Surrey County Chess Association

a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital

company registration number 5602632

registered office 38 Glebe Road, Ashtead, Surrey KT21

 Minutes of Annual General Meeting

**28 June 2020**

Virtual meeting using Zoom from 2.00 pm.

Paul Shepherd (President) was in the Chair.

Attendees

**Nominated Members entitled to vote**:

**Ashtead**: Dan Rosen, Richard Jones (also proxy for Bertie Barlow)

**Dorking**: Peter Lawrence (also proxy for Brian Skinner), Brian Skinner

**Epsom**: Marcus Gosling (also proxy for Michael Wickham, David Flewellen), Michael Wickham, David Flewellen

**Guildford**: Mike Gunn (also proxy for Trevor Jones, Phil Stimpson), Phil Stimpson, Julien Shepley

**Kingston**: John Foley (also proxy for Nick Grey), Alan Scrimgour

**Redhill**: Paul Dunican

**Richmond**: Huw Williams

**South Norwood**: David Howes (also proxy for Ken Chamberlain, Simon Lea)

**Streatham**: Martin Smith

**Surbiton**: Paul Durrant (also proxy for David Morant, Steven Kearney, Malcolm Groom, Heiko Cassens)

**Wallington**: Daniel Young (also proxy for Derek Coleman)

**Wimbledon**: Russell Granat (also proxy for Russell Picot, Gordon Rennie)

**Attendee entitled to a casting vote**: Paul Shepherd (Chairman)

**Attendees not entitled to vote**: Clive Frostick (Farnham & Guildford), David Sedgwick (Full Member), Paul Dupre (South Norwood), Graham Alcock (Surbiton & Epsom).

Paul Shepherd provided advice about the use of Zoom during the meeting including how to show a hand-vote and mute/unmute. Information about the Virtual Meeting Protocol had been provided in the Agenda under Appendix C.

Question – David Howes: Is it clear to everyone attending whether or not the votes cast are either close or definite one way or another? Paul Shepherd answered that the details of the voting will provided to the meeting immediately after the votes have been cast.

 **In memoriam**

Respects were paid to David Fewkes (Crystal Palace) and Derek Harding (Ashtead)

**1. Apologies for absence**

Owen Phillips, David Hodgson, Nick Grey. Bertie Barlow, Ken Chamberlain, Simon Lea, David Morant, Steven Kearney, Malcom Groom, Heiko Cassens, Derek Coleman, Russell Picot and Gordon Rennie

**2. Special Resolution**

Special Resolution proposed by the Board to admit certain documents sent by email without hard-copy signature. An explanation and wording are provided in Appendix A of the Agenda. Paul Shepherd explained that this resolution had to be provided at the start of the meeting so that proxies provided by email could be used. It was passed unanimously.

**3. Approve the Minutes**

The Minutes of last year’s AGM, Annual Finance and League Composition Meetings were all approved unanimously.

**4. Matters Arising**

Paul Shepherd explained, in response to a question by Phil Stimpson, that voting will be conducted by way of a show of hands electronically but a poll will be undertaken if requested. He also mentioned that the document consolidating the guidelines for captains and players had been completed and can be viewed on the SCCA website. Certificates to provide to juniors who play in county chess are available and have been given to those who have played in the U120 and U140 teams.

**5. Questions about Directors’ Reports**

Details of the written reports were distributed prior to the meeting and only written questions submitted in advance of the meeting will be permitted.

President:

Paul Shepherd also mentioned about the need to encourage more women to play chess and requested that clubs with women members invite them to express their views on how that might be done. He requested that the club officials ensure they drew their female members to the last 3 paragraphs of his report.

Deputy President: None

Administrative Director: None

Inter-Club Tournaments Director:

Question: David Howes - Are you aware of the "original" play by dates for the 2 Cup competitions? It's a shame they weren't adhered to as we would only have 2 Finals to organize now.

Huw Williams responded saying there was a need to be flexible in response to the current lockdown and the play by dates were simply a guideline and had rarely been adhered to in the past. He provided examples from previous years. David Howes said he thought that those dates could have been complied with. Brian Skinner commented that there was nothing in the Bye Laws about play by dates and so they are not enforceable. David stated that he had always as a captain played by the dates on the website.

Non-Executive Directors:

Question: David Howes

With the ECF's 4-digit code system imminent, how would you compare it with FIDE's current grading system?

At the moment (as we all know) there is a conversion formula from ECF to FIDE & vice versa.

One would assume this should become obsolete in the event of both organizations using 4-digits to display a player's grade. Do you agree?

Clive Frostick responded saying that the ECF and FIDE grades will be similar using the conversion formula. Eventually the conversion formula will become obsolete as ECF grades will be published already converted.

**6. Treasurer’s Report.**

Copies of the Accounts for the year ended 30 April 2020 had been provided. Dan Rosen advised that the lockdown had occurred at the end of the financial year and that there had therefore been a minimal effect on the accounts. The individual tournaments were not run in 2020. The past year has been much as normal. The SCCA are in a good financial position to cope with the lockdown. There will be fixed fees to pay such as insurance next season and any resumption of over the board chess may change the situation.

The accounts were approved unanimously.

 7**. Questions about Officers’ Reports**

(a)ECF Delegate: There were no written questions. Paul Shepherd took the opportunity to mention that the ECF Finance Council meeting agenda had now been published. In view of Covid-19 there is no proposed change in membership fees other than in respect of the Supporter category where the existing fee of £5 is to be increased to £10. David Sedgwick mentioned that the Olympiad will not happen but the London Chess Classic is scheduled to be run in December.

 (b) SCCU Representative:

Question – Trevor Jones

I suggest that SCCA propose to SCCU a system of conditional entries into the county championship. A county might withdraw its entry upon discovering how many fixtures it ended up with.

Peter Lawrence responded by advising that there is no rule by which the SCCU could allow conditional entries. If the SCCA were to enter a team and then, when it found the number of fixtures were greater than expected, it withdrew its entry that will cause extra work for the SCCU Controller. This will be annoying and the SCCA will not be seen in a good light if they adopted that course of action. The proposal will not therefore be supported.

 (c) Company Secretary: No written questions but Richard Jones mentioned that the accounts are due to be filed next week.

(d) County Team Captains: No written questions but Paul Shepherd commented that the Board are aware of the difficulties which our captains have been experiencing raising their teams. He pointed out that Peter Lawrence is conducting a survey on behalf of the SCCU to try and address the problem but it is too soon to say where it will go. However, the Board do appreciate the work done by our captains.

(e) Junior Team Managers: No written questions but the results of the Brian Poulter league and junior county matches can be seen on the SCCA website.

(f) Individual Tournaments Secretary: No written questions.

(g) Correspondence Chess Secretary: No written questions but this is one area of chess that has not been restricted by the lockdown. Details about correspondence chess and the results of the Surrey teams were provided in the Correspondence Chess Secretary’s report.

(h) Grading Officer:

Question - David Howes: I noticed that one of our current Non-Executive Directors namely Clive Frostick, has "knowledge & contacts" pertaining "monthly & 4-digit grades", which may be of use to you.

Clive Frostick had already provided an answer to this question in his earlier response as Non-Executive Director. Paul Shepherd congratulated Paul Dupre on a very enthusiastic report and mentioned that Clive Frostick may have useful information for him in relation to monthly grading. Paul Dupre mentioned that he does have programming expertise.

(i) Webmasters: No written questions. Paul Shepherd stated he wanted to reiterate some comments in the report. Namely, clubs should have one fixtures coordinator, that they should notify new players to the webmasters in advance and they should ensure results were reported in a timely fashion. David Howes pointed out that with the move to 4-digit grades there will have to be changes to the Bye Laws. In reply Paul Shepherd advised that there will be an EGM to deal with changes to the grades and an over-arching alteration to the rules at the right time.

David Sedgwick asked for the results of the new ECF online county chess championships to be shown on the SCCA website as they are for county chess. Peter Lawrence confirmed that he will arrange for this to be done.

(j) Curator of Equipment. No written questions.

(k) Curator of Trophies: No written report but Trophies will remain with the existing holders for the time being.

(l) Chairman of the Chess Disputes Committee:

Question – David Howes: Are you aware that Peter Rhodes is no longer a member of South Norwood Chess Club & therefore should not be considered as a member of the Chess Disputes Committee?

Paul Shepherd advised that he had not been aware but would now take steps to remove Peter Rhodes from the panel. He will now be looking for volunteers to join the CDC.

m) County Match Secretary: No written questions.

**8. Report Surrey Chess Congress**

No written questions. However, Paul Shepherd mentioned that with Russell Granat and Daniel Young needing to stand down as directors in the near future there is a pressing need to find volunteers to run future congresses.

9 E**lection of Directors.**

The existing Directors are:

President – Paul Shepherd

Deputy President – Russell Granat

Administrative Director - Peter Lawrence

Treasurer – Dan Rosen

Inter-Club Tournaments Director – Huw Williams

Non-Executive Directors – Alan Scrimgour and Clive Frostick

Paul Shepherd informed the meeting that the existing directors were willing to stand for re-election and there were no other candidates.

A vote to re-elect the existing directors en bloc was passed unanimously. They were duly re-elected.

**10. Election of Independent Examiner**

A motion supporting the reappointment of Richard Jones was passed unanimously.

**11. Suspended Competitions and 2020/21 season**

Paul Shepherd advised that information about the thinking by the Board on the suspended competitions is provided in Appendix B of the agenda.

Item a) Summary of feedback from clubs

There is a strong majority to complete the competitions for the last season. There is also a good rationale not to finish those competitions online. Huw Williams and Brian Skinner had reported on the scenarios for completing the season.

Written Question – Owen Phillips: Please can the AGM consider making it a ruling for the ensuing chess season that:

(i) all players have to wear a face covering/mask and gloves. Failure to do so will result in the game being awarded to the opponent, and

(ii) ask that all players desist from coming to matches if they have a cold or cough or a temperature.

(iii) if a player starts coughing and continues or blows his or her nose more than once in a game then the opponent can claim that game via the teams two Captains.

I think that with the additional risk of close proximity that chess players have and with their often being in high risk groups, and touching each-others pieces -that the above sanctions should be put in place until the Country is announced as COVID 19 free. Such measures will allow OTB chess to re-start in a relatively safer environment than will otherwise be the case.

In response Paul Shepherd replied that the SCCA Board recognises the legitimate concerns of players who are anxious to ensure their safety when OTB chess resumes. The SCCA Board stopped SCCA OTB competitions prior to the government advice on social distancing because we understood the vulnerability of the chess playing population by virtue of many players being older and also the exposure of a player to his opponent for a protracted period during a game. So, we understand. This AGM, however, is not the place to vote upon "rules" on what is and is not appropriate regarding player safety provisions. Firstly, rule changes need to be presented to a general meeting with the appropriate notice and support. Additionally, we believe that it would be far preferable for the ECF, as the national body responsible for chess, to provide guidelines to its member bodies on how to restart OTB chess safely so that all OTB chess activities in England can take one overarching approach. I asked ECF (on the ECF Council Forum) about this on June 3rd and have yet to receive a reply, hence I intend to ask at Finance Council under AOB. What we know is that under current government guidelines, including social distancing, whether it be 1 or 2m, and restrictions on the number of people gathering indoors, that it would be unlawful to play team OTB chess currently. The guidelines need to change sufficiently that OTB chess is permissible before we can consider restarting. Aside from seeking ECF advice, SCCA Board will be monitoring PHE/government advice in relation to this matter. To the extent that rules changes are required then they will be put in place ahead of restarting OTB via an EGM. The Roadmap in Appendix B, section d), illustrates where we have opportunities for such EGMs. Whatever measures are put in place need to strike a balance between meeting public health protection requirements while not making OTB conditions so unattractive that no one wishes to return to OTB.

The ECF provided advice following the shutdown and they should also provide advice about when to resume. David Sedgwick referred to an international conference on the subject and he will be happy to send a link so that the details can be viewed. It may show a common practice for competitions in time.

There is a need to avoid making OTB chess so onerous that players may not wish to play. Some players may not wish to resume play until a vaccine is found. A survey conducted by Wimbledon chess club on their members indicated that many will not wish to resume play in the near future. Russell Granat suggested that the SCCA may wish to conduct a similar survey. Paul Shepherd thought that at present as it is unlawful to resume OTB chess therefore it is premature to ask the question. People are likely to say no at the present time. Also, clubs may wish to enquire with their venue about when they will be open for OTB chess and under what conditions if they have not already done so.

Paul Dunican asked whether, because of the need for rule changes, the SCCA should get ready to resume shortly. Paul Shepherd explained that an EGM could deal with any rule changes or it might just involve waiving certain guidelines. There will be a consultation with the clubs at the appropriate time and even a further EGM when necessary. What the rule changes will need to be will depend on ECF advice and government rules. The scenarios could involve starting OTB chess later and compressing the season such as a single round instead of a double round. Some competitions might need to be compressed and he advised referring to the scenarios in the paper by Huw Williams. A further point to bear in mind is that not all club venues may be available.

David Howes commented that with pubs and restaurants opening on 4 July with restrictions why not consult with members now and if necessary neutral venues could be used. He stressed the need to play the finals. Paul Shepherd pointed out that when David Howes was ICTD none of the finals were played within the guideline dates. Mike Gunn expressed his support for Paul Shepherd on flexibility and disagreed with David Howes. Huw Williams mentioned that no dates are specified in the rules.

Online alternative club competitions were discussed. There was interest from some clubs but a lot of controversy about anti-cheating software. A view was expressed that some players have been banned as a result of that software unfairly. A possible solution is for online games to be ungraded so that the anti-cheating software does not apply. Paul Shepherd emphasised that the CDC does not have the expertise to deal with anti-cheat situations. Mike Gunn said that there is very definitely an interest in online chess at Guildford Chess Club and they should follow the best practice provided by the ECF. Alex Holowczak has offered to help in respect of anti-cheat software. However, just because you know your opponent does not mean they will not cheat.

Martin Smith mentioned that Streatham is already running an online competition and entered 3 teams in the 4NCL online competition and all went okay. He thought there is a gap that needs to be filled. Players will just have to live with the anti-cheat software and that there would not be much in the way of cheating.

Michael Wickham said that he was helping 12 teams playing online but an anti-cheat situation had arisen with one player involving Lichess. He would prefer any SCCA online competition to be ungraded.

John Foley mentioned that Kingston have online club evenings and training sessions. Kingston will support an SCCA online competition but it should be noted that not all club members can play online. He thought games should be ungraded and that the CDC should not be involved.

Clive Frostick said online chess is very different to OTB chess and there are huge difficulties to police it. However, he preferred anti-cheat software to be triggered and that is a risk players have to take.

David Sedgwick advised that people you know may still cheat and players are more likely to cheat online than with OTB chess.

Richard Jones would like there to be an ungraded online competition which could be informal fun.

David Howes indicated support for an online chess competition if no OTB chess is available preferably ungraded.

Peter Lawrence stated that Dorking as a small chess club could only manage a 4 board team as some of its members could not play online. He thought it best if the games are ungraded.

Phil Stimpson was concerned that a player versed in well-known opening theory might trigger the anti-cheat software.

Dan Rosen stated that Ashtead may have a similar problem to Dorking and that a joint team might be a solution.

Paul Durrant advised that was aware of 12 junior players who had been flagged for cheating. He had talked to Mr. Regan about this problem and received helpful advice. He played through one game with a junior who had been accused of cheating and thought the opponent had played very badly and it was that which triggered the anti-cheat software. He was in favour of any SCCA online competition being ungraded.

Alan Scrimgour stated that he had heard lots of alternative views and thought that players should be given a choice whether the competition should be graded or ungraded.

The conclusion is that there is an interest in online chess but clubs should be warned of the consequences of dealing with anti-cheat situations.

There will be a roadmap for meetings depending on the situation. Dan Rosen thought that some clubs will be ready and some will not. Some Bye Laws might need changing for certain competitions but it would need to be assumed that players will follow public health guidelines.

Russell Granat advised clubs to get the views of their club members so they will be ready to resume when it is possible to do so. He mentioned that with Wimbledon and especially playing in the London League there was a need to use public transport which created another factor. Informal decisions can be made.

**12. Any Other Business**

None.

The meeting closed at 4.55 pm.