

Report from the Chairman of the Governance Committee

The Governance Committee has dealt with a variety of matters in the last twelve months. As ever, there have been things to do in response to circumstances as they arise, such as putting in place an extra-constitutional election for the post of Chair of Council (no candidate having been elected at last year's AGM), advising on how to hold Finance Council when it became apparent that Covid-19 would prevent a physical meeting from taking place, the proposal of constitutional change to enable both the ECF and BCF to hold future Council Meetings virtually and advising as to matters (including anti-cheating) in relation to online chess activity.

Good governance is not just a matter of technical compliance but also depends on the quality of relationship between those involved. It is in this context that I need to refer to last October's complaint which made serious allegations as to the conduct of the Chief Executive, other Directors and others and which gave rise to considerable conflict on the Board. The role of the Governance Committee in relation to the complaint included advising that it was not appropriate for the complaint to be heard by Board members, adapting the existing complaints procedure to appoint an independent panel to hear the complaint and setting the terms of reference for the panel. An independent panel rejected the complaint in its entirety.

As regards more day-to-day matters, the board has held meetings less frequently than in the past, partially because of the impact of Covid 19, but has readily adapted to holding meetings by Zoom. The recent improvements in board administration – such as there being a schedule setting out board meeting dates a year in advance and minutes being produced and published within the 21 day limit recommended by the Pearce Report have, subject to blips, been maintained.

Looking forward, work will be undertaken in the coming months on some possible constitutional changes to be put to Council in April 2021, the most significant of which would be for graded online games to be treated as games giving rise to voting rights at Council.

The Pearce Report recommends that the annual report of each Standing Committee sets out specific recommendations for Council to endorse and for Council, or the Board, as appropriate, to implement, with agreed time limits for implementation. The Governance Committee has no items for specific recommendation this year.

Finally, Andrew Leadbetter is retiring from the Governance Committee at the AGM. I and the other members of the Committee would like to thank him for his contributions over the past 25 years to the Governance Committee and the predecessor equivalent BCF body.

Robert Stern 23rd September, 2020