

Report from Chairman of the Governance Committee

1. The last year has on the whole been a success for the ECF the headline items being:
 - a. Getting the finances under control. Chris Mattos deserves a lot of credit for bringing us back from a bad position. The invaluable assistance of John Philpott on this and other Office matters must also be acknowledged.
 - b. A record entry for the British Championships.
 - c. Successfully introducing the new membership scheme - almost 10,000 people have signed up. Following the decision by Council last year not to elect a Director for the key membership and marketing role, Sean Hewitt is to be commended for stepping in and solving the teething problems that came to light when we actually tried to implement the scheme.
2. Despite the above successes and the success of running the routine activities, I feel that the Board is not operating as effectively as it could, there are a number of points here:
 - a. The Board fails to avail itself of the opportunity to do routine business by email; instead trying to do everything in the Board meetings
 - b. The publication of redacted minutes as opposed to a summary report of Board meetings. This change comes from a commendable aspiration for greater openness. However, instead of a summary report, generated by the Chairman, appearing a few days after a Board meeting; a full set of minutes and a redacted copy are produced which require endorsement by the Board at the next meeting before anything can be published. There has also been a lack of clarity as to what should, should not, appear on the redacted minutes which could have lead to embarrassment.
 - c. The Board imposed on itself a seven-day notice period for "non-urgent" business to be included on the Board agenda. I don't think this has worked well and the new Board should reconsider the procedure.
 - d. A failure to focus on matters (often minor) that the Board ought to be dealing with in a timely fashion.
 - e. The dropping of the strategic planning documents. While I would agree that these documents could be streamlined (given that the ECF no longer needs to make a submission to the DCMS); I feel that the lack of even a summary business plan is a retrograde step.
 - f. Late production of papers for Council (for which I am also guilty). It is still to be hoped that the Board will improve on the lamentable performance of previous years.
3. At last year's AGM we did not have a candidate for the onerous role of CEO and Mike Gunn was lumbered with covering the gap. It would be unfair to criticise Mike for his performance in the additional CEO responsibilities. However, I have to say that the lack of a dedicated CEO has undoubtedly contributed to the above failings and indeed a few other areas of less than perfect administration. In particular, complaints have not been dealt with well. As reported in April, the complaints procedure was suspended though they continued to come in. Attempts were made to get me, as Governance Chairman, to involve myself in the handling of the complaints. However as was explained last year, the Governance Chairman's role is purely advisory so there was no action I could take to assist with resolution of disputes. Given all this, I am extremely pleased that we not just one, but two, candidates for CEO.
4. Following a degree of confusion in this year's nominations, I have agreed that the Governance Committee will look at the election requirements of the Procedural Bye Laws. In fact I will undertake a wider remit and look at wider aspects such as the drafting of the Bye-laws and the timescale to publish draft minutes of Council meetings.
5. Back in about 2004 when the ECF was being set up, I gave thought as to what should happen to the BCF Management Board Standing Orders and felt that there was a need for ECF Board Operating Procedures. I started drafting something, but then as it wasn't my responsibility, handed the job on. Sadly, nothing ever happened and the Board has struggled on without the guidance of how the Board should operate. I now find that this gap is my responsibility to address and as a starting point I've found what I drafted previously. I intend to progress this and bring something to Council in the next year.
6. Finally my thanks to my fellow members of the Governance Committee and to John Philpott for their support during the year.

Chris Majer Chairman of the Governance Committee