

ENGLISH CHESS FEDERATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 13 OCTOBER 2012
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION PAPERS

C17.15

Introduction

Six consultation papers were launched at the Finance Council meeting in April 2012:

- Charitable Status
- Governance
- Financial Capital
- Changing the ECF's accounting year
- Codes of Conduct
- Junior ECF Membership

The deadlines for responses varied but all fell within the period June-August 2012.

Due to time spent on other matters, there was very little time to introduce – let alone discuss – the papers at the Finance Council meeting. Of the few minutes spent on the subject, the bulk was taken up with the proposal for Standards of Conduct for ECF Officials and Complaints Procedure, which were presented to Council for a decision. Following one or two objections to specific points, it was agreed to incorporate these two proposals into the broader consultation on a Code of Conduct.

Overview of responses

The number of responses to the consultation papers was very low. In total, only four responses were received, as follows:

1. Comment on one aspect of the proposed Code of Conduct;
2. Comments on all six papers;
3. Comments on Charitable Status and Financial Capital papers;
4. Comments on Charitable Status, Governance and Financial Capital papers.

The responses in more detail

To draw conclusions from so few responses would be foolish. The following summary should, therefore, be taken in the context of the relative lack of response:

- All of those who responded to the paper on Charitable Status were in favour of the broad proposals. Specific points were made in respect of:
 - Culture (the assertion that charitable status would significantly change culture was questioned);
 - Availability of gift aid; and
 - Organisational structure (it was suggested that the charitable and non-charitable bodies could be owned by a single entity, thereby possibly reducing the complexity of the governance issues arising).
- On Financial Capital, the two responses received were very different. One (from the PIF Trustees) was supportive of the recommendations for capitalisation of the ECF and Chess England and suggested an openness to temporarily increasing the grant from the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust if considered necessary. The second respondent opposed any redistribution of BCF capital to the ECF or Chess England.

- On Governance, one respondent was supportive of signing up to the Voluntary Code of Good Governance and of OMOV (one member, one vote). The other respondent considered the Voluntary Code a useful guide but not something that the ECF should sign up to in full. He proposed a governance model based on three tiers: AGM (Council); Board (elected for three years and all non-executive, except for the Chief Executive and Finance Director) and executive team (Chief Executive, Finance Director and their appointees). He favoured votes for all members, weighted by their financial contribution (e.g. Platinum members would be weighted at 5 times a Bronze member).
- On the Code of Conduct, one response centred on the issue of ECF officials engaging with “unofficial media” (e.g. English Chess Forum), proposing that the Code should state that ECF officials should be banned from such use of such unofficial channels and should limit their comments to official channels such as the ECF website. The second response focused on the suggestion that the Board should not have the authority to dismiss one of its own members (i.e. someone elected by Council) and disagreed with this constraint.
- The only comment received on the Accounting Year paper was broadly supportive but offered some detailed suggestions regarding the sequence of actions and the timing and location of Council meetings.
- The only comment received on the Junior Membership consultation paper was broadly supportive but noted the need for the financial implications to be properly worked through (particularly in respect of the additional points for consultation at the end of the paper).

Chief Executive’s comments

I am grateful to those who took the time and trouble to respond to the consultation papers. As originator of four of the six papers, it will come as no surprise that I consider these topics of genuine importance for the future of the ECF.

However, it is difficult to formulate firm proposals in the absence of any clear indication of members’ views. As a consequence, the formal proposals being presented to the AGM are relatively restricted:

1. The change to the accounting year;
2. The Standards of Conduct for ECF Officials and Complaints Procedure are being put forward again for Council approval;
3. It is proposed that an EGM should be scheduled for January/February 2013, prior to the expiry of the PIF Trust Deeds, to decide formally the issues of Charitable Status and Financial Capital, along with any changes to Governance considered appropriate at that time.

The EGM referred to in point 3 would also need to include the establishment of the new non-charitable body and a BCF meeting.

The proposal for an EGM will involve the ECF in some cost, but it is considered necessary given the importance of the issues to be discussed and the need to ensure that there is sufficient time to consider and debate them properly. Experience has tended to show that the normal cycle of Council meetings is suited to such matters.

Andrew Farthing,

Chief Executive

16 September 2012

