

Minutes 106th Board Meeting of the English Chess Federation

11:30-17:00 – Wednesday 4 May 2016

Holiday Inn, Birmingham City Centre, Smallbrook Queensway, Birmingham B5 4EW

Present: David Eustace (Director of Finance) (DE)
David Thomas (Director of Membership) (DT)
Malcolm Pein (Director of International Chess, FIDE Delegate) (MP)
Julie Denning (Non-Executive Director) (JD)
Alex Holowczak (Director Home Chess) (AH)
Julian Clissold (Non-Executive Director) (JC)
Mike Truran (Chief Executive) (MT)

In Attendance: Gary Willson (Office Manager, minutes) (GW)
Robert Stern (Chair, Governance Committee) (RS)
Christelle Hafstad (Junior Business Manager) (CH)

Apologies: Dominic Lawson (President) (DL)
Traci Whitfield (Director of Junior Chess & Education) (TW)

1. Appointment of Chairman

It was agreed that JC would chair the meeting. Carried nem con.

1. Motion to approve the agenda

The Agenda as published was approved. Carried nem con.

2. Minutes of Board meeting 105 held on 16 April 2016

(a) Approval

The draft minutes as published were approved.

(a) Redaction

It was agreed that no redactions were necessary.

(b) Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

3. To note E-mail votes, if any, taken since the last Board meeting

No email votes were taken.

4. Appointments

(a) The proposed appointment of Angus French to the Governance Committee (RS)
It was agreed nem con to appoint Angus French to the Governance Committee.

(b) The proposed appointment of Matt Bridgeman as Manager of Girls' Chess
It was agreed nem con to appoint Matt Bridgeman to the post of Manager of Girls' Chess.

(c) Any other

There were no other appointments.

5. Update on action points

99/8 is ongoing

100/5,6,11 are pending

101/3,4, 102/1/2/9, 103/1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 are all cleared

103/11 remains ongoing

103/12 is cleared

103/13,14 are ongoing

103/15,16,17,18,19,20, 21, are cleared.

104/1,2,3 are all cleared

AP 106/1 JC to discuss with DA and MR how to expand the pool of Pro Bono Legal
Advisors

AP 106/2 JD to contact the SRA, to seek guidance on pro bono legal advisors

6. Finance (DE)

(a) Finance decisions taken at the meeting

Council confirmed expenditure for the following year, and with no increase in membership, the shortfall is to come from reserves. Approval was also given to fund the Mind Sports feasibility study. The PIFF was extended for a further 21 years.

(b) Recent donations received by the ECF

Anonymous donations had been received to support the British Championship (£15K) and senior chess (£6.5K).

As all donations received are under the control of the Board, it was agreed AH and MP would take the lead on allocating the two donations above, keeping the Board updated as necessary.

(c) Cycle of Finance papers leading to the 2017 meeting

The Board had not published the papers in time for Finance Council, and a better process is required. This needs to be factored in during the early planning stages.

7. Governance decisions including next phase of review (RS)

Issues to go to October Council include the increase of the maximum number of board members by one.

It was also noted that the Board should respond to:

- i. The problem of Council items falling to the time guillotine.
- ii. Voting procedures and voting reform

Once the Pearce recommendations have been dealt with, the Governance Committee would be considering the possibility of voting reform. MT and AH would want to attend the relevant meeting at an early stage in the process to help draw up proposals.

AP 106/3 MT and AH to attend the meeting of the Governance Committee, to draw up high level proposals for alternative voting methods so that Council can give a steer on preferences to the Board before any detailed and potentially labour-intensive work begins.

Concerning PQASSO, it was thought that this could be explored at a less busy time given the present workload, and work would include identifying the most appropriate tool.

It was agreed that we would wait for a lead from FIDE before drawing up and implementing an anti-cheating policy.

It was agreed that the Complaints procedure was not necessarily intended to be used for disputes among directors, and the procedure should be amended to reflect this. Work needed to be carried out to see whether, bearing this in mind, the procedures are fit for purpose. This matter was referred to the Governance Committee

AP 106/4 RS to include a sentence to the Complaints procedures to reflect the fact it is intended to be used for grievances by members against the federation and not internal disagreements.

AP 106/5 JC to send RS his previous work undertaken on the Complaints procedures, and for RS to refer the procedures to the Governance Committee for review.

It was thought that further guidance might be sought on whether an organisation with charitable status could in fact support professionals, as it is possible in some circumstances.

AP 106/6 DE to speak to Richard Fris concerning charitable status, and feedback to the board.

The FIDE Delegate is to be elected by Council, and we would need to consider the circumstances in which they might be removed.

We need to consider our relationship with some external organisations, in particular, how we interact and collaborate to maximise their contribution to English chess.

It was agreed that we need to explore a suitable mechanism for including the views of our professional players, as one is not there at present.

It is planned to present Council with a complete schedule of issues deriving from the Pearce report, drawn up by the sub-committee. It was agreed that the sub-committee should have a defined life in line with this aim. A copy of sub-committee minutes/notes should be filed with the office for future reference, but they do not need to be published.

AP 106/7 JD to give a copy of sub-committee notes/minutes to GW

AP 106/8 JD to arrange next sub-committee meeting.

8. Draft minutes

The completion of the minutes is delayed due to other pressing office matters. In future, the minute taker will factor in time immediately after Council meetings to ensure they are completed expeditiously.

9. Other

Whilst the Thistle Hotel was a marked improvement, the room could have been bigger.

10. ECF Strategy – the way forward (MT)

MT will draw up a briefing paper, to form the basis of discussion at a planning event. The end product will be a relatively brief strategy paper, underpinned by operational directors' own plans. The briefing paper will take as its starting point the previously agreed strategy paper, and under each heading will include the two or three main areas of focus for each Director.

AP 106/9 DE to provide MT with the most up to date version of the current Strategy document.

AP 106/10 DE & GW to set date and arrange venue for planning day, towards the end of June.

11. Future of the British Championships (AH)

The papers (drawn up following consultation with players) previously distributed among the Board were discussed in detail.

The Board supported the need to boost the profile of the Major Open. It was also in agreement with the proposal to reduce the timetable from 2 weeks to 9 days encompassing two weekends (in order that players and parents need take only 1 week off work).

The Board agreed to implement the revised schedule for 2017 and invite comments from players, and then to review the entire British championships, including eligibility, qualification, and to include the other Federations and Council.

AP 106/11 AH to publish the revised BCC schedule, and invite comments from players.

12. Sports & Recreation Alliance (JD)

(a) Training for Board members

AP 105/12 JD & GW to arrange SRA Training for 3rd June, to include key non-Board members.

(b) Adoption of SRA policies

It was agreed this issue would be revisited after the training had taken place.

13. The Mind Sports Initiative (MT)

The initiative as presented to Council was discussed. Council had agreed to allow the Board to spend up to £3600 on a feasibility study. It was agreed that the Board would wait for a request from the Go Association regarding financial support for the feasibility study.

14. International matters (MP)

(a) Women's Chess – job description and appointment

The Board agreed this is a key role for the future success of the Federation. It would have an initial budget of £2K, but could be allocated in future if activity required it. The post would initially be given status of Director Designate, to be conferred full Director status at the AGM in October if agreed by Council. The role would report to the Chief Executive, in line with other operational directors.

Sarah Longson was appointed to the post nem con.

(b) Update on England team sponsorship

CH mentioned that small parent groups from the academy were starting to identify potential fund raising opportunities.

AP 106/13 MP to write to Mark Jordan concerning charitable donations from employers, to be included in a newsletter.

(c) Membership demographic time bomb

The age gap prevalent in our membership was discussed. Key will be to encourage more and more juniors to continue playing. Whilst there are some areas of success, it was agreed that a lack of opportunity prohibits playing from all but the most able and keen. The implementation of numerous regional development officers was mentioned.

AP 106/14 MT to include in strategy briefing paper the maintaining of clear lines of growth and development to keep young people engaged with chess.

AP 106/15 GW/CH to discuss with TW the concept of Development Officers.

15. ECF Officers – known future vacancies

(a) Company Secretary

A draft advert will be drawn up and made available to the Board. Time commitment would be around 15 days per year.

(b) Financial controller

JP estimates this role takes up around 2 days per week. Work is ongoing to identify tasks that can be subsumed within the office, such as game fee invoicing. Concerning the bookkeeping role, in the absence of a suitably qualified volunteer this service would be best outsourced to a professional to ensure robust financial oversight.

It was agreed that job adverts should be drawn up and published to seek volunteers in the first instance.

AP 106/16 DE to prepare and publish job adverts to cover JP's duties, to be included in the newsletter to be issued at the end of June.

(c) Any others

The post of the grading administrator is to be tendered out after RJH has been through the job spec.

AP 106/17 JC to draft a letter of thanks to RJH, to be sent to MT

AP 106/18 GW to give Keith Osborne's contact details to JC, concerning the vacant IT manager's post.

16. Reports by directors

JC commented that the Arbiter's regulations are a significant document that will require extensive consultation with a lot of organisations. AH agreed to send a copy of the draft to the CAA and ask them to distribute it among its members, and to have individual copies sent to other organisations from the office. The Board was fully in support of this approach.

17. Dates of future Board meeting

Next meeting will be 3rd June, if availability allows. The aim is to have future monthly dates planned for the coming year.

AP 106/19 Members to update availability by the weekend.

18. Any other business

None.

The meeting closed at 16:35