



**Minutes of the 158th Board Meeting of the English Chess Federation
Wednesday 13th December 2023 at 19.30 by Zoom**

Directors:

President, Dominic Lawson	APOL	DL
Chief Executive, Mike Truran		MT
Director of Finance, Alex Longson		AL
Director of Women's Chess, Aga Milewska	APOL	AM
Director of Junior Chess, Alex Holowczak		AH
Director of International Chess and External Relations, Malcolm Pein		MP
Director of Home Chess, Nigel Towers		NT
Director of Membership, Rob Willmoth	APOL	RW
Chair, Stephen Woodhouse		SVW
Non-Executive Director, Sarah Longson		SL
Non-Executive Director, Stephen Greep		SG
Non-Executive Director, Katarzyna Toma		

Invited: Observers and Guests

Chairman, Governance Committee, Robert Stern	RS
Chairman, Finance Committee, Nick Faulks	NF

Apologies, Minutes and Conflicts

1. Apologies for absence

As noted above.

2. Minutes of 157th Board Meeting

(SVW)

The minutes were approved.

3. Conflicts declaration

(SVW)

No new conflicts were identified.

Directors' Reports

4. Finance



AL referred to the report circulated with the Board papers showing the ECF in a sound financial position, but with scope for improving reporting and monitoring of information.

AL had put in place a provisional reporting schedule aimed at getting information to the Finance Committee as early as possible. He was currently working to re-forecast the 2024 budget with the aim of completing this by year-end.

AL noted that membership income for the year ended 31 August 2023 was slightly above forecast. He has begun to track the rolling 365 day average cash receipts and noted that this metric has been flat for 15 months (from 01/09/22 to 30/11/23), which was puzzling when taken in conjunction with the reported membership growth being reported of 20% year on year. Despite analytical efforts this has not yet been resolved, though AL believes the most likely explanation lies in the timing of payments and changes in member payment behaviour following the introduction of rolling membership. AL has carried out an initial reconciliation between the JustGo system, Xero and Stripe and believes payments are being properly collected from live members - which rules out the worst case possibility that payments are not being collected. However if the trend does not pick up by January, and the Board are unable to resolve this, AL suggests committing additional data analysis resource to the problem. Until then the Board should be prudent when forecasting future membership revenue growth.

It had been agreed that AL/MT/NF would hold quarterly meetings, and MT noted that the intention was that the first meeting be held before the year end. The aim was for these quarterly meetings to strengthen to relationship between the Board and the Finance Committee and to enable any issues to be dealt with in a timely manner.

5. Home Chess

NT had submitted a report but was unable to attend the meeting.

The committee gave a vote of thanks to retiring officers Ravi Sandhu and Owen Phillips as suggested by NT.

6. Membership

RW was not in attendance.

7. Women's Chess

There was no report under this heading as AM had given her apologies and had been very busy at the London Chess Classic.

8. Junior

AH had nothing further to add to his report.

9. International

MP's report was included in the agenda papers.

10. Merging Gold and Silver Membership

DT had provided a paper setting out the potential implementation issues and MT had proposed a group consisting of RW (Chair), DT, AL and DA to implement the changes. AL was included as it was important that the merger was correctly costed and took account of potential membership attrition.

11. ECF Committee Reform

SVW said that if the Board was happy with the suggestions in his paper, he would have further discussions with NF and RS outside the current meeting. RS had already spoken at length with SVW and would now consult with the other members of the Governance Committee. It was noted that NF had been unhappy that he had not had access to financial records, and SVW noted that this would be dealt with in the first of the planned meetings between AL, MT and NT (see above).

12. DCMS Funding Update

MP continued to work with DCMS and expected good progress to be made in January towards finalising arrangements.

Once funding had been confirmed, consideration would be given to the scope for additional expenditure in other areas. It was noted that there was little purpose in doing substantive work on this for the time being until that confirmation had been received and it was clearer what scope if any there would be for releasing funds from the international budget as a result. In the meantime reforecasting and budgeting would not take account of any DCMS funding.

In response to a question from NF it was noted that the Board had provided a paper to Council with proposals for supporting grassroots chess. Council had been asked to provide input on that paper, but nothing had been received so far.

13. Regulation 2 Updates

SVW had supplied a paper incorporating the changes agreed at the previous Board meeting and it was agreed that this would be adopted. Further changes were needed including updating the rota, which RS would discuss with SVW.

14. Junior Selection Policy

There was some discussion around the paper that AH had produced, culminating in the Board approving the proposals. It was agreed that the ECF would not provide logistical support to or appoint a Head of Delegation to an event that was not formally being supported, although the ECF would not stand in the way of players wishing to attend such events so long as this did not involve time or expense being incurred by the ECF. It was further agreed that the Selection Committee should extend its remit to include selecting the events to be supported as well as selecting which players should be invited to take part.

15. Congress Membership

This application was approved by the board.

16. ECF Club Membership

NT had produced a paper which was attached to the agenda. It was proposed that the democratic reach of the Council be expanded by allowing clubs of an appropriate size to apply for membership. MT noted that the Board would also be proposing that the membership fee be removed. The meeting approved the change in principle subject the necessary paperwork being put in place for April's Finance Meeting.

17. Chris Fegan Appeal

The meeting agreed that no payment be made to Chris Fegan in respect of the £50 appeal fee he had paid.

18. Honorary Life Membership

KT abstained from the consideration of this item given her participation in the Olympiads.

MT proposed that a recommendation to Council be made that the Board be given the discretion to award honorary life memberships to members of this year's and future years' successful Olympiad and European teams in recognition of their achievements and contribution to English chess.

The Board agreed to support this recommendation and to propose the creation of such life memberships to Council in accordance with Bye Law 1.

19. Any Other Business

SVW would contact members to advise the date of the next meeting, and also to develop a meeting schedule for 2024 that would provide an appropriate mix of face to face and Zoom meetings. There was general agreement that hybrid meetings had proved to be an ineffectual way of conducting Board meetings and would be discontinued.

SVW closed the meeting at 9.10 p.m.

