, and work towards a zero-carbon city by 2030
- social integration – support Londoners to be active in their communities and reduce barriers and inequalities
- policy objectives – changes in the political/social landscape and current affairs will affect prioritisation.

### Economic impact (MSE assessment: low)

2.2. TTE has conducted an initial economic impact assessment. This event has a predicted direct economic impact of over £8m and a GVA impact of over £3.75m; and is predicted to support 95 jobs in the capital.

2.3. Table tennis is very popular in Asia. There is also a strong UK audience outside London. As such, the event has the potential to drive significant international and domestic tourism to Greater London with the attendant visitor spend in the capital.

2.4. The event will provide a platform for the promotion of international trade. There will be significant opportunities for London-based businesses to showcase their services and brands as event partners to a global audience, including millions of viewers in China.

### Global reach (MSE assessment: medium)

2.5. The 2021 ITTF World Table Tennis Championships, held in Houston, secured 33 broadcasters airing to 135 territories, with the highest coverage in Singapore, Malaysia, China and Korea. The event achieved over 200m unique viewers and a cumulative audience of 369m.

2.6. The ITTF has its own streaming platform, with over 3.6m sessions watched in over 140 countries. The ITTF quotes 5.2m global active fans through its digital and social channels. It engages notable audiences in China, India and Europe, all of which are key target markets identified by London & Partners.

2.7. The most recent edition of the Team World Championships was China's second most-watched sports event of 2022, after the Olympic Games.

### Sustainability (MSE assessment: medium)

2.8. The ITTF and TTE do not have an organisational sustainability strategy for the delivery of events. However, OVO Arena Wembley has a robust sustainability strategy and strong sustainability ambitions, which are relevant to the staging of the event.

2.9. TTE has expressed an interest in developing initiatives to reduce its impact on the environment, and in working with the GLA to determine a programme of activities to raise awareness and amplify GLA sustainability campaigns. Initial initiatives include the following:

- Teams and officials will be encouraged to walk between their accommodation and the venue. Where vehicles are required, a combination of electric vehicles and public transport will be used.
- Sustainability messaging will be included in ticket marketing activity and the event’s social impact programme, to encourage spectators to use public transport
- The social impact programme will be brought to under-served communities, rather than requiring people to travel outside their community to stay active.

Social integration (MSE assessment: medium)

- 2.10. TTE has demonstrated its commitment to meaningful community engagement in London through the acquisition, in January 2024, of a London Area Manager to support and develop its impact programme work going forward.
- 2.11. TTE is in the early stages of building its community engagement and legacy strategy. TTE has undertaken a needs assessment using data and insight from London Sport, Sported and the GLA, to analyse the greatest needs and ascertain where true impact can be made from the WTTTC26 in relation to the focus areas.
- 2.12. Through this process TTE has identified four areas of focus for the event:

<b>Reducing inequality in access to activity</b>	A focussed Women and Girls programme to grow the female table tennis workforce and participation in the game, with the end goal of female table tennis hubs.
<b>Skill development through workforce growth</b>	Development of TTE/WTTT workforce programmes that train the target cohorts as leaders, coaches and officials, and in other roles, to support the organisational infrastructure that delivers activity and social impact.  Creating the Wembley Champions volunteering programme that will train, provide opportunities for and support those wishing to become event volunteers at the Championships and beyond.
<b>Mental health in young people</b>	The rollout of a mental health initiative that uses the 12 Emotional Needs Met model from Suffolk Mind, and integrates table tennis into this, to provide an easy-to-deliver, accessible programme to a range of schools, organisations and partners.
<b>Tackling inactivity</b>	A ‘Road to Wembley’ participation programme that will provide participation and competitive opportunities.

Mayoral policy objectives (MSE assessment: low)

- 2.13. Although the WTTTC26 does not meet any immediate Mayoral policy objectives at this time, it offers London a global platform to showcase its ability to host a world championship for a summer Olympic sport.

### 3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Mayor and the GLA are subject to the public sector equality duty and must have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The “protected characteristics” are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage/ civil partnership status. The duty involves having appropriate regard to these matters as they apply in the circumstances, including having regard to the need to: remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share or is connected to a protected; take steps to meet the different needs of such people; and encourage them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low. This can involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without one.
- 3.3. Promoting social integration to connect, activate and reduce inequalities for Londoners is one of the key strategic objectives for the GLA to support major sports events. TTE has plans to support underrepresented groups in table tennis within London in line with this event. They have identified four cohorts that their focus areas will prioritise:
- women and girls
  - the 20 per cent most deprived communities
  - multi-ethnic communities
  - young people
- 3.4. The MSE team has consulted, and will continue to consult, a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that as many Londoners as possible, including those with protected characteristics, are considered in the planning of the event and have the opportunity to be involved in some way.
- 3.5. We will work to ensure that the volunteering programme eliminates discrimination and is open to all, regardless of race, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, or gender reassignment.
- 3.6. We will ensure that appropriate assistance is given to all Londoners and visitors at the event and activations in London. We will work to ensure that Londoners and visitors with whom we may have had difficulties communicating, and those with accessibility issues, are given the tools necessary to maximum engagement in the tournament.

#### 4. Other considerations

##### Risks

	Details	Likelihood/ impact
1	<p><i>Risk</i> Lack of public engagement in the tournament, and matches being poorly attended, could undermine London’s reputation as the home of world-class sport.</p> <p><i>Mitigation</i> The GLA’s promotion of London’s hosting of matches will be based on the tournament as a whole, and on community engagement across the city. TTE has commissioned an independent analysis to model projected ticket sales based on previous events, and is confident of hitting the targets set out in the budget.</p>	Medium/ low

2	<p><i>Risk</i> Financial feasibility of hosting the event at the host venue and other external financial pressures, such as inflation, could result in further calls on GLA budget and/or a reduced programme of delivery in the lead-up to the tournament.</p> <p><i>Mitigation</i> London’s contribution to the event budget will be final. If the budget comes under pressure, the MSE team will work with TTE, the ITTF and UK Sport to look at ways to rectify this without calling on further GLA funding.</p> <p>TTE has confirmed the intention for the SPV to be the underwriter of the event. The OVO Arena Wembley was selected as a venue to allow TTE to deliver the tournament within budget. The MSE team will continue to monitor the budget and meet with the organisers to determine feasibility going forward, and secure assurances from funding partners and organisers.</p> <p>The MSE team is monitoring and reviewing the effects of the rise of inflation on event delivery costs across the industry. The effects of inflation will be monitored and will factor into decision making.</p>	Medium/ low
3	<p><i>Risk</i> Lack of meaningful legacy and community engagement.</p> <p><i>Mitigation</i> TTE has already undertaken a needs assessment using data and insight from London Sport, Sported and the GLA in order to develop a meaningful legacy programme. We will invite the Civic Society and Sport team to advise on the community engagement and legacy programmes to ensure they align with mayoral priorities. Relevant GLA teams will be involved in steering group sub-group meetings to advise and support planning.</p>	Low/ low

Conflicts of interest

- 4.1. There are no conflicts of interest to declare for those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

Subsidy control

- 4.2. London is the only city that TTE is putting forward to the ITTF to host the WTTT26. London last hosted the World Table Tennis Championships in 1954, and Europe last hosted it in 2019. If the bid is successful, it will end a six-year hiatus (the longest in its history) from the event being held in Europe; and it will mark 72 years since the event was last hosted in the capital.
- 4.3. TTE is England’s only governing body for table tennis recognised by the ITTF, and thus the only organisation that can submit a bid to host the WTTT26. TTE conducted a competitive venue-selection process across England, and identified the OVO Wembley Arena as its preferred venue for the reasons listed in 1.13.
- 4.4. Without GLA funding, there will be a shortfall in the budget for the event. GLA officers have reviewed the budget and are satisfied the event will not be able to proceed without GLA funding.
- 4.5. Section 2, above, demonstrates the benefits to London, and how we will achieve our strategic objectives. In summary, we are assured that this is an appropriate use of public funding.



## 5. Financial comments

- 5.1. This decision seeks approval to allocate £100,000 grant to TTE to host the WTTTC26 in 2026. The funding is split across two financial years: the first tranche of £25,000 in Q1 of 2024-25; and the second tranche of £75,000 in Q1 of 2025-26. This funding will only be necessary if the bid is successful.
- 5.2. The expenditure will be funded from the MSE Programme Budget. There is sufficient budget within the plan for future years to fund this request. Future years' budgets are indicative and subject to the GLA's annual budget-setting process. To mitigate any risk of the budget not being approved for future years to cover costs following the budget-setting process, the contract will include the usual break clauses that could potentially be exercised if required.

## 6. Legal comments

### Power to undertake the requested decision

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications (the Director) fall within the statutory powers of the GLA to promote and/or to do anything that is facilitative of, or conducive or incidental to, economic development and wealth creation within Greater London; and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
  - pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
  - consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom
  - consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2. Furthermore, the decisions above also fall within the statutory powers of the GLA under section 378 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999. Under that section, the GLA has the power to do anything for the purposes of encouraging people to visit Greater London and to encourage people from outside the United Kingdom to visit the United Kingdom via Greater London. As set out at paragraph 2.3, above, the hosting of WTTTC26 has the potential to drive significant international and domestic tourism to Greater London.
- 6.3. In taking the decisions requested of him, the Director must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty – namely, the need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Director should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

### Grant funding

- 6.4. The proposed grant of up to £100,000 to TTE may be viewed as a conditional gift rather than a contract for services and supplies. Section 12 of the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code provides that decisions to award grant funding should generally be made on the basis of the outcome of a transparent, competitive application process. Officers have explained at paragraph 4.4 that TTE is the only English governing body for table tennis recognised by the ITTF. For that reason, officers propose that a direct award of grant funding be made to TTE on this occasion. Furthermore, the officers are reminded to ensure that an appropriate funding agreement be put in place between the GLA and TTE before any part of the funding be paid.

## Subsidy control

- 6.5. The Subsidy Control Act 2022 requires that grant funding comply with its subsidy control principles. Officers have set out at paragraphs 4.3 to 4.6 above how the proposed grant complies with those principles.

## **7. Planned delivery approach and next steps**

- 7.1. The table below sets out how the project will be delivered.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
TTE submission to UK Sport event panel	Monday 12 June 2023
UK Sport major sports event panel	28 June 2023
ITTF bid submission	30 June 2023
UK Sport board meeting and funding decision	9 August 2023
ITTF AGM host city confirmed	24 August 2023
Announcement of host cities and venues	(Q3 2023 – exact date TBD)
Establishment of SPV	Q4 2023
Delivery planning	Q4 2023 to Q2 2026
Event	Q2 2026

## **Appendices and supporting papers:**

None

**Public access to information**

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

**Part 1 – Deferral**

**Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES**

If YES, for what reason: pending confirmation of legalities in the funding agreement, which will be drafted after the DD is signed.

Until what date: 31 August 2023

**Part 2 – Sensitive information**

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

**Is there a part 2 form – NO**

**ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:**

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

**Drafting officer:**

Holly Colvin has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

**Assistant Director:**

Nicole Valentinuzzi has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

**Advice:**

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

**Corporate Investment Board**

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 31 July 2023.

✓

**INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:**

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

**Signature:**

*Anna Casbolt*

**Date:**

31/07/2023

PP Anna Casbolt on behalf of Enver Enver