



**Minutes of the 163rd Board Meeting of the English Chess Federation
Wednesday 4 September 2024 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		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		RW
Chair, Stephen Woodhouse		SVW
Non-Executive Director, Sarah Longson		SL
Non-Executive Director, Stephen Greep		SG
Non-Executive Director, Katarzyna Toma		KT

Invited: Observers and Guests

Chairman, Governance Committee, Robert Stern	RS
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Apologies, Minutes and Conflicts

1. Apologies for absence

As noted above.

2. **Minutes of 162nd Board Meeting** (SVW)

The minutes were approved.

3. **Conflicts declaration** (SVW)

No new conflicts were identified.

Decisions

4. **Regulation 7 amendments** (SVW)

The updated document had been attached to the agenda and was passed nem con. A change to restrict the scope to consider complaints against non-members would be considered at a later date.

5. **Regulation 5 amendments** (RS)

The changes to Regulation 5 were largely intended to discourage vexatious appeals. There was some discussion around the wording under 2.5. MT suggested that the wording be amended to read:

'2.5 All information provided pursuant to the complaint, including details which are personal to either party, may be made available to the other party *as appropriate* in order to enable the other party to respond.'

The regulation changes including the amendment were adopted nem con.

In response to a question from AH it was confirmed that the changes needed only to be noted by Council and did not require Council approval.

6. Status of the Chess Centre Limited (SVW)

The aim was to have The Chess Centre Limited (CCL) struck off as it had no continuing function. It was confirmed that the ECF and CCL would work together to achieve this. There had been an outstanding debt to the ECF which it was agreed should be written off with a request being made to the Chess Trust for a grant to cover the amount being written off and the costs of closing and striking off.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was agreed that the following resolutions be passed

THAT all amounts owed by The Chess Centre Limited to the English Chess Federation are written off and that Alex Longson is authorised to write to the Board of Directors of The Chess Centre accordingly.

THAT in order to facilitate the closure of The Chess Centre Limited, any further support provided by the English Chess Federation will be provided without charge and that the English Chess Federation will cover any further costs reasonably necessary to enable The Chess Centre Limited to be struck off.

THAT following the completion of the striking off of The Chess Centre Limited, a request is made to the trustees of The Chess Trust for a payment of such amount as covers the costs to the English Chess Federation of its support for The Chess Centre Limited.

It was also agreed that SVW would agree the wording of the request to the Chess Trust with MT.

7. AGM Preparation

7a. Succession Planning

MT intended to stand for re-election in October 2024 but then to stand down in October 2025 at which point he will have given almost ten years' service as CEO. SVW noted the enormous changes that had been made during MT's term in office.

NT, who had served four years as Home Director plus several more years as board secretary, also intended to stand down. His term finishes in October 2026 but he is looking to stand down early during the course of next year, preferably in April but no later than October 2025.

In addition, SG confirmed that he would also not be standing for re-election and will therefore cease to be a director in October 2025, and AL was considering whether he wished to stand.

MP confirmed that he intended to stand for re-election as International Director in October 2025.

SVW had produced a process map for appointing a successor as CEO which had been attached to the agenda papers.

There followed a lengthy discussion in which it was noted that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find competent volunteers prepared to give up significant amounts of time to work for the ECF. It was agreed that the structure of the Board and the support for the work of Board members and the ECF should be reviewed in order to enable the membership to be served appropriately. NT indicated that he had given thought to this in the context of the work covered by his directorate and how to make the Home Director role more viable for volunteers with limited time.

He considered that options that could be considered as part of a wider review of Board and Board support structure might be to split the Home Director Role into separate positions (for example, Home Director and National Events Director), and also to establish an IT/Operations Director role, while possibly supplementing the positions with more paid officers for key roles. It was recognised that while the wider review would need to consider carefully the financial implications of remunerating non-Board roles the present position was unsustainable given the time demands being placed on some Board roles.

It was agreed that AL would work with MT and SVW to consider various options and the related cost implications.

7b. Strategy Statement and Business Plan

SVW had produced a draft strategy paper which had been attached to the agenda and the Board members were invited to provide their feedback. It was agreed that SVW and MT would finalise the paper in time for it to be submitted to the Council meeting at the end of October.

Directors' Reports

8. Finance (AL)

AL's report indicated his intention to present a report on mitigating costs and maintaining reserves.

Also, in response to a question from AH it was confirmed that membership numbers were lower than forecast, but had still increased over the year.

9. Home Chess (NT)

NT's report covered a wide range of topics including the successful running of the British and the planned UK Blitz and National Club. NT also reported on his intention to appoint a Manager of Organisers who would be asked to work on establishing an organiser's registration system.

There was a short discussion around how to encourage online players to take up over the board chess. MP would be meeting with Lichess and would discuss this with them, and AH would talk to Chess.com about closer relations between them and the ECF at the Olympiad.

10. Membership

No report had been submitted.

11. Women's Chess

No report had been submitted.

12. Junior Chess

No report had been submitted.

13. International

The International Report noted that there had been a successful summer of chess including:

- A strong and well attended British Championship.
- Individual success for Bodhana Sivanandan, Shreyas Royal and others.
- Improving international performances reflecting the benefits of the DCMS funding.

Any Other Business

It was confirmed that the Council meeting would be a hybrid meeting.

There being no further business SVW closed the meeting at 9.0 p.m.