

Oxfordshire Chess Association AGM

7.30pm on Thursday 24 September 2020

Held by Zoom Video Conference

Present: Ian Bush (Cumnor, Chair), Roger Thetford (Didcot), Sara Sengenberger (Cowley), Gerard O'Reilly (Cowley), Will Burt (Cowley), Lawrence Barber (Abingdon School), Alan Gentry (Witney), Kevin Henbest (Oxford University), David Robson (Cowley), Andrew Varney (Cumnor), Steve Rumsby (Banbury), Peter Hemmings (Wantage), John Place (MCS/Blackbirds), Steve Bennett (Cumnor), Phil Hayward (Oxford City), Aloysius Lip (Oxford University)

Abbreviations: OCA = Oxfordshire Chess Association, ECF = English Chess Federation

1. Apologies for Absence: Rod Langham (Oxford City), Mike Truran (Witney)

2/3. Minutes of 2019 AGM and Matters Arising: approved by the meeting with no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Report (Ian Bush)

On a positive note in these strange times, incremental time controls in Division I worked well with no late finishes. Their adoption in other divisions would have avoided a couple of disputes. League Secretary Roger Thetford will report on the winding up of the season in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and we want to ask club representatives for their thoughts on the form of the coming season.

5. Secretary's Report (Roger Thetford)

Roger has posted his report on the OCA website and summarised the parts relating to the winding up of the season and the resolution of three disputes.

6. Treasurer's Report (Sara Sengenberger)

Sara has posted her report on the OCA website. She mentioned the use of spare capital for development and then outlined her further thoughts since writing the report.

If, as seems likely, we do not run our usual league structure, we will not have a mechanism for collecting our usual affiliation fees from clubs. Sara proposes we don't charge such fees for this year only. Our outgoings are low and we don't want to discourage participation. Clubs would remain liable for any ECF game fees incurred.

While many clubs will have low outgoings during the pandemic it is possible some may be suffering financially. Sara proposes that some of our considerable reserves earmarked for development could be diverted to loans for clubs in extreme temporary financial trouble, as it is in the interests of local chess to avoid losing viable clubs.

Sara's proposed amendment to the 2018/19 accounts was approved. It was noted that the item of £90 for University affiliation fees for 2018/19 must cover a longer period than stated. Sara's accounts and proposal to cancel affiliation fees for next season were passed without objection.

The proposal for loans to clubs was discussed. Sara confirmed she envisaged these being interest free. It was noted that we need to have robust procedures for any loans to avoid fraud. The Chair asked Sara to draft a document outlining how repayments would be made.

7. Other Officers' Reports

The Chiltern League captains have already given their reports at the May Committee meeting. Steve Rumsby said his U150 team won despite the curtailed season. Open team captain Rod Langham has previously informed the Chair that the league will not be taking place in 2020/21.

Grading Officer Peter Hemmings has nothing to add to his report to the May meeting. ECF representative Mike Truran has sent in a few comments about the forthcoming ECF AGM, noting that it mostly looks uncontroversial. He will support Nigel Towers for the post of director of home chess but will vote against proposals to amend ECF articles concerning terms of office for directors.

Junior Liaison officer Andrew Varney apologised for not submitting a written report again this year but outlined some events that had taken place: the Oxfordshire Girls Chess Festival at Blenheim Palace in October, the Under-11 regional competition (won by St Joseph's School). New schools have become involved, with one interested in joining the OCA league.

There were strong Oxon players in the UK Chess Challenge Terafinal including Dimitrios Zakarian and Kenneth Hobson, who took the top Under-12 places. The Oxfordshire Junior Chess Championship was in January and the London Junior Championship qualifier has started. The pandemic ended the schools' league early. Finally Andrew thanked John Place, who is standing down, for his decades of involvement in local junior chess.

Gerard O'Reilly reported that the county individual title had its youngest ever recipient Dimitrios Zakarian, whose father David had won the title in 2017. The top section winners at the Witney and Kidlington congresses did not compete in the other events and Dimitrios drew his last round game at Kidlington while two rivals both lost, thus securing the

title. Gerard proposed that, if both congresses take place online in 2020/21, results from these could be used to determine next season's title and there were no objections to this.

8. Election of Officers for 2020/21

As nobody is either standing down or standing for the first time, Ian Bush proposed we re-elect the same committee, noting that this would be his third and final term as Chair. There were no objections and so the following officers were all re-elected:

Chair:	Ian Bush (Cumnor)
Vice-Chair:	Kevin Henbest (University)
Secretary:	Roger Thetford (Didcot)
Treasurer:	Sara Sengenberger (Cowley)
Minutes Secretary:	Will Burt (Cowley)
Fixtures Secretary:	Asif Hameed (Cowley)
Grading Officer:	Peter Hemmings (Wantage)
ECF Representative:	Mike Truran (Witney)
Junior Liaison Officer:	Andrew Varney (Cumnor)
Webmaster:	Roger Thetford (Didcot)
County Individual Championship Organiser:	Gerard O'Reilly (Cowley)
University Representative:	Kevin Henbest (University)

9. Covid-19 and the 2020/21 Season

The Chair made some opening remarks: over the board chess cannot resume in the near future and it is clear participation will be reduced in an online setting, so we cannot simply replicate our usual structures. Options are to cancel the forthcoming season, replace it with an alternative or ask permission for teams to join an already existing competition.

Alternative Competition

Club representatives were canvassed and there was sufficient interest to run an online alternative to our usual structure. Results would be submitted for the ECF's grading system for online chess. The motion to approve the new section 10 of the OCA rules, dealing with online chess, was passed unanimously and Ian Bush has volunteered for the new role of Online Chess Officer required by these rules.

The motion to replace the usual season with a new online competition was also passed unanimously and, after discussion, the following basic parameters were agreed:

- All events should take place during Oxford University's Michelmas and

Hilary full terms to avoid calendar issues

- There will be two competitions, one each side of Christmas, with one round per week
- To give time to prepare, the first competition will have six rounds, starting in the third week of Michelmas full term (thus beginning Monday 26 October), while the second will run throughout the eight weeks of Hilary full term

Aloysius Lip mentioned the possibility of using the league management system developed at Oxford University instead of that provided by the ECF. It was agreed that Aloysius would discuss this further with Ian Bush and Roger Thetford.

Competition Rules and Format

There was a five minute break before this discussion, which started by passing the motion to use time limits of 45 minutes plus 15 seconds increment per move for the new online competition only. Such shortened time controls are typical in online competitions to avoid excessive screen time.

[Note: for some of this lengthy discussion the Minutes Secretary was unavoidably absent (responding to a fire alarm in a neighbouring property) and thanks Roger Thetford for taking and providing notes for this part of the meeting.]

It was noted that game fees might be incurred if players were not ECF members but £10/year Supporter level membership is sufficient for online chess, in contrast to the Bronze membership (£18/year) required for over the board leagues.

The size of teams was debated and voted on, with a narrow majority (4–3, with 1 abstention) in favour of keeping teams of six players rather than reducing this to four. It was generally agreed that a Swiss system would be the obvious way forward.

Eligibility Rules etc.

After detailed discussion the following rules on eligibility and board order were adopted without objection:

- A player may not play in more than one match in any given round of the competition
- In the final round of the competition, a team may field only players who have played in at least one previous round for that team
- After playing three games for a particular team, a player may not play

for a different team in the remainder of the competition

- Within a team, the existing OCA league rules on board order shall apply (with conversion to new ECF grades, i.e. a difference of 10 old ECF points translates to 75 new ECF points)

The proposal to play on the ‘home’ team’s chosen night rather than holding all matches on a fixed night of the week was voted on and supported (7–1 with no abstentions). A decision on requiring ECF membership was deferred, pending the Chair gathering further information.

Ian Bush was actioned to compile and circulate rules for the competition by Thursday 8 October. By this date clubs are also to tell League Secretary Roger Thetford how many teams they will be entering for the first competition. Roger will then produce the first round draw, with subsequent draws made by the Friday morning before the next round.

10. Treasurer’s Recommendations for 2020/21

These are covered above in item 6 (the Treasurer’s report). There was brief discussion of how we would decide on any emergency loans. The Chair suggested a club could approach Roger Thetford and any decision be taken by calling an Extraordinary General Meeting or by polling clubs via email.

11. Formation of the League for 2020/21

This awaits the declarations from clubs after which the competition structure agreed in item 9 above will be set up.

12. Proposals for Changes to OCA Constitution and Rules

Since these would not affect the competitions agreed for the coming season, discussion was deferred to the 2021 AGM.

13. Any Other Business

Phil Hayward offered his thanks to Ian Bush and his colleagues for their work in developing proposals for running the new season during the pandemic restrictions. The meeting closed at 9.58pm.

Will Burt (Minutes Secretary)

25 October 2020