



**Minutes of the 164<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting of the English Chess Federation  
Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 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	APOL	AM
Director of Junior Chess, Alex Holowczak		AH
Director of International Chess and External Relations, Malcolm Pein	APOL	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	APOL	SG
Non-Executive Director, Danny Rosenbaum		DR

**Invited: Observers and Guests**

Chair, Finance Committee, Nick Faulks	NF
---------------------------------------	----

**Apologies, Minutes and Conflicts**

1. Apologies for absence

As noted above.

2. **Minutes of 163<sup>rd</sup> Board Meeting** (SVW)

The minutes were approved.

3. **Conflicts declaration** (SVW)

No new conflicts were identified.

4. **Director Attendance**

It was noted that there was a low attendance. A number of directors were absent due to unavoidable diary clashes or illness, but there were a number for whom no notice or explanation for their absence was given.

It was agreed that SVW would address the issue of director attendance, particularly with no notice being given.

## **5. AGM Debrief**

**(MT)**

MT reported on the AGM, noting that:

- (a) The meeting was positive, with active and constructive engagement from a range of Council members including Steve Westmoreland and Tim Walker.
- (b) The offers of support from Council members with varied skill sets relevant to the tasks needed to develop the ECF were encouraging.
- (c) There would be benefit in reviewing and improving communications with all members through social media. DR agreed to review this and report to the next meeting.

**Action:** DR to consider social media presence in readiness for the next meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> December.

## **6. Board Structure: Events Director**

**(SVW)**

NT has announced his intention to stand down as Home Director no later than at the April Finance Council meeting.

The scope of his contribution as Home Director has been extensive, and it has been recognised that the role will need to be split as part of the consideration of Board structure. Within that, it has been agreed that a new role of Events Director will need to be created. Given the programme of events, identifying a new Events Director is a priority so that there can be a timely handover, with plenty of time for the new incumbent to prepare for key events and agree an appropriate structure.

It was noted that:

- (a) The Events Director's role would not be to manage individual events.
- (b) Instead, they would be responsible for overseeing the structure and design of events, working with events managers appointed to run the individual events.
- (c) It is intended that event managers would be remunerated.
- (d) There would be no prohibition on directors, whether the Events Director or others, being appointed to event manager positions (and being remunerated accordingly), but with transparency on the appointment and steps being taken to ensure that no director determines the level of remuneration for a position to which they are appointed.

**Action:** NT to identify potential candidates for the Events Director position with a view to reporting back to the next Board meeting.

## **7. Board Restructuring: Reorganisation**

**(SVW)**

In addition to the review of the Home/Events Director role, it is recognised, with MT due to stand down as CEO in October 2025, that the wider structure of the Board should be reviewed in the light of the developing activities and services provided by the ECF.

Accordingly, it was agreed that SVW should organise a working party to review Board structure. The intention would be for that group to meet in November, with proposals being submitted for consideration by the Board in December.

**Action: SVW to establish working party meeting in November.**

## **8. Financial Reforecasting**

**(AL)**

AL, recapitulating his update given at the 2024 AGM, confirmed that adverse variances to the 2024-2025 budget had been identified. These were caused primarily by lower than anticipated paid member numbers at year end (15,500 budget vs 14,750 actual) and an incorrect assumption that a temporary member of staff's contract would be terminated in August 2024. Along with some other minor variances the shortfall identified amounts to £35k which, left unmitigated, would see the ECF fall below its reserves target of £50,000 by the 2025 financial year end.

It was agreed that SVW would facilitate a reforecast review with operational directors where mitigating actions would be agreed to set the ECF back on track to achieve a breakeven result for 2024-2025. AL agreed to report back at the December Board meeting for the Board to review and agree the reforecast, namely the revised financial plan that the Board would work towards for the remainder of 2025. This reforecast will be shared with Council at the next Finance Council meeting. The Board would follow the advice of the Governance Committee as to whether Council would be required to approve any elements of the reforecast.

At the AGM AL commented that he hoped to publish a reforecast by the end of October. The Board agreed that this was not so time sensitive that it could not wait until December and it was more important to get complete clarity amongst the operational directors.

**Action: SVW to arrange financial review meeting in November.**

## **9. IT Future-Proofing**

**(MT/NT)**

The fragility of the disparate IT systems operated by the ECF, which are fundamental to the provision of core ECF services including the rating system and LMS, is of increasing concern, particularly when linked to the resulting key person dependency risk which this causes.

MT, AL and NT are leading a project to address this issue. This will continue with an update to be provided to the Board in December.

**Action: MT and NT to report back to Board in December.**

## **10. International**

**(MP)**

Although absent from the meeting due to ill health, MP had submitted a report on international activity which was discussed.

The report noted mixed performances from the English teams at the Olympiad. In addition, MP reported on the successes of the Global Chess League and WR Masters, both held in London and with a strong presence of elite players.

There have also been individual successes which should be noted, including:

Shreyas Royal: England's youngest ever GM.

Ameet Ghasi: now England's oldest direct qualifier for the GM title at 37.

Jonah Willow: first GM norm at 21.

Aaravamudhan Balaji: IM title.

Anusha Subramanian, Elis Dicen, Ruqayyah Rida and Kamila Hryshchenko: WFM titles.

### **Any Other Business**

It was confirmed that the next Board meeting would be held on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 7.30 p.m. on Zoom.

There being no further business, SVW closed the meeting at 9.05 p.m.