

ECF Annual General Meeting, 12th October 2013

This is a summary of the principal outcomes from the AGM. I have made no attempt to match the chronological sequence of the meeting, preferring to split the report into three distinct parts:

1. Election results;
2. Decisions taken;
3. Other matters discussed.

ELECTION RESULTS

BOARD

President:	Andrew Paulson defeated Roger Edwards by 169-106
Chief Executive:	Phil Ehr defeated Andrew Moore by 257-18
Non-Executive Chairman:	No election (position removed – see below)
Director of Finance:	David Eustace (uncontested)
Non-Executive Directors:	Sean Hewitt (150 votes) and Julian Clissold (145) were elected. Also standing were Angus French (133) and Jack Rudd (111).
Director of Home Chess:	Alex Holowczak (uncontested)
Director of Junior Chess:	Lawrence Cooper (uncontested)
Director of International Chess:	David Openshaw (uncontested)
Director of Membership:	David Thomas (uncontested)
Commercial Director:	New post (see below). Appointment to be made by the Board.

OTHER

(All of the following elections were uncontested.)

FIDE Delegate:	Nigel Short
Chairman of Finance Committee:	Mike Truran
Members of Finance Committee:	Ray Clark and Ian Reynolds
Chairman of Governance C'ttee:	Chris Majer

Members of Governance C'ttee: **Mike Gunn, Richard Haddrell** and **Andrew Leadbetter**. Chris Majer also announced his intention to add David Sedgwick to the committee.

DECISIONS TAKEN

1. County Championship rules

- (a) The NCCU proposal to create an option to field a 12-player team in a 16-player section at the National Stages and to reduce the number of sections from seven to six, with differences of 25 points between each of the grading limited sections was **defeated**.

The Director of Home Chess had presented a counter-proposal, increasing the number of players in the Open section to 20 players and in the U120 section to 16; amending the U160 section to U170; and abolishing the U100 section.

Reflecting the feedback received from my consultations, I tabled an amendment changing the Open section to 16-player teams and the U120 section to 12-player teams. An additional amendment was tabled by another delegate reinstating the U100 section (as a 12-player team event).

Both amendments were passed. The vote on the resulting amended proposal was extremely tight but saw the proposal **defeated** on a card vote by 88 votes to 89. The County Championships are, therefore, unchanged.

- (b) The SCCU proposal to amend the rule requiring teams to be played in descending order of grade (with a 10-point leeway permitted) so that it simply required that players be in order of "current playing strength" was **defeated**. Once again, therefore, the rules are unchanged.

2. Business Planning

Following the revelation that the Board had removed the requirement to produce an annual Business Plan and to maintain a Strategic Plan from its responsibilities, I tabled a motion requiring these to be reinstated. (I consider that these are essential components in a well-organised and focused organisation.) The motion was **passed**.

3. Board positions

The proposal to abolish the role of Non-Executive Chairman and to create a new role of Commercial Director was **passed**. For obvious reasons, an election could not be held for a role which did not exist until this motion was passed, and the authority to appoint someone to the role now rests with the Board.

4. Membership requirements

A motion amending the wording in respect of membership requirements for competitions was **passed**. It should be noted that the amendment was intended to clarify the existing rule, not to amend its substance.

5. One Member One Vote (OMOV)

Sean Hewitt had tabled a proposal that the Board investigate the viability of Directors being elected directly by individual members, with a view to bringing proposals to the April 2014 Council meeting.

This proposal was amended to broaden it into a review of the balance between the voting powers of direct members (or their representatives) and those of affiliated organisations and full individual members.

The amended proposal was **passed**. To reiterate: this proposal initiates a review, not – at this stage – any substantive changes.

6. Sanctions against cheating

The SCCU and Chess in Schools and Communities proposal instructing the Board to establish procedures for imposing sanctions in proven cases of cheating was **passed** without objection. It should be noted that the Board had made clear in advance of the AGM that it was already intending to do this.

7. Membership requirements for ECF-organised school team competitions

This subject had been a cause of controversy in the run-up to the AGM. The Board had previously decided to revoke an exemption for the National Schools Championship in respect of the rule requiring ECF membership from all players in events organised and graded by the ECF.

It was argued that requiring membership was a deterrent in particular to schools with weaker, occasional players as well as being an unwelcome administrative burden for teachers.

There was a significant majority in favour on a hand vote, but a card vote was requested (and agreed) on the basis that those voting against included representatives with particularly large numbers of votes. The result of the card vote, however, was still clearly in favour of the proposal, which was duly **passed**.

My personal observation would be that the proposal would have been less contentious had it been made clear before the vote was taken that the games of those players who were **not** members would be subject to Game Fee. The SCCU representative presenting the motion indicated that neither membership nor game fee would be payable, which seemed to place the National Schools Championship at an unfair advantage over other junior (and adult) competitions. It was subsequently confirmed that game fee **would** be payable, which I believe would have satisfied most of those who voted against.

8. Manager of Senior Chess

The proposal to create the role of Manager of Senior Chess was **passed**.

I raised the concern from my consultations that the proposed reporting line into the Director of International Chess may not be the best choice. An amendment leaving it to the Board to determine the most appropriate reporting line was **passed**.

Two motions tabled prior to the AGM were withdrawn:

- **Complaints Procedure** – It was apparent before the meeting that a procedure which related only to ECF officials below Board level was going to be unacceptable. The Chairman of the Governance Committee, Chris Majer, announced that the proposal was withdrawn and that David Sedgwick would be invited to join the committee in order to draft improved procedures.
- **Redefinition of the “requisitionists”** (i.e. those empowered to place proposals on the Council agenda) – Sean Hewitt announced at the relevant point of the meeting that he accepted that this was a matter which could be postponed to a future meeting and voluntarily withdrew the proposal, to the grateful cheers of those in attendance.

OTHER MATTERS DISCUSSED

- **Charitable Status** – No real news as such other than a restated ambition by the Board to take this forward. The Chairman announced that it was the Board’s intention to appoint someone – possibly paid – to prepare the necessary paperwork. A formal decision to proceed would require the approval of Council.
- **Home Chess** – This was the first of two Directors’ reports to generate lengthy discussion (25 minutes). In this instance, it related to an incident at the 2013 British Championships which led to a complaint being lodged against one of the Directors. The Board considered the complaint and the (conflicting) accounts of the parties and other witnesses and decided that no action was appropriate. This was perceived as a lack of support by the Manager of the British Championships, who resigned as a consequence.
- **International Chess** – There was considerable discussion (28 minutes) of the Director’s decision not to send a team to compete in the Women’s European Team Championships. The Director, David Openshaw, explained the basis for what had clearly been a difficult and very reluctant choice, namely a shortfall in available funding of some £4,000 and unavailability of a number of players, for various reasons. An e-mail from Jovanka Houska was read to the meeting, setting out her somewhat different perspective on events. It would be fair to say that there was general dismay at the fact that no team would be sent, but I would not

claim that there was a clear view among the attendees as to whether the decision had been the correct one.

- **Awards** – It was commented upon that there had been no nominations received for Club, Congress and Website of the Year and that this was probably due to the failure to publicise the wish for nominations on the ECF website. There was a commitment to rectify this in 2014.

It was noted that responses to the Player of the Year vote had been very poor. 7,500 e-mails were sent inviting nominations, from which only 76 responses were received, a number apparently frivolous. This seems to be a deterioration from previous years, although the cause is unclear.

The next meeting of the ECF Finance Council will be on 12th April 2014 in London. The 2014 AGM will be held in Birmingham on 11th October.

Andrew Farthing

13th October 2013