

SUFFOLK COUNTY CHESS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Suffolk County Chess Association held on Tuesday 29 May 2018 at Ipswich Chess Club, 7:30 pm

In attendance:

Ipswich – Kevin Greenacre (KG), Ted Mathewson (TM), Steve Gregory (SG), Roger Holt (RH)

Bury St Edmunds – Bob Jones (BJ), John Peters (JP), Steve Lovell (SLo), David Wood (DW)

Manningtree – Leon Burnett (LB), Andy Lewis (AL), Jim Buis (JB), John McAllister (JM), Adrian Sanderson (AS)

Saxmundham – John Feavoyour (JF), Dominic Carter (DC), Malcolm Lightfoot (ML), David Brown (DB), Peter Collicott (PC), Hugo Brown (HB), Sarah Rowles (SR), Geoffrey Lilley (GL)

Stowmarket – David Green (DG), Stephen Lewis (SLe),

Felixstowe – Ed Kirkham (EK), Dave Wild (DW)

Clacton – John Lambert (JL), Melvin Steele (MS),

Suffolk Junior Chess – Tim Kent (TK)

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from:

Bob Stephens (BS) - Manningtree

Steve Ruthen, (SR) – Bury St Edmunds

Tim Lunn (TL), Ian Wallis (IW) - Ipswich

Rob Sanders (RS) - Sudbury

2. Minutes of the last SCCA AGM held on 30 May 2017

BJ asked if there were any comments resulting from these; there were none. All were in favour of agreeing these minutes.

3. Matters Arising

BJ confirmed that the minutes of last year's AGM had been sent out following the meeting and had also been re-sent to club secretaries in the last couple of weeks. There were no other matters arising.

4. Officers' Reports

4.1 President (BJ)

BJ said this was his third and final year as County President. He congratulated two clubs who had both done well this season – Woodbridge and Felixstowe.

It had been a quieter year running the Suffolk Chess website for several reasons and he was now updating on a more occasional basis instead of a daily basis as previously. Since the website was set up in September 2012, 1,149 articles had been posted.

Various rule changes and amendments were on the agenda for discussion later in the meeting and as always, the intention with these is to produce a fair set of rules for everyone.

He wished the County First Team well in their upcoming match versus Surrey in the National semi-final of the Minor Counties competition.

He thanked committee members for their work during the past season.

4.2 Vice President (LB)

It had been a fairly quiet year but there were two items to note. Firstly, LB had been asked to work on putting together a Safeguarding Children's Policy but this has been pre-empted by TK who had also been working on this. LB considered this a welcome initiative and hoped it would be confirmed by the committee in due course.

Secondly, there will be an upcoming vacancy for a Competitions Secretary when DG steps down at the end of next season and he (LB) was pleased to advise there had been some interest in this post.

4.3 Admin Secretary (KG)

Again, it had been a fairly quiet year. KG had produced and distributed the minutes from the 2017 AGM, had also produced an agenda for the Committee Meeting held earlier in the season and the minutes had been forwarded to members and club secretaries.

KG had also provided details of post-holders to the English Chess Federation for inclusion in the Yearbook.

4.4 Treasurer (AS)

AS mentioned the change in charging; players will be able to play three games before a club will be charged as per the Bronze membership scheme and this will be easy to implement.

The county finances were in a good position with a current balance of £2,099 although this included £393 being held on behalf of Suffolk Juniors. This would be paid across when the Juniors had a bank account opened and a Treasurer appointed.

The balance had increased by around £338, an increase of £100 from the previous year.

A provision had been made for engraving trophies although some clubs did do this themselves and had not always reclaimed the costs.

Figures for the 2018 Accounts would be sent to be audited following the AGM after AS has made any amendments to the accounts in line with any new information that he was provided with. The figures for 2017 had been audited satisfactorily.

Team fees had remained the same and no equipment had been purchased.

LB asked about the list that AS had compiled, showing details of the various trophies, cups etc, the last recorded valuation or known cost and the current location, where known. There were a few gaps and BJ / AS will get together to try to update this list. BJ asked if clubs could check cupboards to see if any trophies were held there and if so, let BJ / AS know.

Action Point – BJ / AS to get together to work on an updated inventory.

Action Point – Clubs to check if any trophies have been stored by the club and let BJ / AS know if any are located.

4.5 Competitions Secretary (DG)

Despite some inclement weather, DG was pleased to report that all competitions had been concluded with the exception of two Cup events. The Suffolk Cup Final between Bury St Edmunds and Manningtree had been scheduled for 24 May but due to problems on the A14 that evening, this match had been put back and will be rearranged.

The Norfolk & Suffolk Cup Final between Bury St Edmunds and Manningtree had not yet been arranged, Broadlands are the winners of the Norfolk competition. DG passed on his congratulations to the various winners of the other events.

The subject of relegation and promotions would be discussed later in line with proposals received for rule changes.

Unfortunately, there had been some defaults both in the league and the Cup & Plate during the season.

DG mentioned he had received approximately 500 emails during the season relating to chess; some of these were emails between team captains about postponements – DG said he did not need all of these and asked captains to agree the revised date and then let him know.

DG had also received some requests for rulings to be made; in one game, a player checkmated his opponent but had omitted to press his clock and had lost on time. In line with FIDE rules, checkmate ends the game so DG had confirmed this. In another, a draw had been agreed without any words being exchanged.

BJ thanked DG for all his hard work in what can be a difficult job.

4.6 Cup & Plate Organiser (RS)

In the absence of RS, KG read out the report he had received from RS.

14 teams had taken part in these events, the most ever, including all the Bury St Edmunds teams which had made the events more competitive. Manningtree A play Bury St Edmunds C in the Cup Final and Felixstowe beat Bury St Edmunds B to win the Plate.

Unfortunately, there had been some problems. At the quarter final stage, there had been some 4-0 team defaults and RS suggested that changes needed to be made to maintain the Cup and Plate's position as the Suffolk League's premier knockout competition. Fixture congestion had been considered one of the reasons for the defaults and on the agenda later were proposals to consider reducing the number of Suffolk League games which RS thought could alleviate the possibilities of something similar happening in the future.

RS thanked all teams and players for taking part.

4.7 Results Officer (DW)

DW mentioned the current trialling of the ECF's league management software. He thought it likely we would have to move to this in the future rather than have our own software. BJ asked if this meant the eventual loss of DW's software and DW confirmed he thought this was likely to be the case. The ECF were looking at producing monthly grading lists rather than half yearly as at now; he was not certain of the timeline for this but thought it was sensible for us to use this common system in due course.

DW also apologised to DG for the database being unavailable on occasions during the season; this was due to it being updated.

4.8 First Team Captain (SR)

In SR's absence, BJ read out a report; Suffolk had won the EACU league and had qualified for the knock out stage of the Minor Counties event. Suffolk had beaten Warwickshire in the quarter finals and was playing Surrey in the semi final on 9 June. The meeting was advised there was no actual definition of a Minor County. BJ wished the first team well for this upcoming match.

4.9 U160 Captain (BJ)

BJ had prepared a report of the U160 team; they had won the EACU league, losing just one match in the process. Unfortunately, in the quarter finals, they had lost to Essex in a match played in Ipswich, BJ thanked TM for arranging the venue. 22 players had represented the county in the EACU stage and 6 more in the Essex match. Cameron Little had scored 6/6 (including 1 default) with 13-year old Jaden Jermy on 6/7 (5 wins).

4.10 Correspondence Captain (BS)

In the absence of BS, KG read out a report he had received from BS.

The team had done very well in Division 1 of the Ward Higgs trophy after being promoted from the previous season (one of the Yorkshire teams had declined the opportunity so Suffolk, who had finished third, went up). With two games left, Suffolk are in fifth place and although Suffolk will not win the division, there is every likelihood they will retain their place in the top division. This was an excellent result considering some of the county players had been playing against correspondence GMs.

BS asked if anyone was interested in playing for the team to contact him as soon as possible.

4.11 Junior Organiser (TK)

BJ introduced TK, who is the father of promising junior Rowan Kent, as the new Junior Organiser. TK said he had been looking for a treasurer for the Juniors and BJ had kindly

volunteered and arrangements would be made to move the £393 being held in the main SCCA bank account on behalf of Suffolk Juniors to a new bank account set up by TK.

TK had set up a Suffolk Junior Chess website which he considered was crucial for the success of the Juniors.

Suffolk had entered two teams into the inter county stage. The U11 team had done very well and the U9 team had qualified for the national finals held in Birmingham. Most of the players are from the Bury Knights Club, Ipswich School and Woodbridge School but TK said he would like to broaden this if possible. He was looking to increase the number of schools where chess was played and also increase their strength. He had been donated 400 chess sets and also some demonstration boards and he was in the process of distributing these.

Bury Knights had donated £250 to Suffolk Juniors and Ipswich Junior Club had purchased some chess sets, instead of receiving free ones.

Given that schools were busy places, TK said he was looking for some chess players to volunteer to coach in school clubs and if anyone was interested, to let him know. A DBS check would be needed before being able to do any coaching in the school. JL asked if the website was up to date in relation to schools where chess was played; TK said he was in the process of checking and he needed one or two schools to confirm this. JL said an event was being held in July but schools were not always answering emails that he was sending to them about this event. LB asked about whether girls were playing chess in schools – TK confirmed that although boys were in the majority, he was pleased to report that girls were also taking part. The split at Bury Knights was around 60% boys to 40% girls.

5 Election of Officers

BJ had completed three years as President, with LB as Vice-President. No one else wished to stand for the post of President, so BJ proposed that LB become the next President, this was seconded by DG. On a show of hands this was carried unanimously.

BJ agreed to stay in the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

All other current officers were standing for re-election.

BJ said no other nominations had been received and suggested that a show of hands vote should be taken to re-elect the other members en bloc. This was carried unanimously.

6 Presentation of Trophies

Trophies were presented by KG as follows –

Division 1 – Manningtree A (to LB)

Division 2 – Felixstowe (to EK)

Division 3 – Woodbridge (to EK)

Division 1 Player of the Year – John Peters

Division 2 Player of the Year – Peter Gemmell

Division 3 Player of the Year – Timothy Wesson

U125 Cup – Clacton

U145 Cup – Bury St Edmunds (to SL)

Suffolk Cup– not yet played

Suffolk Plate – Felixstowe (to EK)

First Team Player of the Year – Tim Lunn (to TM)

U160 Player of the Year – Cameron Little (KG to arrange to let Cameron have this)

7 Divisional Structure

Currently, the Suffolk League is split into three divisions of 8 teams – a total of 24 teams. Each team plays 14 league matches on a home and away basis.

BJ said there has been two proposals: Firstly, two divisions of 12 teams; and secondly, four divisions of 6 teams. These proposals are based on the assumption that 24 teams will take part in the 2018-19 season.

LB, who introduced the former arrangement, was asked to provide further information. He said that the proposal would reduce the number of league matches from 14 to 11, which could ease the load on team captains. He thought this would also reduce the number of defaults and allow players to play a wider variety of opponents as there was the opportunity to play 11 unique opponents. This might lead to more interesting matches.

In the absence of RS, BJ asked JL to speak in favour of the second proposal. He said that RS had been dismayed by the number of defaults in the Cup and Plate events and this might have been a result of too many league fixtures which meant it was difficult to rearrange matches.

DG advised there were 12 players who had played for more than one club in a different league during 2017-18 and thought these players must have considered they wanted to play more chess and Stowmarket play a total of 27 league games a season. Some players actively seek more matches and he felt that the SCCA should not restrict activity.

JL said Clacton had not defaulted any matches but if they considered they were not able to raise enough players, they might have to pull out team(s). He thought it had been harder and harder to compete and wondered if other clubs also found it hard. AL said he found it tough to play in all the league games and personally welcomed a reduction.

BJ summarised both proposals – both implied a likely reduction of league matches, from 14 to 11 or 12 a season. The AGM needed to consider whether to maintain the status quo or not.

BJ proposed that, following a discussion, a vote be taken to determine the preference of either two or four divisions. The winner of this vote would then be subject to a second vote to see if the AGM preferred the winner or to maintain the current league structure.

JL thought there might be an imbalance between teams in the Divisions and the potential for a change in the league structure would require a rules rewrite.

LB clarified that under the two divisions proposal, any player could play 11 games in each division.

BJ agreed that if the league structure were changed, the substitution rules would need to be reworded.

ML said he was a little puzzled by these changes. He reminded the AGM that last year the size of the divisions was tweaked and he thought these had worked well and produced good results.

DB said it was a complex subject but if there was a strong consensus for a change, this should not be implemented until the 2019-20 season.

LB confirmed that under the two division proposal, four teams would be promoted / relegated. This would mean no change to the current Division 1 teams and the top four in Division 2 would move up.

JF thought that clubs should have been aware of the potential implications of these proposals prior to the season. DC said that the structure needed to be a fair one.

TM said he was not personally in favour of changing the divisional structure. He thought 14 games should be possible to fit in and wondered if too many teams had entered the Cup and Plate events.

To summarise – the options are

2 divisions of 12 teams

3 divisions of 8 teams (current arrangement)

4 teams of 6 teams

TK said that if there was a vote on all three options (two divisions, four divisions, retain the current system), there was a risk of the minority outvoting the other options. EK wondered whether there was potential for a vote under a proportional representation method.

SLe expressed a concern over the two divisions proposal. He wondered whether this might make Division 1 rather uncompetitive given the potential for large grading differences between players, perhaps as much as 50 or 60 grading points. LB replied that he did not think this was such a concern and some players might welcome the opportunity to play stronger opponents.

MS suggested that at this stage, the AGM was not in a position to determine the number of teams entering the league in 2018-19 and there was a potential for more or less than the current 24. JF said he thought teams should know what the implications were regarding promotion and relegation prior to the start of the season. JP thought any change would need to be phased in over two seasons.

BJ wondered whether LB's proposal could be implemented next season; LB said he thought this was possible but DB thought that if any change had not been announced by mid-season, it should be implemented the season after next.

BJ said that if either the two or four division proposal was voted in, this would mean the substitution rules would need to be radically overhauled.

Following this discussion, BJ said he still wanted to have an initial vote on the two proposals, with the winner being voted against retaining the status quo

On a hand count, the two division proposal received six votes and the four division proposal seven votes. A further vote was then cast between the four division proposal and retaining the status quo. Four divisions (although not to be implemented in 2018-19) received 7 votes, whilst retaining the status quo of three divisions received 12 votes. The decision was therefore made to retain the existing three division structure for 2018-19.

BJ said if people were still keen on either a two or four division structure, they could make the case during the upcoming season and make a further proposal at the 2019 AGM.

8 Proposals

8.1 Currently each team plays 14 league matches and a proposal had been made jointly by the Clacton and Sudbury clubs to make 12 matches per season the maximum. There was a brief discussion about the possible impact this would have.

On a hand count, six were in favour of the proposal, with 11 against. The proposal was therefore rejected.

8.2 The Bury St Edmunds Club had proposed that the Suffolk League use the same Fischer time control as in the Bury Area Chess League. BJ asked SLo to provide some further information about this. SLo said there were two potential advantages; firstly, it would solve any possible confusion for players who took part in both leagues and secondly when the clock shows 1:15 at the start of the game, there might be some confusion whether Fischer or standard time is being used whereas if the clock shows 1:10 at the start, it is clear that Fischer time is being used – the BAACL uses 1:10 plus increment.

The meeting discussed this proposal and any possible impact a change would have. AL said he understood why the proposal was being made but was personally against this. SLe said that home teams should be responsible for checking the clocks had been correctly set at the start of the game.

JB suggested some players preferred a slightly longer starting stock of time – 1:20, with slightly less increment per move. LB said he thought there would not be any confusion between standard and Fischer time in Division 1 as the default time control is Fischer. He said there needed to be confidence in the rules.

DG mentioned the proposal to trial Fischer time in Divisions 2 and 3 to be discussed later; DB wondered if the proposals might have been in slightly the wrong order for discussion but BJ said he was happy with the order and confirmed that under the proposal, players would start with 1:10 on the clock.

JL asked if, with the Fischer time control, games could potentially last more than three hours. BJ said although this was feasible, he was not aware of this occurring during last season and the proposal could decrease this possibility as the starting time would be five minutes less per player.

On a hand count the proposal was rejected by ten votes to six.

8.3 Bury St Edmunds Club had proposed that Fischer time becomes the default in Divisions 1 and 2. The Committee had also considered this and proposed to make this the default in Divisions 1, 2 and 3. This would mean that only when both players agreed to use standard time, they would play with the traditional time control; if only one player wanted to do so, then Fischer time would be used.

EK asked what would happen in Division 3 when not all teams have electronic chess clocks. BJ said that Fischer time could only be used subject to suitable equipment being available

DB said both proposals were in accordance with the current trend to use Fischer time and was in favour for Division 2. If clubs were short of electronic clocks, they could look at purchasing the necessary ones.

BJ asked if anyone present had any good or bad experiences to share. ML said he was mainly in favour as this would mean a game could not be lost solely on time.

DG said that Fischer time had been used in Division 1 as a trial during the season and this needed to be reviewed to see if it had been successful. Any changes for other divisions could require a rule change. DB said he had not heard of any concerns, implying it had been a success.

ML proposed an amendment to 8.4 to trial Fischer 2 only in Division 2, seconded by JF.

On a hand count this was agreed by 11 votes to four.

BJ summed up – there were 2 proposals to consider: Firstly, Fischer time would be the default in Divisions 1 and 2 (proposed by Bury St Edmunds Club) and secondly (as amended), Fischer time would be the default in Division 1 and trialled in Division 2.

On a hand count, proposal 1 received four votes, whilst proposal 2 received 12 votes. Next season, Fischer time will be the default in Division 1 and will be trialled as the default in Division 2.

8.4 Saxmundham Club had proposed a player may only play for one team in a given division.

JF handed round some sheets with various fixtures and results to attendees. He confirmed that players from the club had discussed this topic and were in agreement to the proposal made. JF believed the current rule 5.4.c should be amended. The idea of playing for a specific team could be forgotten if players were able to be interchanged so much and JF was in favour of having a loyalty to one team. Saxmundham were in favour of upwards substitution being possible but not sideways. JF thought that smaller clubs could not slot players into different teams in the same division which gave an unfair advantage to clubs that were able to do so.

DW said that Bury St Edmunds had complied with the rules of the League and JF agreed that no rules had been broken.

BJ said that if the proposal was agreed, there would be a need to change the substitution rule again.

LB said he had noted JF's points; he thought upward substitutions were clear, fair and simple to arrange. DB said he was in favour of the proposal; he wanted to maintain the integrity of the league and was not himself in favour of sideways substitutions.

AL said he thought some excellent points had been made; in what other sport could a player play for two different teams in the same division? He thought the current rule could be considered as unfair. He also thought that larger clubs had an advantage under the current rule and that some clubs have multiple teams in the same division.

TM said he believed the rules may not be perfect but he considered some flexibility was necessary; he had captained teams and sometimes it could be difficult to get a full team without using a substitute(s). He did not want to prevent players from playing chess.

JF reiterated that he did not expect to play the same opponent playing for different teams.

AL wondered if the proposal was rejected, whether Saxmundham and Manningtree could consider forming a joint team.

BJ said that both Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds clubs do spread their strongest players across several teams.

DC said he liked the Ipswich approach; this gave each team its own character and he thought the proposal would promote fairness amongst all clubs.

JB said he was in favour of the proposal but assumed this did not relate to Division 3 – JF confirmed only Divisions 1 and 2. BJ said that this will require an amendment to the proposal.

BJ held a hand count to see if most attendees were in favour of JB's amendment to the proposal – Division 1 and 2 but not the lowest division. Most attendees were in favour.

LB said there were arguments on both sides and proposed that a trial season be added.

AL then seconded LB's proposal about a trial season. On a hand count ten were in favour, with four against.

Finally, BJ asked for a vote on the proposal – a player can only play for one team in a division except in the lowest division. On a show of hands, a clear majority was in favour of the proposal.

8.5 The Committee had proposed to remove the expression 'material change' from rule 5.2 in relation to the renomination process. DG discussed this; currently he reviews proposed renominations and either agrees or disagrees with them. There is no definition of what is a 'material change' – it could be one, five, ten or more grading points.

After a brief discussion, BJ asked for a vote on this proposal. On a show of hands, the change was approved unanimously.

8.6 The Committee had proposed a revision of the rules relating to the Norfolk & Suffolk Cup (Suffolk section).

LB thought there were still some incomplete areas. There was no mention of the locality of the Suffolk final – would this be at a neutral venue? BJ suggested the Competitions Secretary could decide on this. JP asked if there was a draw made for the event and who was going to be the home team in the upcoming Suffolk final.

BJ asked for a vote on this proposal which was carried unanimously.

8.7 The Committee had proposed to opt out of the FIDE rule that said a player making two illegal moves in a game would lose that game. SLe asked whether by opting out of this rule we would revert to the previous situation. BJ said he assumed would go back to three illegal moves losing the game.

After a brief discussion, BJ asked for a vote on this proposal, which was carried by 13 votes to four.

8.8 The Bury St Edmunds Chess Club had proposed to ease the upward substitution rule from a maximum of six to 'not more than half the possible games'. BJ said the current principle for six games was based on seven teams in a division and suggested it should be 50% depending on the number of teams in a division.

SLe asked for details of the benefits of the proposed change and various scenarios were discussed.

TM agreed it was a minor change but still needed a vote. A show of hands vote was carried out and the majority were in favour.

8.9 The Committee had proposed to amend Appendix 2 relating to Suffolk grade-limited competitions. After a brief discussion, BJ asked for a vote.

Show of hands vote – the proposal was accepted unanimously.

9 Changes to the Constitution

Bury St Edmunds Chess Club had proposed to meet match fees from county funds. SLo said he had been a county captain in the past and had an issue with collecting board fees from players where the league would not reimburse; he did not think captains should be put into the position of having to pay money themselves to avoid the county owing money. He suggested captains should be reimbursed to avoid the possibility of them being out of pocket.

AS thought the idea sounded a little complicated as he would not always be sure how much would be needed. He suggested this needed to be costed – based on 16 players in a county side, the potential would be £32. If Suffolk reached the national rounds, there was the likelihood that the total cost could be in the region of £300 so there would be a need to increase team fees.

LB said it seemed Suffolk was the only county where players had to pay, other counties met match fees from their own county funds.

BJ agreed that the proposal would mean team would need to be increased and estimated this would increase to about £10 a team. AS said currently the team fee was £16 so this would need to increase to £25 or £26.

The proposal would mean individual players would not need to pay for playing for the county.

DC suggested that the County could meet match fees when the team captain was not able to collect enough money to prevent the captain being out of pocket. JB said when he had been a county captain, he had never collected board fees; the costs had been met from county funds.

TM said that county captains did a difficult job and collecting money from players was a nuisance, especially when the captain himself was playing in the match. Although he felt this was not such a problem for a non-playing captain, he was in favour of county funding.

AL said that he was not a Suffolk county player but that Essex operated a board fee arrangement; if the proposal was approved, players who choose not to play county chess would indirectly be funding those who did.

BJ asked for a vote on the proposal. On a show of hands, the proposal was agreed by 11 votes to one.

It was also agreed to use some of the county reserves to introduce this for the coming season.

10 Safeguarding Children Policy

TK said he had put together a policy but thought this needed to be reviewed; he had adapted it from Essex Junior Chess. He was hopeful that a draft Suffolk SCP could be finalised for the start of the season in September.

BJ asked TK to send him a copy of this draft and also for this to be circulated to all Suffolk clubs as well – comments and feedback to be sent to TK. He wondered if the Committee would need to meet to approve the draft SCP and asked for attendees to agree this could be done; this was agreed unanimously.

Action point – TK to send the draft SCP to BJ and to circulate it to all Suffolk clubs and committee members.

11 Teams for next season

BJ reminded clubs that the deadline for entering teams into the 2018-19 season was 31 July 2018, information needs to be sent to DG.

He asked clubs for their best estimate on the number of teams they would be entering in the league.

Ipswich – 7 teams (league) plus U125, U145, Cup and Plate

Bury St Edmunds – will need to be considered, currently 5 teams in the league.

Saxmundham – 3 teams

Manningtree – 3 teams

Felixstowe – 3 teams

Woodbridge – 2 teams

Clacton – 1 team

Sudbury – 2 teams

Stowmarket – 1 team

This totals 27 possible teams for next season.

12 Any Other Business

BJ suggested that clubs look on the English Chess Federation website for details and guidance about the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which had recently been introduced.

The meeting ended at 10:30. BJ thanked all attendees and the Committee for their work during the previous season.