



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the English Chess Federation held on Saturday 14th October 2023 at 14.45 at The Edwardian Radisson Hotel, Free Trade Hall, Peter Street, Manchester M2 5GP and by video conference.

In attendance:

Adam Ashton	As:	Director of Finance
Jimmy Blair	Representing:	Cambridgeshire Chess Association
Gavin Cartwright	Representing:	ECF Silver Members
David Clayton	Representing:	Blackpool & Fylde League, Leyland Rapidplay, Ribble Congresses
	Proxy For:	Preston Chess Congress
Nigel Colter	Representing:	Hillingdon & District League
Chris Cook	Representing:	Hertfordshire Chess Association
Paul Cooksey	Representing:	Berkshire Chess Association
Nigel Dennis	Representing:	Chiltern Cup Counties League, Thames Valley League, Berks & Bucks Congress, Maidenhead Juniors, British Chess Problem Society, English Primary Schools Chess Association, National Youth Chess Association
Gareth Ellis	Representing:	Lancashire Chess Association, Merseyside Chess Association, Chester & District League, ECF Bronze Members
	Proxy For:	Cheshire & North Wales Chess Association, Frodsham Congress
Adrian Elwin	Representing:	ECF Platinum Members
	Proxy For:	East Anglian Chess Union, Norfolk County Chess Association, North Essex Chess League, Bury St Edmunds Congress
David Eustace	As:	Chair of Council
	Representing:	ECF Platinum Members
Peter Evans	Representing:	Staffordshire Chess Association
Peter Farr	Representing:	Sussex County Chess Association, Sussex League
	Proxy For:	Crowborough Rapidplay
Michael Farthing	As:	The Past Chair of Council
	Proxy For:	Lancaster Morecambe & District League
Nick Faulks	As:	Chair of the Finance Committee
	Representing:	Bronowski Trophy, Croydon & District Chess League
Chris Fegan	Representing:	Chess in Schools and Communities
	Proxy For:	Director of International Chess (for part of the meeting), The Past Chief Executive
Nikki Forster	Representing:	West of England Chess Union, Dorset County Chess Association, Bournemouth & District League
Satish Gaekwad	Representing:	Southern Counties Chess Union
Stephen Greep	As:	Non-Executive Director
Mike Gunn	Representing:	Friends of Chess
Christopher Holt	Representing:	Lincolnshire Chess Association, Nottinghamshire Chess Association

Peter Hughes	Representing:	Birmingham & District League
Roger Lancaster	Representing:	Watford Junior Chess
Alan Leary	Representing:	Herefordshire Chess Association
Steve Mann	Representing:	Doncaster Chess Congress
Alex McFarlane	Representing:	Caplin Hastings International Congress
	Proxy For:	Chess Arbiters Association
Mark Murrell	Representing:	Essex Chess Association
	Proxy For:	London Chess League, Kent County Chess Association, North Circular League
Malcolm Pein	As:	Director of International Chess
John Reyes	Representing:	Manchester Chess Federation, Midland Counties Chess Union, South East Lancashire League, Stockport & District Chess League, Stockport Rapidplay League, Torbay Chess League, Warrington & District League, ECF Silver Members
	Proxy For:	Bolton & District Chess League, Stockport Rapidplay Chess Congress
Paul Sharratt	Representing:	Worcestershire Chess Association, Cannock & District Chess League, Dudley & District League, North Staffordshire & District Chess Association, Wolverhampton & District Chess League, Worcester & District Chess League
Robert Stern	As:	Chair of the Governance Committee
	Representing:	Central London League, Pimlico Summer Tournament
	Proxy For:	London Public Service League, Golders Green Congress
Tina Teotia	Representing:	ECF Bronze Members
Nigel Towers	As:	Director of Home Chess
	Representing:	Warwickshire Chess Association
	Proxy For:	British Universities Chess Association Director of Junior Chess and Education, Director of Women's Chess
Brian Valentine	Representing:	Bedfordshire County Chess Association
Mike Waddington	Representing:	ECF Gold Members
Tim Wall	Representing:	Northern Counties Chess Union, Durham County Chess Association, Northumberland Chess Association, North East League, Northumbria Chess Masters, Northumbria Junior Chess Association, ECF Gold Members
	Proxy For:	Cleveland Chess Association, Cumbria Chess Association, South Tyne Chess League, Thanet & East Kent Chess League, South Lakes Congress
Huw Williams	Representing:	Surrey County Chess Association, Surrey Congress Ltd
	Proxy For:	Friends of Chess (for part of the meeting)
Rob Willmoth	As:	Director of Membership
	Representing:	Middlesex County Chess Association, Barnet Knights, Chess Coaching Services, English Junior Coaches and Organisers Association
	Proxy For:	City Chess Association
Stephen Woodhouse	As:	Non-Executive Chair
	Proxy For:	Cornwall County Chess Association, Leicestershire & Rutland Chess Association, Oxfordshire Chess Association, Somerset Chess Association, 4 Nations Chess League, British Rapidplay, Delancey UK Schools Chess Challenge, Kidlington Chess Congress, Witney Congress, Chief Executive

Toma Katarzyna	By invitation of the Chair (as a candidate)
Sarah Longson	By invitation of the Chair (as a candidate)
Mark Leonard	By invitation of the Chair
Damien McElvenny	By invitation of the Chair
Andrew Walker	Hosting the Zoom meeting

1. Appointment of Chair

The Chair was present for the start of the meeting.

2. Observation of a Minute's Silence

For colleagues who have died since the last meeting

3. Notices

Apologies for absence

Malcom Pein (though he did attend).

In attendance with the Permission of the Chair

Andrew Walker - ECF Office, Damien McElvenny, Mark Leonard

4. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 22 April 2023

The minutes of the meeting were approved and Council resolves that the Chair of the meeting shall sign the minutes of the Finance Council meeting of 22nd April 2023 as being an accurate record.

5. Matters Arising from these Minutes and not Otherwise on the Agenda

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

6. To Receive and Approve the Following Reports:

a) The Board of Directors' Report

The report was noted.

b) Report from the Non-Executive Directors

The report was noted with two items requiring further action.

Although the Board was working well but there were two areas where issues needed to be addressed:

- i. More attention to be given with regard to succession planning
- ii. Board interaction with the Finance committee. Stephen Woodhouse would work with Nick Faulks with regard to Board/Finance Committee interactions.

c) The Strategy Statement and Business Plan

This was not discussed as the Board had indicated that this was subject to revision and the effect of the new government funding needed to be assessed.

d) The Report of the Governance Committee

The report was noted with two items being further discussed:

- I. There was a discussion on the possible appointment of two family members to the posts of Finance Director and Non-Executive Director, and whether this might cause a conflict of interest. Some Members considered this would not be an appropriate arrangement. These comments would be passed on to the Board.
2. Chris Fegan raised an issue around the way an appeal he had made against a decision by the Complaints Committee had been dealt with. He requested more formal corporate ownership of such issues, an apology, publication of the result of the appeal on the ECF website and return of his £50 fee paid for the appeal. The Chair confirmed that Chris Fegan's views would be passed to the Board.

Under d) Robert Stern noted that following Chris Fegan's complaint the Governance Committee had recommended that a strict time control be put on the appeal process, and this had been incorporated into the Regulations at the Board's September meeting.

e) The Report of the Finance Committee

The report was noted with several issues being raised:

- I. Tim Wall requested further information on how the government funding would be spent. Malcolm Pein responded that he was still involved in talks with the Minister for Levelling Up and it was most likely that the money would be released as a series of grants with condition attached as to their use.
- II. The Finance Committee had not been satisfied with the level of spending on the Olympiad and considered there was a lack of transparency around how the expenses had been incurred. It was noted that the Board put considerable effort into providing information on how funds were spent, and Nigel Towers and Adam Ashton expressed their disappointment that the Report implied otherwise. The Board would look into Xero access for the Finance Committee.

7. Elections

For each post candidates were allowed five minutes to speak, and questions were invited.

The meeting was informed that Adam Ashton was not standing as Finance Director. One candidate for this post was Alex Longson to take on the role as a casual vacancy. The Council needed to be aware that Sarah Longson was also standing as a Non-Executive Director. Some members considered that this would present a conflict of interest since it was the role of a Non-Executive Director to monitor the Board and that NEDs needed to be completely independent. Sarah Longson recognised there could be a potential conflict but would be content to recuse herself if such a circumstance arose.

Malcolm Pein made the point that In view of the ongoing discussions with DCMS it was fundamental to have a Finance Director. If the meeting were unable to approve anyone then the Board would nominate someone at their next meeting who would then need to be approved at the next Council meeting in April 2024.

- a) Chair of Council
David Eustace, in post and agrees to continue

Not this candidate	2
b) Director of Home Chess	
Tim Wall , nominated by NCCU	46
Nigel Towers , in post and agrees to continue	210
None of the Above	4
c) Director of Membership	
Rob Willmoth , in post and agrees to continue	222
Not this candidate	12
d) Non-Executive Director	
Katarzyna Toma	100
Sarah Longson	125
None of the Above	17
e) FIDE Representative	
Malcolm Pein , in post and agrees to continue, nominated by Dir. Events	220
Not this candidate	4
f) Members of the Finance Committee	
Ray Clark , currently in post and nominated by Chair of Finance Committee	224
Not this candidate	5
David Eustace , currently in post and nominated by Director of Events	232
Not this candidate	1
g) Members of the Governance Committee	
Michael Farthing , nominated by the Chair of Governance	217
Not this candidate	5
Peter Hornsby , nominated by the Chair of Governance	217
Not this candidate	11
David Eustace , nominated by the Chair of Governance	217
Not this candidate	4

For information candidates for particular posts made the following points which may be of interest.

Director of Home Chess

Tim Wall said that he had a number of ideas to take English Chess to the next level. These included gaining more sponsorship, holding more international tournaments, and the setting up of a National Chess Centre in the Midlands/North East. He would look to work with the International and Event directors as well as with congress organisers.

Nigel Towers said his focus was on five main areas: events – the development of a portfolio of national events; Education at all levels – relaunching the Certificate of Excellence based upon the Certificate of Merit; grassroots chess – including club chess, online chess, and membership growth; and building on the ECF's existing capacity.

There was a discussion where various points were raised including the retention of junior players as they grew older, how best to increase sponsorship, how the ECF could better help organisers with their congresses. NT felt the grant money might help with organising more title norm events, but also more events aimed at the grassroots. He also thought an ECF register of venues would be of use to organisers. TW wanted to set up a national chess centre with the Chess Trust and John Robinson Trust joining the ECF as stakeholders. This could then also be used as a venue for events.

FIDE Delegate

It was noted that Malcolm Pein currently held three positions – as International Director, FIDE Representative, and England Open Team Captain and that it was perhaps difficult to fulfil all three positions. Malcolm had recently stepped down from the last role and was happy that he could perform the International Director and FIDE Representative roles together.

8. Appointment of Auditor

Adam Ashton advised the meeting that Watson Associates and the ECF were working well together, and he encouraged a vote to retain their services. The reappointment was accepted on a hand vote with none against.

9. Membership Options

There were two items on the agenda for changes to the current membership scheme, one from the Board and one from the NCCU. To ensure a fair and proper discussion these were considered together. The detailed voting arrangements were included in an attachment to the agenda – *Proposed Changes to Membership Scheme and Voting Arrangements*.

There was not a clear Board preferred option and at the Finance Council meeting the Board had been requested to develop several options. The Membership Director was in favour of a single membership scheme whereas the Home Director preferred to keep the existing Bronze category or to have no change as any other option might lead to a reduction in membership. There was a view that grandfather rights held potential for discord further down the line when e.g. student members had to change to adult membership and found they were paying more than older players. The Membership Director agreed that there should be some system to help members who encountered financial hardship.

Those who wanted no change should still vote in the earlier sections. If no change did not win at the final stage, they would then at least have had the opportunity to vote for their preferred option for change.

Papers on the various options can be found at: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/about/ecf-council-and-board/>

First Stage – vote between the Board options 1 and 2.

<i>Board Option 1</i>	40
<i>Board Option 2</i>	215

Second Stage – vote between Board Option 2 (winner above) and the NCCU proposal

TW said that in a survey of Gold members there had been a clear preference for the NCCU proposal. The NCCU proposal would also allow for the reward scheme to be costed at £5 per member, which would be an additional benefit compared to the current rates of £10 for Silver members and £15 for Bronze members. Gavin Cartwright had surveyed the Silver members, and this had produced a strong majority in favour of retaining a separate Bronze level. John Reyes felt that Bronze members were often only members because they are required to be and that any change that did not retain the Bronze level could lead to a reduction in membership. Nick Faulks liked the proposal but noted that a flat membership fee of £25 was too low and would lead to a reduction in membership income.

Board Option 2	211
NCCU	54

Third Stage – Vote between option selected in the Second Stage and No Change.

The inclusion of no change was a legitimate choice and indeed Robert Stern pointed out that it was necessary to include this as an option as it represented the current constitutional position. It was not incumbent upon the Board to reach a unanimous decision on this matter, or to vote in accordance with any particular director’s wishes. They had been asked to produce several options and had done so. Indeed, it was important that the board operate in a democratic manner and entirely normal for the board to abide by any vote it held.

Winner of stage 2 (Board Option 2)	136
No change	122

The following resolution was therefore adopted.

“THAT option 2 as further described in the paper entitled “Membership Options Paper” shall be adopted and that with effect from a date to be determined by the Board (and subject to the Board so determining) the Direct Members Bye Laws be amended by:

(a) deleting the defined terms “Silver Concessionary Members” and “Silver Members;”

(b) deleting “Silver” in the wording above the table in paragraph 3 and the column headed “Silver” in the table in paragraph 3”.

Fourth Stage – Amendment to Direct Members’ Bye Laws

Subsequent to the approval of the amalgamation of the Gold and Silver categories of membership as above the following changes to the Bye Laws need to be implemented.

In favour	217
Against	22

The following resolution was therefore adopted.

The following is the resolution to be proposed at the fourth stage, if the fourth stage is reached:

“THAT, subject to and simultaneously with the amendments in the preceding resolution put to Council taking effect, paragraph 5 of the Direct Members’ Bye Laws be amended by (i) deleting paragraph 5.1 (d) in its entirety and re-lettering paragraph 5.1 (e) accordingly; (ii) deleting the first sentence of paragraph 5.2 and replacing it with: “Each of the categories in 5.1 (a), (b) and (d) above shall be entitled each year to elect two and the category in 5.1 (c) above to elect four representatives (who shall in all cases be Direct Members but not necessarily of the relevant category)”; and (iii) in the next sentence deleting the words “(c), (d) or “(e)” and replacing them with the words “(c) or (d)”.”

10. ECF Awards

The full details of the awards could be seen at - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/ECF-Awards-2023.pdf>

Anybody interested in further information should contact Stephen Greep who was the Chair of the Awards Committee.

11. Regulation Changes

Council was invited to note:

- a) A revised version of Regulation No. 5 (ECF Complaints Procedure) and,
- b) The adoption of Regulation No. 7 (ECF Complaints against Direct Members and Supporters Procedure).

12. Time and Place of Future Meetings

Council resolves that in 2024 its Finance Meeting shall be held by Zoom on 27 April 2024 and its Annual General Meeting shall be held in London, with access also by Zoom, on 26 October 2024.

13. Grass Roots Development

The Chief Executive had produced this paper and anyone with any additional ideas for input should contact Mike Truran or any other Board member.

14. Any Other Business

Chris Fegan proposed a vote of thanks to the Chair for conducting the meeting in difficult circumstances.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 18.30.