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**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the English Chess Federation held on Saturdy 26 October 2024 at 1.30 pm at the Mercure London Hyde Park Hotel and via Zoom**

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| **Attendee** | **Representing** |
|  |  |
| Blair, Jimmy | Cambridgeshire CA |
| Cartwright, Gavin | Gold Members |
| Clayton, David | Blackpool & Fylde League, Leyland Rapidplay, Ribble Congresses |
| Cook, Chris | Hertfordshire CA |
| Cooksey, Paul | Berkshire CA |
| Dennis, Nigel | Chiltern Cup Counties League, Berks & Bucks Congress, EPSCA, NYCA, Maidenhead Juniors, Thames Valley League |
| Ellis, G | Chester & District League, Merseyside CA |
| Elwin, Adrian | Platinum Members |
| Eustace, David | Platinum Members, Chair of Council |
| Farrar, Barbara | Stockport & District Chess League, Warrington & District Chess League |
| Farthing, Michael | Past Chair of Council |
| Faulks, Nick | Chair of the Finance Committee, Croydon & District Chess League |
| Forster, Nikki | West of England Chess Union, Dorset County CA, Bournemouth & District League |
| Gilbert, David | London Chess League, Kent CCA, LPSC |
| Greep, Stephen | Non-Executive Director |
| Gunn, Mike | Friends of Chess |
| Holt, Christopher | Lincolnshire CCA, Nottinghamshire CCA |
| Holowczak, Alex | Director of Junior Chess and Education, BUCA |
| Hornsby, Peter | 20/20 Chess |
| Lancaster, Roger | Watford Junior Chess |
| Lettington, David | Southern Counties Chess Union |
| Lewis, Chris | Shropshire CCA, Birmingham & District League, |
| Longson, Alex | Director of Finance, Delancey UK Chess Challenge |
| Mann, Steve | Doncaster Congress |
| McFarlane, Alex | Caplin Hastings International Congress |
| Morrison, Julian | Gold Members, Essex CA |
| Mulleady, Peter | Bolton & District Chess League |
| Pein, Malcolm | Director of International Chess, FIDE Delegate |
| Reyes, John | Manchester Chess Federation, South East Lancashire League, Torbay Chess League |
| Stern, Robert | Chair of the Governance Committee, Central London League, Pimlico Summer Tournament |
| Teotia, Tina | Bronze Members |
| Toma, Katarzyna | Non- Executive Director |
| Towers, Nigel | Director of Home Chess, Warwickshire CA |
| Truran, Mike | CEO, Oxfordshire CCA, 4NCL, Kidlington Congress, Witney Congresses |
| Valentine, Brian | Bedfordshire CCA |
| Walker, Tim | Midland Counties Chess Union |
| Wall, Tim | Northern Counties Chess Union, Durham CCA, Northumberland CA, Northumbria Masters, Gold Members |
| Westmoreland, Steve | Yorkshire CA |
| Wickham, John | East Anglian Chess Union, North Essex Chess League, Norfolk CCA, Bury St Edmunds Congress, Life Members |
| Wildman, Jo | Kent Junior CA |

1. **Appointment of Chairman**

The Chairman was present for the start of the meeting.

1. **Observation of a Minute’s Silence**

A minute’s silence was held for colleagues who have died since the last meeting.

1. **Notices**

**Apologies for absence**

Nigel Colter

Mark Murrell

Robert Willmoth

Stephen Woodhouse

**In attendance with the Permission of the Chairman**

Debra Atkinson - ECF Office

Ray Clark - Finance Committee

Danny Rosenbaum - Canidate for election

1. **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 27 April 2024**

The minutes were approved nem con without amendment.

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

There were no matters arising from the minutes

1. **To Receive and Approve the Following Reports:**
2. **The Board of Directors’ Report**
3. **Report from the Non-Executive Directors**
4. **The Strategy Statement and Business Plan**
5. **The Report of the Governance Committee**
6. **The Report of the Finance Committee**

The above were all accepted.

Comments on reports:

b) Report from the Non-Executive Directors

In response to a question regarding more consultation on appointment of directors MT stated that the Board had recently started to consider a potential restructure of the Board, and that having more directors on the Board than at present ran the risk of the Board becoming too unwieldy.

c) Strategy Statement and Business Plan

It was noted that there was a document on the ECF website with information on how the DCMS funds had been spent. It was noted that the funds had been expended on elite/professional chess in accordance with DCMS’s requirements.

DCMS had insisted that some of the funds be used for the necessary administrative support, and there were two part-time people dealing with this, which left MP free to focus on allocation/prioritisation o funds.

MP noted that it was essential to promote good news stories both to ensure that members were aware of the use of funds and to assist in securing additional funds. It was also noted that the Board considered it imprudent to assume that the funding would automatically be renewed, and plans were being constructed on that basis.

e) Report of the Finance Committee

Nick Faulks (NF) advised that the committee had agreed that they would need to meet to produce a more comprehensive report for the April meeting. Alex Longson (AL) noted that modelling membership revenue had been challenging following the introduction of rolling membership and the merger of Silver and Gold. It was not possible to calculate with full certainty the impact of these changes. Currently there was a £35,000 shortfall in the forecast but there were positive steps that could be taken to mitigate that figure. More information would be provided in April. AL said that there was a good possibility that an inflation linked increase in membership fees would be needed for 2025.

It was noted that game fee invoices had been delayed following the departure of a contractor, but work was in in hand to get them issued as soon as possible.

Gavin Cartwright (GC) said there had been 476 responses to the Gold members survey, and that a not inconsiderable number of those had indicated they were not happy with the increased fees following the merger of the Silver and Gold categories.

AL said that it was becoming much harder to find volunteers who were prepared to commit to the number of hours that were necessary to fulfil the director roles, and this was why it was being suggested that some of that work might be remunerated in future. MT noted that, in the absence of a membership fee increase, it might be necessary to either cut the number of ECF events, increase entry fees, or reduce prize money. However, once fees were raised or prize money reduced it could very quickly lead to a large drop in entrants. Nigel Towers (NT) said that the current system was unsustainable as there were too few volunteers generally, with too much work falling on a small number of people. In addition, for ECF organised events it was particularly difficult to achieve break-even budgets. If conditions were cut for top players, they would not attend, and this made the event less attractive to grassroots chess players. He reiterated MT’s point regarding increasing fees/reducing prize money. GC said that the Gold members survey had shown that members did appreciate events, and members needed to be better informed as to the costs associated with the running of events.

It was suggested that members needed to be kept regularly informed about the various ECF activities so that they better understood where their membership fees were spent. In this connection, it was suggested that the ECF might consider overhauling/updating its social media presence as another means to increasing its profile.

There was some discussion around the use of sponsors, and it was noted that paid for fundraisers could put off some potential sponsors who wished all their support to go to the event itself.

1. **Elections**
2. President

**Dominic Lawson**, in post and agrees to continue 201

Not this candidate 16

1. Chair of Council

**David Eustace,** in post and agrees to continue 205

Not this candidate 9

1. Chief Executive Officer

**Mike Truran**, in post and agrees to continue\* 203

Not this candidate 0

1. Director of Finance \*\*

**Alex Longson**, in post and agrees to continue 217

Not this candidate 0

1. Director of Women’s Chess

**Aga Milewska**, in post and agrees to continue217

Not this candidate 0

1. Director of Junior Chess and Education

**Alex Holowczak**, currently in post and agrees to continue 202

Not this candidate 16

g) Non-Executive Director

**Danny Rosenbaum**, new appointment, nominated by Mike Truran 191

Not this candidate 19

1. FIDE Delegate

**Malcolm Pein**, in post and agrees to continue 208

Not this candidate 7

1. Chair of the Governance Committee

**Robert Stern**, in post and agrees to continue 202

Not this candidate 16

1. Member of the Finance Committee

**Zoe Varney**, new appointment, nominated by Nick Faulks 214

Not this candidate 3

1. Member of the Governance Committee

**Mark Murrell**, new appointment, nominated by Robert Stern 204

Not this candidate 13.

\*MT reiterated that he expected be standing down in October 2025

\*\*AL stated that he would prefer to stand down in October 2025 but

would remain in place for the full three years in the absence of any

other candidate coming forward.

Comments made during election procedures:

Under f), AH said that he would like to see more organisations apply to be included in the Junior Development Pathway. Any organisation that was interested could apply via the website. He also said that he would like to some financial support from the ECF for clubs that were involved with the Pathway.

In response to a question from Tim Wall (TW), AH confirmed that there was no intention to alter the current procedure for juniors entering events abroad. There were recommended rating levels quoted for such events, and if a player was entered who did not meet those criteria, AH contacted the parents to advise them that the event might not be suitable for their child.

Under g), Danny Rosenbaum (DR) confirmed that he intended to continue with his social media role, and did not feel this would prevent him from properly fulfilling the requirements of the Non-Executive Director role.

Under h), MP updated the meeting on the recent FIDE Congress in Budapest where the continued suspension of the Russian Federation had been upheld. In fact, only 22 of 221 delegates had voted for the sanctions to be lifted. That said, FIDE remained a Russian dominated institution, with Russia wielding influence through the Kazakhstan Federation.

1. **Appointment of Auditor**

It was agreed nem con that Watson Associates would be reappointed.

1. **Future Proofing the ECF’s IT Estate**

Many areas of the ECF’s IT estate were less than ideal: for example, the membership/rating/LMS systems worked independently of each other and contained unnecessary duplication of information, and much of the software needed to be replaced or refactored to make it fit for purpose and to reduce security and maintenance risks. There was also an issue with key person dependencies. Board members and officials had already met with an IT company to scope out what work was likely to be required. This was a large project, and significant investment was likely to be required, but the result would be a modern and future proofed set of systems that would be based on up to date technology, would be more easily maintainable, would be better integrated, and would avoid spiralling IT costs in the future. The current view was the membership system would first be updated with rating and LMS systems being updated later. AL confirmed that no commitment had yet been made and that the proposals would be put out to tender. NT noted that he expected the final cost of the project to be significantly higher than the initial cost that had been quoted, although refactoring the systems rather than rewriting them from scratch still needed to be investigated as a more cost-effective option. The Board would be putting together a full specification so that a better idea of the scale of costs could be obtained. A temporary project manager would be appointed, and they would produce a full report for the Finance meeting in April.

1. **ECF Awards**

DE invited those present to view the full details of these awards on the ECF website.

1. **Report on the Grassroots Fund**

Stephen Greep had provided a written report for the meeting. (There was one error – it mentioned 10 regions when there was in fact nine.) A total of £90,000 was available to the regions plus an additional central amount. There were nine regional co-ordinators, and advertising had been undertaken both nationally by the ECF, and locally by the co-ordinators. Applications were approved by the co-ordinators and then put to a central body for final approval. To date, 50% of applications had received funding, with some of the applications not meeting the specification given. The next round of funding would end on 1 December 2024. 38 applications had been put forward for the round that ended on 1 September, and a similar number was expected for the December round. Further information would be supplied in the next month or so and some of the grant recipients would be asked for their comments on how the funding had helped their club. TW noted that more publicity could be given regarding applications that had been agreed as awareness among members did not appear to be very high.

1. **Constitution Changes**
2. Articles

Resolution: “That the articles of association of the ECF be amended by making the changes as set out in the draft document presented to the meeting and signed by the Chair for the purposes of identification.”

The Resolution was passed nem con.

1. Changes to Bye-Laws

Resolution: “That the Direct Members’ Bye-Laws be amended by making the changes set out in the draft document presented to the meeting and signed by the Chair for the purposes of identification.”

It was agreed by the meeting that the Bye-Laws would be amended to reflect that those who received a free Yearbook would also have the postage paid. The Resolution was passed nem con.

Resolution: “That the Game Fee Bye-Laws be amended by making the changes set out in the draft document presented to the meeting and signed by the Chair for the purposes of identification.”

The Resolution was passed nem con.

1. **Changes to regulations to be noted.**

Regulations 5 and 7 had been amended as per the constitution paper. Council was asked to note the changes.

1. **Time and Place of Future Meetings**

Following some discussion as the relative merits of Zoom only and hybrid meetings, it was agreed that the Finance Meeting would remain Zoom only, and the AGM would remain as a hybrid meeting as a number of members saw hybrid meetings as a good opportunity to build relationships.

Resolution: Council resolved that in 2025 its Finance Council meeting shall be held by Zoom on Saturday 26April and that its Annual General Meeting shall be held on 25 October at Birmingham.

The dates were agreed.

1. **Any Other Business**

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 17.28.

Approved: ………………………………………………………………………………….. Date…………………………

David Eustace, Chair of Council