

SUFFOLK COUNTY CHESS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the SCCA Committee Meeting

Held on line via Microsoft Teams on 8th January 2024, 7:30.

Present: President – Stephen Lewis (SLe)
Vice President - Simon Wilks (SW)
Secretary – John McAllister (JM)
Treasurer – David Green (DG)
Competitions Secretary – Sam Gaffney (SG)
County First Team Captain – Steve Ruthen (SR)
County U1850 Team Captain – Bob Jones (BJ)
Internet Officer – Steve Lovell (SLo)

1. Apologies for absence

None.

2. Minutes of the last SCCA Committee Meeting June 6

These were circulated before the meeting and accepted as correct.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Matters arising from the 2023 SCCA AGM

None.

5. Do we need to formally adopt Rapid Play Handicap Rules into the SCCA Competition Rules

While the 2023 AGM agreed to the proposal to introduce the Rapid Play Handicap tournament, the document on which the proposal was based was not voted into the Competition Rules. SG was actioned to tidy up the document so that it could be put to the AGM as Appendix 4 of the Competition Rules (AP20).

6. Treasurer's Report

DG prepared the following written report for the meeting;

All Fees invoices and other income for the 2023/24 season totalling £536 have been paid by our member clubs. When the outstanding cheques clear the SCCA will have spent £552 so far in this financial year. There will be a shortfall of income compared to expenditure of about £150 as predicted at the 2022/2023 AGM and it will have to be met from reserves.

Current Account balance: £506.00 after all cheques clear.

Deposit account balance: £1371.10 a small increase of £4.76 from a change late in the year to a slightly higher interest rate of 1.51%. Inflation has been far greater

than the interest rate so the SCCA money on deposit is losing value. Interest rates of 5% and more are available elsewhere (NS&I were offering 6.2%) so should we consider moving the deposit account funds to where they may be able to earn about £60 per year instead of £4.76? This would be a significant amount towards meeting the income shortfall.

There has been no other activity on the Deposit account.

I have written to our President to remind him that I will be leaving the post of Treasurer at the 2024 AGM. I have done a decade or so on the committee as Comp Sec and now Treasurer and that is more than enough contribution to the SCCA Administration for me.

This is a firm decision to leave and I will be bringing all the Treasurer's information to the 2024 AGM in both digital and paper formats and leaving without it. I will not do another year while the SCCA finds a replacement but of course I will be available to assist any incoming treasurer.

The Accounts have never been audited during my time as Treasurer, the committee is welcome to get the audits done if they can find an auditor to do the job for free.

Why for free? The SCCA cannot afford to pay the going rate for even an hour or two of an auditor's time. Why pay out about a third of the £530 SCCA annual income just to audit the accounts?

There are bound to be some small errors in the accounts but the records are clear, up to date, simplified and well organised with less than a dozen invoices sent out and only about 20 bank transactions each financial year so there is precious little to audit.

Having inherited a completely paper based double signatory system with no online banking, I leave the SCCA with a revised, simpler system including full digital banking and single cheque signing that makes the revised treasurer's job easy.

The latest bank statements show that I have not emptied the SCCA's bank accounts for my own gain despite having full control of the SCCA accounts using just my single signature, something that some people had the insulting temerity to hint was a possibility when I sought to simplify the accounts.

7. Competition Secretary's Report

SG reported that Bury B had suffered two penalties for board order violations so far this season and that there had been two defaulted matches, one each by Woodbridge and Saxmundham. There was an incident in the Ipswich v Clacton match in which a Clacton player "interfered" in one of the games by pointing out to one of his player's his clock position. Ipswich did not wish any action to be taken. DG pointed out that this was not the first time such a complaint has been made in a Clacton match. SG also mentioned the need to penalise Ipswich in the Divisional Rapidplay Knockout match against Clacton for a board order violation that resulted in 5½-2½ win becoming a 4-4 loss on board elimination. An appeal was raised by Ipswich but the committee agreed that while this was very unfortunate, the rules demanded it. SG concluded this part of his report by pointing out that Bury A have two outstanding postponements that have still not been re-scheduled.

There had been a spate of 4-4 draws in the Divisional Rapidplay Knockout competition and SG expressed his concerns that the tie-break rules were somewhat arbitrary. A discussion followed regarding possible alternatives including;

- a blitz round of five minutes
- each team nominates one of their players to play two games, if still drawn, continue playing until one is the first to win
- award the match to the away team

It was acknowledged that not all of these would necessarily produce a winner in the time available. SG was tasked with investigating further and drawing up a proposal (AP21).

SLo suggested that if we are considering such tie breaks can we make the use of digital clocks mandatory. As only Clacton do not use them perhaps the SCCA could subsidise them as an incentive to getting them. This was rejected as unfair to other clubs, particularly as Clacton do not take a full part in the league. JM suggested that if away clubs preferred digital clocks then they could always take their own clocks with them. This raised the question of whether Clacton would be obliged to use them or not. SLo suggested the SCCA should write to Clacton to see if they have any plans to migrate to digital clocks, and if not, would they object to away clubs bringing their own clocks with them. SLe took an action to do this (AP22).

8. Future of the Norfolk and Suffolk Cup - Suffolk section

SG expressed his disappointment that only three clubs entered teams in the NS Cup this year, and wondered if there was anything we could do to encourage a greater take up. If not, perhaps we should decide the winner by another means, perhaps the winner of Division One. BJ pointed out that the NS Cup is its own competition, and is also bound by the umbrella Norfolk and Suffolk rules. On top of that, it is played over six boards. Apart from encouraging more clubs to take part, even if they would be heavily out-rated, there was no consensus to change the existing arrangement.

9. Discussion document for Rule Infringement Penalties (see appendix)

This item on the agenda did not discuss the penalty for board order infringements, but rather the cause of them, and how they could be reduced, if not eliminated.

The number of board order violations this season has been linked to the move to monthly ratings, therefore SG proposed that perhaps we should return to using only two sets of ratings, September 1st and January 1st. It was pointed out by many that the problem was not so much the constantly changing monthly ratings, but the fact that we have two sets of ratings (standard and rapid) and that P ratings are ignored, resulting in standard ratings replacing rapid play ratings more often than not in rapid play matches, which sometimes confuses both captains and players.

SR repeated his claim that if captains were obliged to put the relevant rating of their players on the team sheet, this would go along way to resolving the issue. It was also suggested that once this is done by both captains it should be seen as tacit approval by both captains that they are satisfied with the board order and that no penalty should thus apply if a mistake was subsequently discovered.

SW suggested that perhaps we should allow captains to choose how they wanted to organise their team, whether by Sept/Jan only ratings or by monthly ratings, and that so long as their board order complied with one of them, the rules would be met. BJ's view was that returning to semi annual ratings in any form was a step backwards, and we should not entertain it, stating that it basically boils down to education, citing Bury's guidance sheet for team captains, explaining the dos and don'ts.

After a great deal of discussion it was decided not to propose a change to the current use of monthly ratings, but to send to all clubs some advice on best practice that should reduce, if not eliminate board order violations in future. BJ was tasked with providing a copy of Bury's help sheet, suitably rendered for distribution to all team captains throughout the league (AP23).

10. Review SCCA Child Welfare Policy - are we as a committee confident we know where it is and that it is up to date – see attached observations from David

DG pointed out that since the Child Protection Policy was published it has been largely ignored. He proceeded to point out many of its shortcomings, not the least being that the SCCA no longer has a "Lead for Safeguarding" and that the subject hasn't appeared as an agenda item of any committee meeting since.

BJ explained that he and Tim Kent had adapted it from the ECF model, which had to be stripped down considerably. He acknowledged that it was not free from the occasional typo, but the vast majority of them are relatively trivial in nature and do not detract from the objective of the policy. BJ was tasked with liaising once again with Tim Kent to review and refine the document further (AP24). DG was thanked for his investigation and tasked with passing his findings on to BJ for his review with Tim Kent (AP25).

The committee agreed that a review of the Child Protection Policy would become a permanent agenda item for future meetings, and that a new Lead for Safeguarding would be sought.

11. AOB

SLe pointed out that we need to make the next committee meeting soon as there will be three vacancies on the committee at the next AGM, and we also need to recruit a new Lead for Safeguarding.

SW said he has approached Phil Hopkins for the County First Team Captain's role, but did not get a positive response. He feels it is still worth trying again. JM was tasked with writing to all clubs with an appeal for volunteers for all of the soon to be vacant posts (AP26).

BJ questioned the need for the third sentence in Rule A1.6. Everyone agreed this was pointless and had never been invoked. A proposal would be put before the AGM to remove it.

12. Date and venue of next SCCA Committee Meeting

The meeting was closed at 8:40. The next committee meeting was scheduled for Monday March 11th.

SUMMARY OF ONGOING ACTION POINTS

AP19. SG to review the Norfolk and Suffolk Cup Rules regarding a tie-break in knock-out finals.

AP20. SG to tidy up and prepare the proposal document submitted for the Rapid Play Handicap competition so that it could be put to the AGM as Appendix 4 of the Competition Rules.

AP21. SG to investigate possible alternatives to resolve tie-breaks in the Divisional Rapidplay knockout competitions.

AP22. SLe to write to Clacton regarding their plans for digital clocks, and the SCCA's proposal that clubs could bring their own, and make acceptance of their use a condition of entry into all SCCA competitions.

AP23. BJ to provide a help sheet for team captains suitable for all clubs to help eliminate accidental board order violations.

AP24. BJ to liaise with Tim Kent to review the SCCA Child Protection Policy.

AP25. DG to send to BJ the findings of his investigations of the SCCA Child Protection Policy.

AP26. JM to write to all clubs to seek volunteers for the three vacancies on the committee and for a new Lead for Safeguarding.

PROPOSALS FROM THE COMMITTEE TO PUT TO THE AGM

Appendix 4.

A new appendix to the Competition Rules specifying the rules governing the Rapid Play Handicap competition (in preparation).

Rule 1.6.

Delete the last sentence of Rule 1.6, which reads; "*The board order need not remain the same for both games.*"

This rule conflicts with Rule A1.4 which states that players must face the same opponent with black and white.