

Minutes of the 93rd Board Meeting of the English Chess Federation
Friday 20th March 2015 at the Daventry Court Hotel, Daventry

Present: Phil Ehr (Chairman) (PE)
David Eustace (Director of Finance) (DE)
Alex Holowczak (Director of Home Chess) (AH)
David Openshaw (Director of International Chess) (DO)
Traci Whitfield (Director of Junior Chess, via Skype after item xxx) (TW)
David Thomas (Director of Membership) (DT)
Bob Kane (Commercial Director) (BK)
Julian Clissold (Non-Executive Director, Chairman for item 9) (JC)
John Foley (Non-Executive Director) (JF)

Also in attendance:

John Philpott (Company Secretary, via Skype until item 12) (JP)
Gary Willson (minutes) (GW)
Chris Fegan (Strategic Advisor) (CF)
Chris Majer (Chairman, Governance Committee)

Apologies: Dominic Lawson (President)
Malcolm Pein (FIDE Delegate)
Mike Truran (Chairman, Finance Committee)

1 Approval of Agenda

Approved.

2 Approval of the Minutes of the 92nd Board Meeting held on 16th February 2015.

Some minor corrections were noted.

AP 93/1 GW to amend minutes of meeting 92, to reflect Platinum membership zero increase and consistent use of the proper title "Independent Constitutional and Governance Review Commission".

3 E-mail Votes taken since the last Board Meeting

None.

4 Appointments made since the last Board Meeting

None.

5 Action Point Update

A spreadsheet was previously distributed, with action points marked as cleared by specific directors.

92/3: it was agreed that delisting from FIDE was draconian and not necessary. It was agreed to introduce a “pay to play” fee of an amount equivalent to upgrading for Gold membership.

Action points concerning the library cleared, to be discussed under the specific agenda item.

92/17: Gareth Pearce is currently contacting and interviewing members (including all directors); he wants to complete his review by July in order for recommendations to be produced for Council in October.

6 An alternative to the English Chess Federation's Forum

A paper, previously distributed by AH was discussed. It outlined perceived problems with the forum including lack of use by Directors, a lack of timely answers, duplication of threads on the unofficial forum, and a public perception that it was a needlessly hostile idea. The paper proposed closing the forum and installing a “Questions for Directors” page on the website, the answers being published online.

It was generally agreed that the paper had identified a problem, but this was not necessarily the solution. It was accepted that the forum could be used more by directors. However, there is indeed confusion amongst members as to which is the official forum.

It was stressed that it was important to be able to communicate with members; however, lack of time did not always make a timely response possible. It was noted that it had previously been agreed that directors would use the official forum, so that it would be perceived as the official forum, and for it to be successful.

The suggestion of a blog was discussed, but it was generally agreed this would be labour intensive to maintain. The question of compunction to use the forum was discussed, with a common view that it should not be mandatory for directors.

It was agreed that the forum perhaps had too many threads, many of which are not used. They should be weeded, and refocused on issues that are relevant to our business and the concerns of our members.

It was suggested that our forum looks too similar to the unofficial forum, and that a distinct change would make the two more distinct.

The Board was reminded of the reason for launching the forum: the unofficial forum was toxic and displayed an unprofessional, unregulated image of English chess which would deter potential sponsors; the need to communicate was essentially secondary.

It was noted that we had recently launched an email system to contact members with targeted messages as part of the communication strategy, with member feedback generally being good. 50% were opened within 24hours and very few had opted out.

Following agreement with the members, it was agreed to slightly amend AH's proposal: the motion to close the forum failed.

The amended motion (to establish a "Questions for Directors" page which could be diverted straight to directors, with answers bundled up and published in an appropriate way) was voted on, with 3 members for and 3 against, therefore the motion did not carry.

It was agreed that BK would consider the "Questions for Directors" concept to complement communications, continue with his work to slim down the threads, and that directors would be encouraged (but not forced) to use the forum.

7 Strategy Paper

Two documents were previously circulated, derived from the strategy meeting in November: (1) "English Chess Federation Strategy Statement" and (2) "English Chess Federation Goals and Objectives 2015". DE and JF had had a constructive meeting, with (1) being what was actually agreed over the weekend, and (2) is what we publish to the outside world.

The papers were different in scope but contained mainly identical "goals and initiatives". A general discussion took place that focussed on the content and purpose of each document. It was noted that Council will be asked to approve the strategy paper that is presented to them; not merely noting it. Paper 1 is to be the agreed Strategy Document that is to be presented to Council; paper2 still requires some work before final publication.

It was agreed to go through each document line by line, as both reflected key elements from the strategy weekend. A significant number of individual changes were discussed at length on both papers and agreed, and noted by DE for amendment. It was agreed that both papers would enter the public domain.

AP 93/2: DE and JF to make changes to Strategy statement (paper 1) and republish.

9 (taken out of order) Update on the National Chess Library and Recommendation on Course of Action to be taken in the Budget

The request for an extension had been made so that Council had time to make an informed decision. The College had responded neither positively nor negatively. It may mean that we need to move the library before Council meets, in which case temporary storage would be necessary.

The other options discussed at the last meeting, such as utilising spare space in Universities or other institutions, were not possible, leaving us only with relocating to Battle or storage.

The option of disestablishing the library was discussed, but rejected by the Board. Whilst some of the books may be of value (but legal advice would be needed before selling), the majority would not. Also, the library included some collections that had been bequeathed

to the Federation, and included not just books but papers and other objects. It was possible that the library could be reduced in size (e.g by removing duplicates), but it was agreed that this would take time. It had been estimated some time ago by Bernard Cafferty that around 2/3 of the books did not have an ISDN so could not be catalogued easily.

If Battle is the chosen option, it would incur a one off cost to restructure the building and shelving (estimated to be around £11,000 in total), for which funds were available. It would also incur an increase of rent by some £8,000 pa, a decision better taken by Council.

It was agreed to put two options to Council: (1) to relocate the collection to Battle, and (2) to put the collection into storage with the intent of reviewing the contents so that it can be sorted and catalogued.

Following a vote, option (2) was chosen to be a recommendation to be put to Council, with the firm undertaking that we did not want to repeat the incident with the Sussex archive.

AP 93/3: PE to draft a recommendation to Council outlining the two potential options for the National Chess Library, with a recommendation for storage/cataloging.

AP 93/4: PE, following Council's decision on the library relocation, if appropriate, to ask for volunteers on the forum to catalogue the whole contents of the library.

8 Finance Update & Budget Papers

DE presented the draft figures. These include revised projections based on the recommendations to be made to council where appropriate.

Junior figures include an increase next year due to the launch of the Academy.

International included an amount for the expenses of the FIDE delegate: it was agreed this could be included in administration. There was concern that the cost of running the European and Olympiad is increasing due to a drop in sponsorship. In addition, because there is an event in November and in September 2016, we need Council's go ahead now. Discussion was had on the balance between putting out our strongest team, and the commensurate drop in sponsorship if we do not select our strongest team. It was agreed that Council need to understand the complex issues of team selection and funding.

AP 93/5 DO to provide DE with an explanatory breakdown of the figures for the International Team.

The aim is for the British Championships to break even.

The figures for administration remain static (except the increase for the inclusion of the FIDE delegate's fees, increases in salaries and the implementation of the auto-enrolment pension scheme).

Some discussion was had concerning the size of the administration costs for the Federation; it was noted that it is difficult to reduce the size of the costs.

AP 93/6 DE to identify the origin of the credit card costs within the administration budget.

It was agreed *nem con* to recommend to Council to increase (for next year) the game fee to £2.50, £1.25 for rapid play. Junior game fee would increase to 60p and 30p respectively. The envisaged game fee for 2017/18 would be: £3, £1.50, 60p, 30p: the envisaged game fee for 2018/19 would be £3.50, £1.75, 60p, 30p. These increases are in line with our wish to phase out the game fee and move to a membership only system.

The figures also include a £2 flat fee increase in membership for 2016/17. However, it was agreed this increase should be £2 Gold, £1.50 Silver £1 Bronze. In addition, it was agreed to continue with the same increase for 2017/18.

AP 93/7 DE and JF to adjust the finance figures in line with the discussion.

The issue of the Yearbook was raised, and some concern was expressed that we would lose a vital record of the workings of the Federation. It was agreed that a full explanation would be included in the paper that would be put to council.

AP 93/8 GW to ensure, should Council agree to discontinue the Yearbook, to investigate the safe collection and retention of data.

10b Minimum membership fee for Affiliated Organisations

These are small in number, and it was agreed to increase their fee to £60 annually *nem con*.

In summary the overall budget was agreed, and would be presented to Council as discussed.

The Meeting of the ECF Board took a short break at this point, whilst the BCF Board met (same attendees).

The Company Secretary was authorised to convene an Extraordinary Council Meeting of the BCF on the same day as the ECF Finance Council Meeting. It was noted that the accounts of the Chess Centre Ltd (which was a subsidiary of the Permanent Invested Fund) and of the John Robinson Trust (which was established from funds originally bequeathed to the BCF), would be presented to the BCF for meeting for noting. The accounts were being reviewed by Goatcher Chandler, as in the previous year.

No issues were raised, the meeting was adjourned.

The meeting of the ECF Board reconvened,

11 Amendments to Procedural Bye-Laws

The Governance Committee is not supportive of long reports for election addresses. Following discussion, it was agreed to limit each election address to a maximum of 750 words.

The Governance Committee would also like to make it mandatory for members standing for election to abide by a code of conduct, and not make it merely an expectation. It appeared incongruous to treat existing officers and potential officers differently. It was also agreed that campaigning should be done on the ECF Forum. All changes were agreed *nem con*.

AP 93/9 CM to publish updated draft of changes to procedural bye laws.

12 Other Items on the Council Agenda

It was agreed to change the wording of item 8 on the Council Agenda from “note” to “agree”.

It was agreed that the item concerning the library be presented to Council before the Finances were discussed and agreed as a whole.

(JP left the meeting)

Further discussions took place, before the order of the Agenda for Council was agreed.

As the meeting was running short of time, it was agreed to highlight and deal with the more important business.

The Chair proposed that we deal with item 16 on the Agenda (concerning the Articles of Association), which was to be put to Council.

DO disagreed, stating that he thought we were pushing this item through without a full discussion.

BK agreed with DO.

PE stated that, whilst not in this particular format, the issues it dealt with had been on the table for a number of months and so were not being pushed through.

DO stated that he was happy to discuss it, indeed he may even agree with it, but it was late in the day for a full discussion to take place.

DT proposed that the item concerning “Articles of Association” be struck from the Agenda for Council. The Board agreed.

The Chair pointed out to the Board that because this matter had been put to them previously, they needed to pay attention in order that business can be progressed.

13 Direct Members Representative

The Board agreed to appoint Ashok Damodaran to represent the Platinum Members at Council. However, it was agreed that he be asked to provide a written statement, outlining his reasoning and wishes for undertaking the role.

AP 93/10 GW to contact AD, to ask for a written statement concerning him becoming a Members Representative at Council.

17 ECF Funds held by individuals

A discussion was had concerning individuals who raise money for the ECF, where these funds should lie and how they should be spent. It was agreed that provided the money was being spent under the control of the Board, then there were no issues.

AP 93/11 DO to investigate the raising of funds and where funds are held by an individual, and report back to the Board

AOB:

- It was agreed nem con that Con Power, the long serving organiser of the Hastings International Chess Congress, should receive a Presidential Award for Services to Chess.

The Board was apprised of developments with FIDE and the UK Chess Academy, and the Training Commission's Decision to allow the UK Chess Academy to attend the World Schools event in the summer. It was noted that we would like to fully support the Academy, but they had refused to provide us with specific information so that we were assured they complied with UK law. In particular, they had not reassured us about "in loco parentis" provisions for any child travelling without a parent, and they had not reassured us that all coaches travelling with the group would be DBS checked. The decision from the FIDE Training Commission appeared to fly in the face of UK law. The Board would be apprised of updates when they arose.

The meeting closed.