

SUFFOLK COUNTY CHESS ASSOCIATION

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Suffolk County Chess Association
held on Wednesday 1st July 2026
at the Ipswich Institute (home of Ipswich Chess Club) 7:30 pm**

In Attendance (14)

Simon Wilks (Saxmundham)
Piotr Dolewka (Ipswich)
John McAllister (Manningtree)
Sam Gaffney (Saxmundham and Woodbridge)
Bob Jones (Bury St Edmunds)
John Feavyour (Saxmundham)
Alonso Paez (Ipswich)
Tim Lunn (Ipswich)
Mark Weidman (Felixstowe)
Martyn Colebrook (Ipswich)
Bob Stephens (Manningtree)
Rob Sanders (Sudbury)
Jon Pascoe (Sudbury)
Charlie Smith (Ipswich Sports Club)

1. Apologies for absence

John Lambert (Clacton)
Melvin Steele (Clacton)
David Green (Stowmarket)
Anthony Taylor (Bury St Edmunds)
Steve Lovell (Bury St Edmunds)
Hugo Brown (Saxmundham)
Ed Player (unattached)

2. Minutes of the last SCCA AGM held on Wednesday 02 July 2025.

The minutes of the 2025 AGM were accepted without amendment.

3. Matters arising

Mark Weidman understood that he had been added to the committee at last year's AGM but had not been invited to any committee meetings, and was told that it wasn't in the minutes. Simon acknowledged that there had been some confusion over this and apologised on behalf of the committee.

Mark stated that he had done some work on a County Championship but encountered a few issues when trying to get access to the LMS to record results. He was initially given access but found later that his access was removed. The committee was unable to shed any light on that. Mark also organised an interclub blitz match against Bury and was planning to invite other

clubs to, and this time he was able to enter the results but found that they had later disappeared.

That aside Mark reported that he has arranged a venue and proposed to run a tournament that will be a Swiss to start, with a knock-out to follow because he doesn't think that a Swiss alone is good enough to find a champion.

Mark was asked to remind the meeting why he was invited on to the committee. He explained that it was to organise an individual Suffolk Chess Championship, which everyone except one, voted in favour of at the last AGM. Simon sought approval from the floor to progress with this and there was unanimous agreement.

Mark added that he would also like to invite clubs to play some rated blitz matches because this is something he finds many others would like. These do not necessarily need to be formally structured into SCCA activities but could be done on an ad-hoc basis.

Bob Stephens raised the issue of whether matches should be decided on board points or match points as this was trialled in the rated limited competitions and asked if this has been reviewed. A varied discussion followed on the merits of each system, although no one at the time could find where in the previous minutes this was mentioned. Bob concluded with an illustration that if a team won all twelve of their matches 3-1 they could still not win the league if another team wins all theirs 4-0 except the two they lose 3-1, which doesn't seem right. Simon asked that as we couldn't find this matter in the minutes could we refer it to AOB.

4. Officers' reports.

4.1 President (Simon Wilks)

Simon presented the following report;

This was my second year as President of the SCCA and once again I would like to express my admiration for, and gratitude to, the members of the Committee and many others who gave of their free time to ensure Suffolk Chess runs smoothly.

I have previously observed that chess players can get over-obsessed with the rulebook. As someone who grew up watching Fischer v Spassky I might reflect that perhaps it is a permanent feature of chess. Perhaps the Competition Secretary will disabuse me of my view but it seems to me that there have been fewer controversies this year. There certainly seem to be fewer suggested rule changes for this AGM. I would like to attribute this to chess generally having been played in a positive sporting spirit.

My highlight of the year has been the return of the senior County Team which I have had the pleasure to captain on occasion and the pain of losing a lot of games personally. The return of the first team is almost single-handedly down to the magnificent efforts of Tim Lunn which, I hope, the meeting will acknowledge.

4.2 Vice-President (Piotr Dolewka)

Piotr stated that for him the year has gone quite smoothly without any major disputes. However the matter of match defaults is quite concerning and he

would like to ask all clubs if they could think of anything we could all do together to improve the situation.

4.3 Admin Secretary (John McAllister)

John reported that as there has only been one committee meeting since the AGM last year he has not been very busy, but at that meeting the committee did appoint a new Junior Chess Representative to replace Tim Kent. This is Ed Player, and although he is currently in Germany he will be returning to the UK before long. He already does a lot for Suffolk Junior chess.

John attended the EACU AGM last month. The finances of the EACU are good and they have not increased any fees. Several counties will be entering teams in the U1650 and U1450 County Championships, which means Suffolk could also enter a team in those categories if a captain could be found. There are two vacancies on the EACU committee, those of Junior Chess Representative and Lead for Safeguarding. And finally the EACU ECF representative reported that the ECF will be making a modest increase in membership fees.

4.4 Treasurer (Anthony Taylor)

Anthony was unable to be present, the President read out the following report prepared by Anthony;

I apologise to everyone present for not attending at the AGM. This is due to unforeseen circumstances which arose at very short notice.

As of today the balance on our Current Account is £803.47 and on our Savings Account £1,531.95.

For the accounting year ending 31st May 2026 the SCCA made a profit of £262. However, this gives a misleading impression as the only outgoings were for room hire. I didn't receive (and have still not received) the usual requests for engraving trophies and maintaining our website. These would have dented our profit but not eliminated it entirely.

I'd recommend that we maintain the same fees for entering leagues and other competitions as those charged for the 2025/26 season.

Finally, I will have served 3 years as Treasurer by the end of the current accounting year on 31st May 2027. One of the most important tasks of any Treasurer is to be able to hand over to his successor. Next year I'll be 84 and it would be tempting fate if I carried on for any longer. I'll be available to show the ropes to the next Treasurer at any time during the current accounting year.'

4.5 Competitions Secretary (Sam Gaffney)

Sam echoed Simon's sentiments because there were fewer disputes this year, however there were a number of issues raised by one club, which will be covered later on the agenda and two teams were disqualified last season: Bury in the U1650 and Saxmundham in division 3.

This year the finals night was introduced, which will be discussed later.

4.6 County First Team Captain (Simon Wilks - caretaker)

Simon asked Tim Lunn if he would like to make a report as he had done most of the work in arranging the team. Tim had prepared a brief written report.

After not entering a team the previous season, the aim this season was to get some regular players to consistently put out a team of 16. I'm glad to say that we succeeded in that.

Suffolk, unfortunately, isn't as strong as it has been in the past, but I'm pleased to say we gave our stronger opposition a close run on occasions.

We did, though, lose both matches to the very strong Norfolk and Cambridgeshire teams and had a win and a loss versus Bedfordshire. Our win coming in the last game of the season.

Top scorer for Suffolk was our board one Alan Merry with 4.5 out of 6.

A big thank you to everyone who played, I hope we can build for next season.

4.7 U1850 Captain (Bob Jones)

Although we weren't expected to qualify for the knock-out stage, we won our last two matches and squeezed through in second place. In the national rounds we were drawn against Kent. A very tough county. We went down to Wansted to play them and we won 9-7 even though we were out-rated by quite a few points.

In the semi-final we had to face Yorkshire, who beat us last year in the quarter final. Unfortunately Bob himself was away on holiday, as was 6 or 7 others from the squad. He managed to draft in replacements but we were very heavily outrated. Yorkshire had 11 players rated over 1800, we had 6, but Yorkshire have 49 clubs to select their players from. We were out-rated by 125 points per board. On the top 11 boards, occupied by their 1800 plus players, we lost 4-7. On the bottom five boards we were out-rated by a huge amount because all our players were below 1700, one below 1600, facing players all over 1740 we managed to do 2½-2½, which was a very good performance. We therefore lost the match 6½-9½. Bob singled out Martin Colebrook for special mention, who on bottom board was rated at 1585 and faced an opponent rated at 1744. He was the last to finish and he won. Martin was then given a round of applause and asked if he could provide the score of his game. He said he would once he had deciphered his scribble.

Bob concluded by saying it had been a fantastic year with a great team spirit, it was just a shame we couldn't get a stronger team to face Yorkshire.

4.8 Internet Officer (Steve Lovell)

There was nothing to report from Steve.

4.9 Suffolk Junior Chess Representative (Ed Player)

We received a written report from Ed, which was summarised below. The full report is attached to these minutes.

There's now an EACU Junior Championship that Suffolk takes part in competing for the Adam Hunt Trophy: <https://suffolkjuniorchess.org/eacu-junior-team-championship>

There's now an SJC Online Shop: <https://suffolkchess.team-togs.com/shop/store.php>

Ipswich Junior Chess Club has moved to Sunday mornings.

SJC Online Club has reached over 100 members since it began in 2020.

In short, to attract more players I believe our county could do with more (junior) chess organisers, controllers/arbiters, clubs, and OTB events. Having said that, there has also been quite a lot of progress over the past year.

4.10 Lead for Safeguarding (Bob Jones)

Bob reminded the meeting that at the last AGM the draft policy was accepted, therefore there can be no question as to the validity of the policy as posted on the SCCA web site. He went on to say that although the minutes state that the policy is subject to further review, there is no stated procedure for that, which is something we should instigate, and invite clubs to comment on the policy.

The only club that has sent a copy of their Safeguarding policy is Stowmarket, which is a single page, which in Bob's opinion is insufficient.

Rob Saunders informed the meeting that Sudbury have their own Safeguarding policy and agreed to send a copy to Bob. Any other club with a policy of their own was also asked to send a copy to Bob, and regardless of whether they have one or not they were also asked to comment on the SCCA policy.

Alonso sought clarification on the applicability of the SCCA policy on all junior clubs. Bob replied that it is applicable to all clubs, even those without juniors. Piotr explained further the obligation of all organisations to have a Safeguarding policy. Alonso repeated his thoughts that the SCCA policy was for the whole of Suffolk regardless of their own policy. Bob read out from the policy to make things clear;

"Clubs affiliated to the SCCA will be required to follow this policy unless they have their own acceptable Safeguarding Policy in place. Clubs will be asked to declare whether they operate their own Safeguarding policy, or will follow the SCCA policy"

Sam Gaffney raised the question, what if a club refused to adopt the SCCA policy, what role would Bob have in relation to a club's own Safeguarding policy? Bob replied that he would probably refer that to the committee.

After much further discussion the matter was finally summarised thus:

The SCCA policy is the default policy and clubs can opt out of it if they have their own policy. If a club's own policy is deemed inadequate, that club will be required to follow the SCCA policy.

5. Election of officers

There were no new candidates and all existing officers agreed to continue in post.

5.1 First Team Captain

Simon Wilks explained that after the resignation of Steve Ruthen the SCCA has been unable to find a first team captain. Last year he, Tim Lunn and Rob Sanders agreed to organise the team amongst themselves, although in practice it worked out that Tim virtually did it all on his own.

Tim was asked if he wanted the role of captain to be made official, which he declined. Without another candidate Simon said he would be happy if the current arrangement to continue for next season with Tim organising the team and himself or Rob captaining on the day.

In conclusion, the role of captain would be officially shared between Rob Sanders and Simon Wilks.

6. Review of the SCCA Safeguarding Policy

This had been satisfactorily dealt with under item 4:10.

7. Divisional Finals Night

Simon Wilks summarised the current situation and acknowledged that having the final matches of each division held on the same night was not universally welcomed and asked for comments from the floor.

This generated a great deal of debate. In general, it was considered a good idea in theory, but not very practical. The main issues being;

- an odd number of teams partly nullify the objective
- teams that postpone their final match defeat the object of the finals night
- with a single venue half the teams lose a home match
- if a team cannot postpone their final match they would be forced to field a much weakened team
- when the title race for a division has already been settled (as was the case in all three divisions last season) it makes the finals night irrelevant

There was some disagreement as to whether it was agreed that all matches should not only be played on the same night, but also at the same venue. Sam Gaffney pointed out that while it may not be necessary to use the same venue, he was doubtful if having it on the same night at different venues could be applied across all three divisions, and that there are other factors that also have an impact.

Simon Wilks concluded the discussion with a summary and with his view that the finals night should be abandoned. Bob Stephens agreed, and made a formal proposal that it should be abandoned. This was carried 10-1.

8. Proposals for Changes to the Competition Rules

"A new rapid play league, to be created, separate from the standard play league. A proper league, not a knockout. Nominations to be completely separate from the standard play league. To replace the handicap cup."

Mark Weidman explained that his proposal was due to requests from others to have more rapidplay matches. He added to this proposal that the new rapidplay league should also replace the divisional rapidplay knockout competitions as well.

Sam Gaffney did not think there would be enough free weeks in the season to accommodate such a league, even without the rapidplay handicap and divisional knockout competitions.

The implications were discussed at great length with various options suggested, including scrapping the U1800 and U1650 Cups, introducing a Plate in each divisional rapidplay cup, having five or even six boards in the rapidplay handicap, changing the divisional structure of a rapidplay league to rating limited divisions (U7000 being suggested).

Simon Wilks pointed out that none of these options could be decided at this AGM. Concrete proposals for any of these options will need to be put to the next AGM.

This original proposal was voted down 6-3.

The committee will consider the options discussed and come up with concrete proposal for next year's AGM.

"Teams should notify the other team, in advance, if a board is to be defaulted, as a matter of courtesy."

A considerable debate followed, very little of which was relevant to the actual proposal. As Mark Weidman proposed no penalty for breaking this rule, and as it could not be enforced, and as this nearly always happens anyway, this proposal was not put to a vote.

"When a captain notifies the other team of a default, he should ask, 'which board would you prefer us to default on.' The team being defaulted against can then choose."

There was little debate on this part of the proposal and it was quickly put to a vote. It was defeated 11-1.

"When a team defaults in advance, the other team should only have to make sure the three players who play, are played in correct board order."

It was immediately pointed out that this proposal is already in the rules. Mark explained that the purpose of this proposal was to allow the team taking the default the option of not having to enter a player's name on the score-sheet. While the proposal itself does not make this clear, it was defeated 11-1 and would thus have been defeated anyway even if it had been clear.

"The competition secretary should follow a principle of laissez-faire. Agreements between teams should be respected and honoured."

Mark Weidman argued that if two clubs agreed to waive the rules in an individual case then the Competition Secretary should not intervene. There was considerable objection to the idea that two teams could agree among themselves to disregard the Competition Rules and that the Competition Secretary should apply the rules in all cases. The proposal was defeated 11-1.

9. **Proposals for changes to the Constitution.**

There were no proposal for any changes to the constitution.

10. **Proposals for Changes to the Safeguarding Policy**

Delete the second to last paragraph in the preamble on page two beginning;

"An affiliated club opting to operate a separate policy will be required to share their policy with the SCCA Lead for Safeguarding"

And replace it with;

"The Individual clubs in the SCCA have the Primary duty of care to protect their junior and young members from any form of child abuse."

There was no objection to adding the second paragraph, which was passed nem-con. Keeping the original paragraph was unanimously agreed.

11. **Presentation of Trophies:**

Division 1 – Manningtree A – collected by John McAllister

Division 2 – Ipswich B – collected by Tim Lunn

Division 3 – Ipswich Sports Club B – collected by Charlie Smith

Division 1 POTY – Panagiotis Kanellopoulos (Manningtree)

Division 2 POTY – Tim Lunn (Stowmarket)

Division 3 POTY – Hugo Smith (Bury St Edmunds)

U1800 Cup – Bury St Edmunds – collected by Bob Jones

U1650 Cup – Clacton – collected by Bob Stephens

Division One Rapid Play – Bury St Edmunds A – collected by Bob Jones

Division Two Rapid Play – Bury St Edmunds B – collected by Bob Jones

Division Three Rapid Play – Clacton – collected by Bob Stephens

12. **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

Manningtree A
Ipswich Sports Club A
Bury St Edmunds A
Stowmarket
Ipswich A
Sudbury A
Felixstowe A

Division Two

Bury St Edmunds B
Saxmundham A
Manningtree B
Ipswich C
Woodbridge
Ipswich Sports Club B
Ipswich B

Division Three

Ipswich D
Bury St Edmunds C
Sudbury C
Ipswich E
Manningtree C
Felixstowe B
Saxmundham B
Ipswich Sports Club C

Simon Wilks stated that Saxmundham has an AGM in two weeks where they will decide on the teams they can support next season, particularly after the

passing of Saxmundham stalwart Malcolm Lightfoot who had recently died and whose funeral would be the next week.

13. Any other business

Mark Weidman questioned the practice of ejecting teams from the league after two defaulted matches. It was recognised as an issue, but the Competition Rules are quite clear, and anyone in the league is free to propose a change to that rule.

The matter of deciding league positions on match points versus board points was revisited. After identifying where in the minutes of last year's AGM this matter was discussed (item 6) the conclusion of which was to maintain the status quo, it was agreed to stick to that position.

As far as the committee was concerned this matter is now closed and it was now in the hands of individuals and clubs to make any further proposals for changes.

Draft

Annual Report Suffolk Junior Chess Representative – Ed Player

My own role at the moment is to try to coordinate what's going on chess-wise in Suffolk remotely. I'm also the main organiser of the SJC online club.

Bob Jones runs Bury Knights.

Martin Tomes runs Ipswich JCC.

Tim Kent and Asutosh Vyas (fathers of Rowan and Kalp) volunteer alongside me in the SJC online club.

Jon Ferris (father of Oliver) helped run the J4NCL online teams but has stepped down in this role.

Dagne Ciuksyte is helping with coaching and schools chess. She also runs the Martlesham tournaments, focused on grassroots chess for both juniors and adults.

Clubs

Ipswich JCC moved to Sunday mornings and now sees between 20-40 kids turn up each week.

Bury Knights gets around 20 kids each week. Bob is looking for a successor. He would still like to help out but would be great if someone local could take on more responsibility. I am keen, but still in Germany.

SJC online club could do with more regular attendance - currently it's about 8-10 each week on Wednesday.

All clubs run from September through to around the end of April - there isn't much in terms of club chess over the late spring/summer period (this might be fine as children should be encouraged to do outdoor activities too, but just thought it is worth mentioning).

Schools

We've emailed all schools in Suffolk about free chess equipment and to find out if they're running any form of chess activity. We received a very small percent of positive responses (~16 from 300+ schools), but were able to figure out roughly how many schools have some form of regular chess activity. There's a (very recently updated) map of schools we're aware of who have been running some form of chess activity/club within the past 5 years or so:
<https://suffolkjuniorchess.org/schools/>.

We plan to run a chess workshop at the beginning of October (after schools have settled back into the new term) for teachers/organisers to share their experiences and to answer any questions, plus provide one or two tips.

There has been talk about a Suffolk inter-schools tournament, but this is just talk at the moment.

Woodbridge School includes chess on their Primary Enrichment programme:
<https://www.woodbridgeschool.org.uk/community/primary-enrichment/>

Membership & Participation

The numbers could be better in terms of the over-the-board chess for both clubs and schools, however, it's hard to gauge exactly how many children are playing chess in Suffolk - there are likely many schools who haven't let us know about their chess activities and a lot of kids playing online chess, who potentially have the ability to join and attend something more local.

Levels & Abilities

Juniors Elo (ECF) range from around 600 up to 2000. There aren't really any complete beginners anymore, because most seem to pick up the basics at home and through online chess learning websites like chesskid. Some of the stronger juniors like Rowan Kent and Oliver Ferris won't be juniors for much longer, but there are some talented players coming through the ranks.

OTB Competitions

Seems to be limited to the Martlesham Heath Blitz, Lowestoft Rapidplay and Bury St Edmunds Congress, plus adult club/league/county chess competitions. The Bury Junior Congress didn't run this year. However, the new junior EACH team championship was a great success. OTB chess is an area we could seek to improve with more event organisers and volunteers like Dagne and Bob (we lack in arbiters - see below).

Online Competitions

Plenty of in-house events, East Anglian and national events, and even an international event organised by Bayern Munich Football Club - see the website for more info.

Finance & Equipment

All junior chess clubs are currently run by volunteers and are nonprofit. Bury Knights and Ipswich JCC have healthy balances and plenty of equipment. The SJC online club doesn't deal with money (Ed and Tim pay for the website and Zoom account).

Suffolk Junior Chess (the organisation) has a bank account, which Tim Kent has access to. Ed to follow up with Tim on how this should be managed going forward.

SJC a number of sets (in Tim Kent's loft) available for new clubs/schools who're interested.

Safeguarding

Falls under Suffolk Chess safeguarding policy written by Tim Kent and Bob Jones.

Bill Mackintosh wrote to Ed that Stowmarket Chess Club would like to be mentioned on the Suffolk Junior Chess website. Ed is happy to add them provided they have proof that they have DBS checks.

Suffolk Junior Chess has an account for applying for DBS under the Community Action Suffolk website. Ed in the process of adding Bob Jones and anyone else we would like to support Suffolk Junior Chess.

Organisers & Arbiters

We have a severe lack of arbiters/controllers in Suffolk (and England), for both junior and adult chess, capable of controlling ECF-rated events. Currently, only Bob is listed as an ECF arbiter: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-arbiters/>.

Coaching/Training

Ed has run some online summer training for beginners and intermediate-level players.

IJCC now has two rooms for training beginners/intermediate-level players. Sometimes they invite guests.

Dagne was the county team coach for the EACU Team Championship and offers a lot of help/support to some local schools.

There's a coaching and learn page on the website with more info.

Integration with Adult Chess

One area that isn't that great is the overlap between junior and adult chess clubs. It's quite common for juniors to play at separate venues to adults and on different evenings, reducing their chances of learning from/playing against more experienced adult players. Also, these days it could well be the case that some adults might learn more from some of the junior players!

Publicity

We have a website that provides quite a bit of information, e.g., how to get started and join a club.

We have contacted all schools in Suffolk about free chess equipment and offering to help them run chess clubs, providing them with a chess poster promoting Suffolk Junior Chess (attached).

We now have an online chess shop currently offering t-shirts and sweatshirts, but this could easily be expanded.

There's currently no information about how to get involved for parents, i.e., volunteering at local or online clubs. Ed plans to add some kind of 'Get Involved/Volunteer' section to encourage more parents to help out.

We have been approached by Framlingham Country Show in August about setting up a stand (free-of-charge) to promote chess in Suffolk. Ed can't make it but will contact other members of the committee - if nobody is around, Ed is keen to set something up next year.

Inclusivity

Since the online club started, we've been doing a lot better at attracting junior players who are not necessarily able to make it to OTB clubs. This includes children with mobility issues and children whose families live too far away.

We could do more OTB clubs spanning a wider catchment area.