

ECF AGM October 2019 Minutes

The ECF Council met on Saturday 12th October at the Thistle City Hotel, London. A full agenda and all associated paperwork can be found [here](#).

Present - There were 45 attendees as follows:

Officers - Mike Gunn (*MG - Chair, Surrey Border League, and Surrey Congress*), Nigel Towers (*NT - Warwickshire Chess Association and Secretary*), Julian Clissold (*JC - Non-Executive Chairman and Manchester Chess Federation*), Robert Stern (*RS - Governance Chairman and Central London League*), Adrian Elwin (*AE - Home Chess Director*), David Eustace (*DE - Finance Director*), David Thomas (*DT - Membership Director*), Julie Denning (*JD - Non-Executive Director, Sussex, Mid-Sussex League and Crowborough Congress*), Stephen Woodhouse (*SW - Non-Executive Director*)

Delegates - Francis Bowers (*FB - Platinum Members' Representative, Lincolnshire Chess Association and Cambridgeshire Chess Association*), John Wickham (*Platinum Members, East Anglia Chess Association, Norfolk County Chess Association and Bury St Edmunds Congress*), Rob Willmoth (*RWM - Gold Members, Barnet Knights and Chess Coaching Services*), Lorin d'Costa (*LDC - Gold Members' Representative*), Michael Farthing (*MF - Silver Members' Representative, South East Lancashire League, Lancaster and Morecambe League, Blackpool and Fylde League, and Preston Chess Congress*), John Reyes (*JR - Silver Members' Representative, South East Lancashire League, Stockport Chess League, Stockport Rapidplay League and Stockport Rapidplay*), Keith Jones (*Silver Members*), Angus French (*AF - Bronze Members' Representative and Croydon and District League*), Gareth Ellis (*GE - Bronze, Northern Counties Chess Union, Merseyside Chess Association, Central Lancashire League, Warrington and District Chess League*), Stewart Reuebn (*Vice President*), Samantha Ali (*Chess in Schools and Communities*), Chris Cook (*CC - Hertfordshire*), Paul Cooksey (*PC - Berkshire*), Kevin Dalley (*KD - Derbyshire*), Nigel Dennis (*ND - EPSCA*), David Farley (*DF - Wirral Chess League*), Nick Faulks (*NF - Bronowski Trophy*), Ian Hames (*Thanet and East Kent Chess League*), Roger Hardy (*RH - West of England Chess Union, Bristol and District Chess League*), Peter Hughes (*PH - Birmingham & District League*), Andrew Leadbetter (*ALD - MCCU*), Steve Mann (*Leeds Chess Association*), Mark Murrell (*Southern Counties Chess Union and Essex*), Alex Longson (*UKCC*), Mark Rivlin (*MR - London Chess League*), Paul Shepherd (*PS - Surrey Chess Association*), Claire Summerscale (*CS, 4NCL, Kidlington Chess Congress*), Brian Valentine (*BV - Bedfordshire*), Tim Wall (*TW - Northern Counties Chess Union, South Tynedale League, Cumbria, Durham, Northumberland, Northumbria Junior Chess Association*), John Wheeler (*JW - Hampshire, Portsmouth and District Chess League*), Huw Williams (*Thames Valley League*)

Guests by invitation - Carl Portman (*CP - Development Officer*), Daniel Rosenbaum (*DR - ECF Social Media Manager*), Ursula Wielgosz (*UW - Junior Chess Parent*), Gary Willson (*GW - ECF Office*), Andrew Walker (*AW - ECF Office*).

Apologies- Apologies were noted from Mike Truran (*MT - Chief Executive, 4NCL, Kidlington Congress, Witney Rapidplay, Witney Weekend Congress, and Oxfordshire*), Alex Holowczak (*AH - Junior Chess Director*), Malcolm Pein (*MP - International Chess Director and FIDE Delegate*), Chris Fegan (*CF - Women's Chess Director, and North Essex*), and Tim Herring (*TH - Finance Committee Chairman*).

The meeting started at 1-30 pm.

- 1. Appointment of Chairman** – Mike Gunn (MG) was confirmed as the meeting chair.
- 2. Observation of a Minute's Silence** - The recent passing of colleagues including Marcus Misson of Cambs was recognised by a minute's silence.

3. Notices

- Location of printed lists of apologies for absence – As above;
- Members voting by individual proxy and members voting by proxy to the Chairman. - Noted and available;
- Announcement of others in attendance with the permission of the Chairman – Guests attending by invitation were noted as above.
- Appointment of Tellers – Ursula Wielgosz (UW) and Andrew Leadbetter (AL) were appointed as tellers; Michael Farthing (MF) acted as Voting Registration Officer;
- Voting Register – The voting register was noted and available to the Voting Registration Officer and tellers.

4. Approval/ Correction of the Minutes of the AGM – The AGM minutes can be found [here](#) and were approved nem con subject to two amendments as follows:

- PS (Surrey) asked that the minutes be amended to indicate that 'a question was asked' about LMS budgeting rather than the question being attributed to him as he was not present for that part of the meeting.
- PS asked that a subsequent exchange with MP in relation to Malcolm's criticism of the Surrey on-line consultation be put on record. As background to the survey questions, PS explained that he felt that the doubling in member contributions to International had implied that there was effectively no limit being placed on International Spend. PS indicated that MP had said this was not the case and he was willing to comply with an International Spending limit.

5. Matters Arising from these Minutes and not otherwise on the agenda

In relation to the straw poll on membership fees for Counties and Associations, AL asked about the difference between a straw poll and a normal vote of Council.

MG indicated that a straw poll was a poll taken to take the sense of what the meeting felt so that the Board could take notice of this. A normal vote of Council was a formal vote taken on a resolution.

AL asked that Unions and Counties with no game submissions should be notified of the rule that membership fees will be charged where there are no offsetting game fee submissions, and further requested that the charges should not be applied until the end of next season.

MG noted AL's concerns, but pointed out that the arrangements for organisation membership fees had always been in the Articles and were unchanged. He said that if AL wished these not to be chargeable until next season he should submit a motion to this effect.

6. To Receive and Approve the following reports:

(a) The Board of Directors' report and Strategy Statement (MT)

Board Report - JC presented the Board of Directors report and Strategy Statement, highlighting three main areas.

- Demographic concerns and the appointment of the Development Officer
- The importance of Women's chess and activities to promote chess to female players
- Ongoing Improvements in the ECF's financial systems

Questions - JC invited questions on the report and strategy with inputs from the meeting as follows:

Implementation - UW noted the strategy and asked why there was no implementation plan. She also asked whether a breakdown was available for membership data and why this was not made public on the web site including figures for junior retention levels.

DT said that he had presented detailed membership figures to the board including age profiles and retention level and an action was agreed to publish a summary of this information on the web site so that this data was visible to all.

Internet Chess - TW asked what progress was being made with the provision of an ECF internet chess service which he felt was overdue.

JC explained that NT is leading this area and asked him to provide a summary of progress. NT explained that an ECF internet service was being established based on online ECF clubs/ teams with a number of the leading providers, open to ECF members and supporters. The service was currently in beta test with a test group of players participating in scheduled tournaments on a weekly basis. The plan will be to stage international events as well as the weekly tournaments in due course. Once in production the results from ECF club games will be used to provide rapid and blitz internet ratings for club members which would be published on a monthly basis on the ECF site. NT noted that a number of Council members were already in the beta test group and invited further participation from interested council members.

TW asked when the service would go live and NT replied that he was currently planning for a launch in November although a specific date had not yet been decided.

Supporters – It was noted that there were only 12 supporters to date but notwithstanding the limited numbers a question was raised about Supporter representation at Council.

RS replied saying that this had already been considered by the board and a decision taken to defer consideration of how supporters should be represented until numbers had increased relative to total membership numbers.

Achievements and Challenges – AF noted the various achievements listed in the report but questioned what had not been achieved and where the main challenges had been.

He questioned the time taken to appoint a development officer and said that he thought there was a shortfall of 280 members compared with planned figures.

He also noted that there had been 4 years of loss making in the accounts and questioned whether this created a problem with the ECF's reserves.

In response JC indicated that there is a Business Plan which is based on the strategy and which had informed the summary of achievements in the report.

He also indicated that the Development Officer would be goaled on KPI's consistent with the board's goals and that CP would be developing his detailed plans on that basis.

DT comment on AF's assessment of membership numbers. He recognised that the ECF is down on forecast membership levels but indicated that the revenue loss was offset by a corresponding increase in game fee receipts which were significantly over budget.

DE replied to AF's point about 4 years of loss making. He recognised that this was correct but pointed out that the last 4 years were preceded by 4 good years and the ECF had made the choice to spend some of the surplus which it had accumulated.

Development Officer Plans - JC asked CP to address the meeting to cover his plans as the newly appointed Development Officer. CP said that he reported to the ECF's CEO MT, and has been asked

by MT to focus on three areas for development:

- Womens Chess
- Junior Chess
- Social Chess

CP said that he was looking to achieve a substantial increase in membership and participation in all of these areas.

He outlined his experience with chess playing in social venues in other European countries. He would be looking to promote something similar in England and would try to get chess playing opportunities out into 'social' environments – eg libraries, bars, restaurants, parks and town centres.

Membership Fees - PC (Berkshire) indicated that he was happy with the Board of Directors report but was less comfortable with the strategy. He noted that MT described the ECF as underfunded which raised a concern that membership fees might rise further.

DE responded that there was a further increase in fees expected next year, but not the year after that.

Membership Development - TW indicated that he was pleased that a Development Officer had been appointed but felt there was a massive demographic time bomb with many English clubs likely to disappear and there was therefore an urgent need for action. He asked why it had taken the ECF 6 months to find the money from the Chess Trust to support the Development Officer Appointment.

JC responded that it was important to make considered and proper arrangements for funding and DE added that the Chess Trust had responded to the request for funding as soon as it had received the letter from the board.

MG asked TW what he felt the federation should be doing about the demographics issues and TW responded that he felt the ECF should work more closely with CSC on promoting chess in libraries as an example and should be participating more actively in this area.

Monthly grading - AL asked how much the provision of monthly grading would cost.

DT explained that the ECF was working collaboratively with the Welsh Chess Union who were having problems with their grading system and that some areas of cost would therefore be shared. He expected that long term running costs would be minimal and that the costs of a transition would need to be met in any event as the current system was unsupported with the source code no longer available. He also indicated that the transition costs were expected to be supported from Chess Trust funds.

PC highlighted the amount of grading work required to process data for monthly lists.

DT indicated that the ECF would not insist on monthly submissions and would accept twice yearly results for the foreseeable future while local leagues were adapting to the change.

JD asked if clubs and leagues would consider adopting the ECF's LMS system to help with the monthly grading process. PS explained that this was under consideration but that some leagues had contracts and arrangements in place for their own LMS systems which would need to be taken into account.

County Championships - PC indicated that he felt the ECF County Championships finals day was extremely well run.

Women's Chess - PC raised a question on the 15% target for female membership and how this related to current membership levels. DT replied that this was essentially a doubling of current levels which were about 7.5% of the membership.

Membership Consultation – AF quoted a reference in the report to the ECF's biggest asset being its membership and asked whether the board would take steps to survey the membership to ask what they wanted to see in the ECF's strategy.

JC replied that the strategy document was the CEO MT's responsibility on behalf of the board and that he would relay AF's request to MT for discussion at the next board meeting.

Vote

MG asked for a vote on the Board's Report and Strategy Document which was passed by show of hands with only 1 person against (AF).

(b) The Chairman of the Governance Committee's report (RS)

RS summarised his report as chair of governance, which was accepted nem con.

(c) The Chairman of the Finance Committee's report (TH)

TH was not in attendance due to illness and MG asked for comments on his report.

FB pointed out that his consultation with Platinum members has shown that some members were not happy with the fee increases and would resist any attempt to increase fees above the £80 level.

AL asked that the ECF consider whether some portion of the Platinum membership fee could be considered as a gift with corresponding tax relief.

SW pointed out that a gift of this type would need to be made to the Chess Trust as a charitable organisation rather than to the ECF in order to attract a rebate on income tax.

TH's report was approved unanimously.

MG proposed and the meeting approved a vote of thanks to TH for his service as Chair of the Finance Committee and recognising that he was standing down from this role.

7. Strategy/ Business Plan and Report to Council – This was covered under item 6.

8. Elections and appointments

(a) Non Executive Chairman of the Board – JC standing

Julian Clissold said that he did not have an election address but indicated his willingness to stand for a further term as Board Chair.

(b) Director of International Chess – MP standing

MP was not in attendance at the meeting.

MG pointed out that MP had provided an election address for consideration at the meeting in his absence but that the address had been provided later than the deadline for submission. He therefore asked if delegates wished to consider the address (which was available in printed form) before voting on Malcolm's position.

The motion to allow the election address to be taken into consideration was agreed by a large majority with 3 voting against, and MP's election address was therefore provided for consideration.

(c) Non Executive Director - SW standing for re-election

SW provided a short address summarising his role and his willingness to stand.

AF asked what SW had achieved during this time in the role. SW responded that his contribution had been mainly in the following areas:

- Taking a sceptical viewpoint and helping to address some of the more contentious board level issues
- Leading on areas of recruitment and related discussions
- Questioning and challenging board level decisions where appropriate

(d) Chairman of Council – No nominations

MG indicated that he was standing down as chair of council with no nominations received to date for a replacement and that this was being considered as a later agenda item.

(e) FIDE Delegate - MP standing for re-election

MP's address had been provided as above.

(f) Chairman of Finance Committee - NF standing for election

NF gave a short address indicating that he had decided to stand for election as Chair of the Finance Committee when it was known that TH was standing down. He was not an accountant by trade but has spent a lot of time during his career looking at business plans and accounts. He felt that he also has a good relationship with board members and the Finance Director in particular.

(g) Member of Governance Committee - MG standing for re-election

MG confirmed that he was happy to continue to serve on the Governance Committee, but had no election address.

(h) Auditor

MG proposed the reappointment of Goatcher Chandler Audit Ltd as ECF Auditors.

Vote

A vote was taken on the various appointments with all nominees elected with voting as follows.

Position	Nominee	For	Against
Board Chairman	JC	261	0
International Director	MP	255	9
Non-Executive Director	SW	258	6
FIDE Delegate	MP	255	9
Chair of Finance Committee	NF	256	9
Governance Committee Member	MG	265	0
Auditor (Goacher Chandler)		265	0

9. Constitutional Matters

RS presented a paper on constitutional matters including changes to the Articles of Association, Game Feed Byelaws and Direct Member Byelaws.

The following resolutions were put to the meeting with votes as indicated:

- a) a special resolution to update the Articles of Association (requiring a 75% majority) – passed

- unanimously.
- b) an ordinary resolution to amend the Game Fee Bye Laws to supplement the amendments to the Articles of Association in above – passed nem con subject to two amendments as follows:
 - Rapid games should be defined as longer than 10 minutes (as per FIDE rules)
 - 'Designated Officer' should have parentheses.
 - c) an ordinary resolution to amend the Procedural Bye Laws in relation to holders of posts standing for re-election – Passed nem con.
 - d) an ordinary resolution to update the Direct Members Bye Laws – Passed with one against.
 - e) In addition, Council was invited to note that the Coaches Regulations (Regulation No.3) are no longer in force – This was noted by delegates.

In relation to the Coaches Regulations, RW said that he had made a presentation to the September board in relation to junior chess issues including a recommendation to reinstate some form of accredited coaches scheme. JC stated that AH had been asked to work with RW on this proposal.

10. County Championships

MG asked Council to consider the following resolution from MM (SCCU) which was seconded by AL.

"That fines levied and received by the ECF in the ECF stage of the Counties Championships for defaulted boards and defaulted matches (which currently fall under Counties Championships Rule D4.2) shall be passed on by the ECF to the county defaulted against (the 'innocent' county)."

(Note: the text of Rule D4.2 of the 2018/2019 Counties Championships Rules read:

"D4.2. Should any County, having been nominated by its Union for the Final Stage of any of the Championships and having accepted such nomination in accordance with Section B, default any match, or any game in a match, it shall be required to reimburse such of its opponents reasonable expenses incurred as the Controller shall determine; and unless the Controller decides otherwise shall also pay a fine of 20 per game defaulted or 100 per match defaulted, whichever is less; such fines being payable to the English Chess Federation.")

John Reyes (Manchester) asked how much had been collected in default fines for the last season.

Delegates were informed that a total of £1,000 had been collected in fines for the season.

AL stated that he felt the £20 per board/ £100 match fine was iniquitous and had the effect of deterring County teams from entering the competition.

A number of delegates including FB (Cambs) and ND (EPSCA) agreed that the fine was disproportionate and was unfairly penalising counties where captains were unable to field teams for good reasons and had informed their opponents in advance.

MG pointed out that the motion was not considering the imposition of fines and asked Council to focus on where these fines should be paid if they were in force.

MF spoke in support of the motion on the basis that the fines should be paid as recompense to the injured party who had lost the opportunity of playing a fixture. TW suggested that the word fine should be changed to compensation.

This amendment was passed nem con.

A vote was then taken on the amended motion which was passed with 3 delegates voting against.

11. ECF Awards

MG asked Council to note the awards for 2019 as set out in the Awards paper from Paul Bielby.

JD stated that Paul Bielby had decided to stand down from his position as chair of the Awards Committee and asked for a volunteer to take on this role has no one had come forward so far.

FB asked whether Paul Bielby should be given an award to recognise his service and TW proposed a vote of thanks to Paul who he said has been a stalwart of English Chess and had played an immense role in promoting the game.

JC asked MG to write to Paul as Chair of Council to express Council's thanks for his contribution.

TW asked whether Awards could be made at the British while others suggested that they were better made at Club level.

12. Dates of the Finance Council

The dates were agreed for the Finance Council and AGM (25 April 2020 in London and 17 October 2020 in Birmingham, respectively).

13. To consider any actions arising from the lack of a nominee for Chair of Council.

MG advised that as Council had not nominated a replacement Chair by the required date, the decision was now with the board to make an appointment.

The Board had asked Council to look again at putting forward nominees and had indicated that they would honour an email vote of council if a nominee or nominees came forward and were voted on.

TW indicated to Council that he had now put his name forward and would be happy to be considered for the position of Council Chair.

MG proposed that Council should put forward nominees for the position by an agreed deadline at which point there would be an email vote. If there were no nominees at that point the Board would then make an appointment.

MG proposed this as a course of action which was agreed nem con.

At this point JC expressed the Board and Council's thanks to MG for his years of service as very highly regarded Council Chair and asked him to write a letter on Council's behalf to this effect as his last activity as Chair.

AL echoed JC's words and thanked MG for his work as a highly effective chair of Council meetings over a number of years.

14. Any Other Business of Which Notice Has Been Given to the Chairman of the Meeting

UW raised a concern over the schedule for the 2020 British which now includes an U100 Over 16 event which UW felt to be inconsistent with the ECF's strategy to promote Womens' and Junior chess.

AE responded by saying that this had been done in response to a complaint about the noise and disruption caused by juniors at the event. MM stated that in his experience non-junior players were normally the more disruptive.

There being no other items of AOB, the meeting closed at 4.30 pm.