

SUFFOLK COUNTY CHESS ASSOCIATION

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Suffolk County Chess Association
held on Wednesday 2nd July 2025
at the Ipswich Institute (home of Ipswich Chess Club) 7:30 pm**

In Attendance (18)

Simon Wilks (Saxmundham)
Piotr Dolewka (Ipswich)
John McAllister (Manningtree)
Sam Gaffney (Saxmundham and Woodbridge)
Anthony Taylor (Bury St Edmunds)
Bob Jones (Bury St Edmunds)
Steve Lovell (Bury St Edmunds)
David Green (Stowmarket)
John Feavyour (Saxmundham)
Alonso Paez (Ipswich)
Tim Lunn (Ipswich)
Les Jones (Ipswich)
James Irwin (Stowmarket)
Bethany Irwin (Stowmarket)
Mark Weidman (Felixstowe)
Martyn Colebrook (Ipswich)
Steve Gregory (Ipswich Sports Club)
Rob Sanders (Sudbury)

1. Apologies for absence.

Bill Mackintosh (Stowmarket)
Ken Lunn (Ipswich)
John Lambert (Clacton)
Melvin Steele (Clacton)

2. Minutes of the last SCCA AGM held on 19th June 2024.

The minutes of the 2024 AGM were accepted without amendment.

3. Matters arising.

None

4. Officers' reports.

4.1 President (Simon Wilks)

Simon presented the following report;

This was my first year as President of Suffolk Chess Association and I wish to express my thanks to the Committee who have given their time and energy to keep the wheels of the SCCA turning.

I have an observation that we can get obsessed with the rulebook and that sometimes we need to put aside an over-high expectation that legislating will solve all our problems and rule out all anomalies. That said, you'll have seen from the agenda that we are not without rule change proposals for this AGM. But I think it's also important to try and approach matches (and indeed games) in an appropriate sporting spirit and with consideration for the other team (or opponent's) circumstance.

It would be remiss of me to omit from my report a glaring disappointment during the year and in this context, I'd like to remind everyone of the stated purpose of the SCCA.

The Suffolk County Chess Association (SCCA) exists to organise, encourage and promote adult and junior chess throughout the county and in neighbouring areas. We organise league and cup competitions for local chess clubs and enter teams into the regional and national county championships.

The disappointment is that we did not field a County A side this season. On the agenda we have an item for the election of a First Team Captain I hope that someone will step forward so that the opportunities for playing County chess are not wasted in 25/26. I also hope that Clubs will encourage their best players to participate in the County Championship.

4.2 Vice-President (Piotr Dolewka)

Piotr had nothing specific to report as his role was limited to attending a number of committee meetings.

4.3 Admin Secretary (John McAllister)

John reported that apart from the routine aspects of the role, which went quite smoothly, he had attended the AGM of the EACU the previous weekend. The financial position of the Union is good; hence there will be no increase in fees for next season. There was a proposal from a Norfolk player to appoint a Regional Junior Organiser, but the EACU felt that the responsibilities of such a post would be better served at County level. The EACU does have a Junior Representative, although at the moment that role is vacant, as is the role of Lead for Safeguarding, which could be combined into a single role. John then passed on the EACU's appeal for a volunteer for these posts. Norfolk were entering teams in the U1650 and U1450 County Championships, and as things

stand they will progress straight to the knockout stages as no other county in our area has entered a team in either competition.

Alonso Paez asked if the junior clubs in Suffolk were running and what activities they engaged in. Bob Jones replied that as well as usual club meetings they also play matches between each other. Mark Weidman said he could ask Dagne Ciuksyte if she would be willing to help.

John then informed the meeting of a presentation given by the new ECF director of events announcing a new competition designed to encourage the development of grassroots chess. It is called the "Champion of Champions" and will be two tournaments, one each for the Open Champion and the Women's Champion of English counties. It will be held in the midlands and will be FIDE rated. It is unclear how a Champion of Champions tournament will develop grassroots chess, but it has been designed to encourage the 20% of counties that do not have a county championship tournament, and the 80% of counties that do not have a women's county championship, to do so. The tournaments are going ahead, although their success will depend on county champions being willing to take part as only champions do so, their place cannot be taken by the runner up.

4.4 Treasurer (Anthony Taylor)

Anthony thanked David Green for the even transition of the Treasurer's role, particularly as it had involved several home visits to complete the transfer. He reported that the county started the year with a total of £1784 in its two accounts and ended the year with £2052 – a surplus of £257. He explained that there were two reasons for this, one good the other bad.

The bad reason was because our dues to the EACU were reduced because we did not enter an A Team in the County Championships, the good reason was the arrival of Ipswich Sports Club, which boosted our income from entry fees. Anthony pointed out however, that accounts can be misleading, particularly when invoices come in after the end of the financial year that were incurred during that year, and in this case we have recently received an invoice for £80 that is not included in these figures.

David Green pointed out that this would have reduced the surplus to £177, and had we had a county first team, the surplus would be even less.

4.5 Competitions Secretary (Sam Gaffney)

Sam opened by thanking the league for raising far fewer disputes last season, making his job a great deal easier. He spoke of the innovations introduced last season, the divisional rapid play tie breaks and the move from board points to match points in the rating limited competitions, and asked how these had been received. The rapid play tie breaks had not been received with glee, although no one had raised any issues with the move from board points to match points.

He announced that for the first time in many years a team other than Bury or Ipswich had won the Suffolk section of the Norfolk and Suffolk Cup, namely Manningtree. However, he also pointed out that the level of defaults in the

league was still much too high, particularly in division one and the division one rapid play cup, as these are our premier competitions.

4.6 U1850 Captain (Bob Jones)

Bob reported that this had been a good year for the U1850 team. A total of 23 players represented Suffolk across eight matches this season. In the six round EACU event Suffolk finished in second place to Cambridgeshire and therefore qualified for the National rounds.

In the National quarter-final Suffolk was drawn against Lincolnshire. This was a repeat of the same stage last season when Suffolk were beaten. This time however, Suffolk were victorious, winning convincingly 10-6.

On to the National semi-final against Yorkshire, one of the largest counties in the country with many times more clubs and players to call on. They put out a very strong team, averaging 1789. Suffolk managed one of their strongest teams possible but despite our best efforts we were still out-rated by an average of 20 points per board. Yorkshire ran out winners by the close margin of nine points to seven.

Yorkshire now face Middlesex in the Final (to be played on Saturday) with the latter having beaten Cambridgeshire in the other semi-final. By contrast Middlesex averaged 1741 and Cambridge only 1725. Clearly the luck of the drawn did not favour Suffolk!

Our **Player of the Year** was undoubtedly **Nathan Barnes** (Clacton) who played on either top board or Board 2 and was unbeaten, scoring 5½ from 8 (+3 =5).

Other high scores included: Simon Riley (Ipswich) 5/7, Bob Jones (Bury) 5/7, Tom Gordon (Ipswich) 4½/8, Peter Newton (Bury) 4½/8, Thomas Sheat (Ipswich) 4/6, Judith Heffer (Bury) 3½/6 (unbeaten!).

Bob concluded by thanking all those who represented Suffolk this season!

4.7 Internet Officer (Steve Lovell)

Steve had nothing specific to report as it was business as usual maintaining the county web site. He invited others to send him articles for posting on the site as he doesn't get many contributions these days, and would welcome regular contributions from individuals and clubs.

He pointed out that the SCCA site also hosted the web sites of three affiliated clubs (Stowmarket, Saxmundham and Woodbridge) which offsets some of the costs of maintaining the site and he would welcome any other clubs without a web site to join them.

4.8 Lead for Safeguarding (Bob Jones)

Simon Wilks briefly outlined how Bob had come to be in this role before Bob made his report. Bob described how the original policy was produced and that the Lead named in it had long since resigned. Bob had had several meetings

with Tim Kent, who had previously been an SCCA Junior Chess Organiser, to update and amend the original policy and then handed out copies of the updated policy, dated today in the expectation that it would be accepted by the SCCA at his meeting. Simon Wilks proposed that this be accepted subject to further review. This was passed nem con.

David Green welcomed the arrival of the modified policy document, although he still had some issues with it. Bob reminded the meeting that any club who is not happy with it can use it as a template for developing a policy document of their own.

Mark Weidman questioned some of the expectations required of volunteers, some of which are subjective and impossible to quantify. Bob pointed out that the policy will be subject to constant review and any wrinkles can be ironed as reviews progress.

5. Election of officers.

Simon Wilks stated that all previously elected officers are prepared to continue in post and asked if there were any other candidates for any of the positions. There being none he proposed the current committee be elected en bloc. This was approved nem con.

The appointment of Bob Jones to the post of Lead for Safeguarding had been made by the committee, it was now proposed that it be approved by the AGM. This was carried nem con.

5.1 First Team Captain

Simon Wilks asked if there were any candidates willing to take on the role of the County first team captain. Bob Jones pointed out that it doesn't have to be a strong player, just someone who is a good organiser and could serve as a non playing captain. Simon suggested the role could be split on a rota basis, with just three matches to manage in the initial stage, the load could be spread. Rob Sanders said he would be willing to help but was in the process of moving home so couldn't commit to much. Simon said he would be willing to help himself but also couldn't commit to the full role. Simon and Rob agreed to discuss after the meeting to work a way forward.

Steve Lovell concluded by stating the reasons the county first team had suffered so much was that while it survived Covid running on 12 boards, it never recovered to 16 boards as many top players didn't return to over the board play after Covid.

6. Review of Rule 7.1 in relation to the U1800 and U1650 competitions.

Simon Wilks reviewed the outcome of the rating limited competitions, pointing out that the change from board points to match points would not have changed the final positions this year. Piotr Dolewka reminded the meeting why the change was proposed in the first place, i.e. the prevalence of defaults, especially match defaults. Simon asked the meeting if it felt this change should be applied to all competitions.

Mark Weidman stated that in leagues of six boards then it made sense to use match points, but with teams of only four boards it didn't. Tim Lunn pointed out that with small teams, defaulted boards would potentially have a bigger impact if match points are used instead of board points.

The consensus was for the status quo.

7. Proposals for changes to the Competition Rules.

7.1 Competition Rule 3.2

The SCCA committee propose the following amendment to Competition Rule 3.2. Replace the existing rule with the following;

“A match may be postponed by agreement between the two captains. Where any two teams from the same club arrange a postponement then the postponed match may not be scheduled for a date that would make it the last match of the season for either team. A request for a postponement, made at any time up until 48 hours of the originally scheduled match date cannot be unreasonably refused. Subsequent requests to postpone a postponed match may be declined. In this case, the match will be played on the last agreed date. The date for the rescheduled match must not be later than 30 May.”

Simon Wilks read out the proposal and the rational behind it. David Green pointed out that there could be many cases where less than 48 hours would still be unreasonable to refuse a postponement, as Rule 3.4 identifies. This was acknowledged and it was pointed out that this new rule would not prevent a captain agreeing a postponement with less than 48 hours notice.

Rob Sanders did not agree that only teams from the same club should be proscribed from making a postponed match the last match of the season. He pointed out that it gives teams an advantage if they know exactly what they need from their last match if all other matches have been played. He cited the example of the English Premier League where the final matches of the season are all played on the same day and at the same time. Mark Weidman agreed, especially for the first division, where he felt that the teams took it more seriously. Martyn Colebrook did not disagree with Rob, but did disagree with the implication that teams in the lower divisions took it less seriously.

Rob also pointed out that he has to book his venue at the start of the season making postponements difficult, and did not accept that the non-availability of players was a valid reason for postponements. Bob Jones stated that that is nearly always the only reason, and that in many cases, it is either a postponement or a default. Everyone agreed that the former was preferable.

The motion was passed 11-1 with the proviso that May 30 will be changed to May 31.

There was general agreement that the final matches for each division should be played on the same night, although Sam Gaffney was sceptical about the practicalities of this, particularly if that night was not a club's home night, and may cause fixtures to extend into May. He would however make an attempt. David Green stated that Stowmarket's home fixtures could not extend into May as their venue is not available.

7.2 Competition Rule 5.2

The SCCA committee propose the following amendment to Competition Rule 5.2;

Change “*mid-season*” to “*January*”.

This was passed nem con.

7.3 Competition Rule A1.7

The SCCA committee propose the following amendment to Competition Rule A1.7;

Insert “*only*” between “*make*” and “*one*” and change “*for another team*” to “*across all other teams (not one per team)*”

This was passed nem con.

7.4 Suffolk Championship

Mark Weidman (Felixstowe) has proposed the following amendments to the Competition Rules:

The Suffolk Championship should be reintroduced, the format to be discussed by a committee, appointed at the AGM.

Mark Weidman outlined his proposal in general terms, suggesting various formats, which would be determined by the number of entrants. Tim Lunn pointed out that he still has the trophies for when the Suffolk Championship was last run. Mark Weidman affirmed his willingness to run the tournament, but not to run a junior section. Sam Gaffney, Tim Lunn and Piotr Dolewka all volunteered to help. Bob Jones said that a junior tournament should be held alongside, to which there was general agreement.

The proposal was passed nem con.

7.5 Rules Committee

Mark Weidman (Felixstowe) has proposed the following amendments to the Competition Rules:

A rules committee should be appointed at the AGM to deal with both updating the rules and dealing with any issues regarding their interpretation.

Mark Weidman felt that rules are sometimes changed at AGMs without fully exploring the consequences, and cited the rules in the rapidplay handicap that allowed the rating of a player taking a default to be included in the average, which seriously and unfairly disadvantaged Felixstowe last year in their match against Woodbridge. It was pointed out that the rules for this competition had not changed, as last year was the first year the rules were in place, although it was acknowledged that the season before that they were run on provisional rules, which may have led to the confusion.

Sam Gaffney, Bob Jones, along with several others, pointed out that the current committee already fulfils this role and spends a considerable amount of its time debating the rules, and how they can be improved. The committee

acknowledged that they do not always get it right. The general feeling was that a rules committee was unnecessary.

The proposal was defeated nem con.

8. Proposals for changes to the Constitution.

The SCCA has proposed the following amendments to the Constitution:

8.1 Article 9

In the first sentence replace “*Treasurer*” with “SCCA”.

The rationale for this change was explained and was duly passed nem con.

9. Presentation of Trophies:

Division 1 – Ipswich Sports Club – collected by Steve Gregory.

Division 2 – Stowmarket – collected by James Irwin.

Division 3 – Ipswich C – collected by Martyn Colebrook.

Division 1 POTY – Angus Irving (Ipswich)

Division 2 POTY – James Irwin (Stowmarket)

Division 3 POTY – Martyn Colebrook (Ipswich)

U1800 Cup – Manningtree – collected by John McAllister

U1650 Cup – Ipswich – collected by Piotr Dolewka

Division One Rapid Play – Manningtree A - collected by John McAllister

Division Two Rapid Play – Stowmarket – collected by Tim Lunn

Division Three Rapid Play – Ipswich C – collected by Martyn Colebrook

10. Teams for next season

Sam Gaffney sketched out the divisional structure for next season, although he would like to even out the divisions to have the same number in each. This would require the agreement of certain teams accepting promotion.

Division One	Division Two	Division Three
Bury St Edmunds A	Bury St Edmunds B	Bury St Edmunds C
Ipswich A	Felixstowe A	Felixstowe B
Ipswich Sports Club A	Ipswich B	Ipswich D
Manningtree A	Ipswich C	Ipswich E
Stowmarket	Manningtree B	Ipswich Sports Club B
Sudbury	Saxmundham A	Manningtree C
	Woodbridge	Saxmundham B
		Sudbury C

Steve Lovell raised the subject of halfway way venues for teams on opposite sides of the county (i.e. Bury and Saxmundham). Piotr Dolewka said Ipswich were prepared to host such matches, but the maximum number of matches they could host on one evening would be four.

11. Any other business

Sudbury announced a change of venue. They are returning to the Sudbury Institute Club at 54 Station Road, CO10 2SP.