Surrey County Chess Association

a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital

company registration number 5602632

registered office 38 Glebe Road, Ashtead, Surrey KT21

 Minutes of Annual General Meeting

**24 June 2018**

Held at Parochial Rooms, Cheam from 3.00 pm.

Paul Shepherd (President) was in the Chair.

An attendance list was available for people to sign before the meeting. It read as follows:

**Nominated Members entitled to vote**:

**Ashtead**: Dan Rosen, Phil Brooks, Bertie Barlow (also proxy for Robert Jurjevic)

**Castles**:Daniel Young

**Dorking**: Peter Lawrence (also proxy for Anthony Collins), Brian Skinner

**Epsom**: Marcus Gosling

**Guildford**: Mike Gunn, Trevor Jones, Julien Shepley, Phil Stimpson

**Kingston**: Ed Mospan, John Foley

**South Norwood**: Martin Cath (also proxy for Simon Lea), Ken Chamberlain

**Surbiton**: Paul Shepherd, Paul Durrant (also proxy for David Morant, Steven Kearney)

**Wallington**: Daniel Young

**Wimbledon**: John Wilcox, Russell Granat, Gordon Rennie

**Attendee entitled to a casting vote**: Paul Shepherd (Chairman)

**Attendees not entitled to vote**: Barry Miles (South Norwood), Richard Jones (Ashtead), Nick Faulks (Surbiton)

Paul Shepherd provided details about the fire escape routes and also invited any of the attendees to advise him if they did not wish to be photographed. No-one raised a concern about photographs or their publication.

 **In memoriam**

Respects were paid to Roger Barnett (Redhill)

**1. Apologies for absence**

David Hodgson, Richard Tillett, Alan Scrimgour, Nick Grey, David Sedgwick

**2. Approve the Minutes**

The Minutes of last year’s AGM, Annual Finance and League Composition Meeting were all approved.

**3. Matters Arising**

None

**4. Questions about Directors’ Reports**

Details of the written reports were distributed prior to the meeting.

President: Paul Shepherd opened the meeting by thanking all those who helped the SCCA in a voluntary role. Traditionally SCCA AGMs have dealt a lot with the minutiae of rule changes but the real issue we should be addressing is the struggle to obtain volunteers. Finding and retaining officials is not just a problem for the SCCA but is also an issue for clubs. He firstly asked the meeting whether it felt the challenge he had identified was an important one. That was generally agreed to be the case. He then asked the meeting for volunteers to take part in a conversation about this issue. There were no volunteers.

Julien Shepley pointed out that if there were fewer chess players then it follows there will be fewer volunteers.

In response Paul Shepherd said that is not something we should just accept. There were pockets of success in clubs which are expanding and thriving so it can be done. One suggestion put forward is that officer positions should be rotated every three years rather than leaving the existing officers in position until they retire.

Gordon Rennie mentioned that Wimbledon chess club are expanding and have 15 officials involved in the running of the club. They will be happy to share their experience with other clubs. Other factors that may be causing the problem mentioned were the individualisation of leisure time such as television and playing chess online. Another idea is to give lots of people much smaller tasks that they may well then be willing to take on. It was acknowledged that there is a general problem with recruitment illustrated by the difficulty of the SCCA Board in filling vacant positions.

Deputy President: No questions on the report but Russell Granat drew attention to the fact that the Northern and Midland counties are doing far better in maintaining and expanding their activities compared to the Southern counties.

Administrative Director: None

Inter-Club Tournaments Director: Martin Cath express concern about the disparity in grading between teams in the main league this season. He proposed bringing back the Centenary Trophy thereby creating four divisions rather than the current three. This would allow for more evenly matched teams. He would like John Foley to consider changing the league structure for next season.

John Foley responded that the promotion and relegation mechanism served to address this apparent problem but Martin’s proposal was worthy of consideration and that some analysis would be undertaken to assess the issue in preparation for the League Composition meeting. Dan Rosen pointed out that divisions with fewer teams would have to choose between single and double header fixtures which could be too few or too many games per season.

Various potential solutions to this apparent problem were mentioned such as an average grade limit and weekend league games. The Surrey Border League was mentioned as a model. All of these suggestions received a mixed reception. Nick Faulks requested that any change in the league structure be delayed until the 2019/20 season but this was not accepted.

Mike Gunn mentioned that any changes in the league structure can be approved at the League Composition meeting. When the invitations for entries by clubs into next season’s competitions are sent out they could include the Centenary Trophy and an alternative structure to take account of the proposal by Martin Cath so the clubs will be fully briefed before the meeting

Paul Shepherd noted that, while the league structure can be altered and agreed at the League Composition meeting, any proposals for more fundamental rule changes should be deferred until the 2019 AGM.

Non-Executive Directors: Paul Shepherd explained that there were no reports as the non-executive directors had only been appointed recently.

**5. Treasurer’s Report.**

Copies of the Accounts for the year ended 30 April 2018 had been provided. Dan Rosen advised that this year there had been a deficit even though total expenditure was roughly the same as the preceding year. This has arisen due to fewer teams being entered in the SCCA competitions. We can live with the deficit for this year but if it continued next year the matter would need to be addressed. He advised in response to a question that the pro forma account details the income and expenditure and also whether there is a surplus or a deficit. The balance sheet shows the assets.

 The accounts were approved nem.con.

**6. Questions about Officers’ Reports**

(a)ECF Delegate: None

 (b) SCCU Representative: Trevor Jones drew attention to the fact that he had experienced difficulties in fielding a full team for the U180. He not only had to dip into players from the U160 team but also the U140 team. He had not had to do so in previous years. Peter Lawrence said he had experienced similar difficulties with the U160 team and even had to select players with a grade of below 100. In response Paul Shepherd said that the SCCA had supported the ECF proposal to reduce number of boards in the U180, U160 and U140 teams to 12 with the full support of the match captains. There had been zero support from other SCCU Counties. The SCCA will have to find its own internal solution. Changing the dates of match fixtures is not always desirable as the SCCA wish to have home double-team matches where possible as it saves money on hiring the venue. There is also the issue of avoiding clashes with other weekend events.

 (c) Company Secretary: No report and no questions but Richard Jones mentioned that all is up to date.

(d) County Team Captains

Barry Miles expressed concern about the policy of using Cheam for home matches. He referred to a recent email from the U120 captain, David Archer who was proposing that the Aldro school near Godalming be used as a venue for his team’s home matches next season. That venue is at the southern end of the county and for some involves a long car journey and is very difficult to get to by public transport. Barry Miles said that last year the Surrey authorities had been adamant that there must be no departure from Cheam, to the point where they were prepared to scrap the U120 team rather than let it move elsewhere, so asked whether there had been a change in policy by allowing team captains to decide what venues to use or is the Board now being more flexible? Paul Shepherd responded by stating that the Board decides which venue to use which has always been the situation and that it had made no decision yet as to the venue for the U120 team next year. Barry Miles then stated that the Board should take into account the views of ordinary county players as to which home venue they prefer. Paul Shepherd stated that the Board took into account many factors when deciding upon county match venues but that he would not provide details due to commercial confidentiality. Barry Miles stated that there was a lack of transparency. The Board should take into account ease of access in getting to a venue. Trevor Jones commented that there is a lot of setting up work at Cheam unless there is sufficient assistance from other members of the team. Barry Miles asked whether there were any aspects of deciding the venue which were not covered by commercial confidentiality. Paul Shepherd said that he was not prepared to discuss such aspects as that would not reflect the full picture, which included the commercially confidential aspects which he could not discuss.

 (i) Open: Paul Shepherd noted that Julien Shepley was stepping down as captain at the end of the season and thanked him for his efforts in the role. Julien Shepley mentioned that the Surrey Minor Counties team was the only SCCU team to reach the ECF finals. However, the ECF were late publishing the date of the finals and in consequence they clashed with other chess events on the same date making raising a team more difficult. He also complained that there has been no email from the ECF about the finals and when he made enquiries was told to refer to the rules. He found it difficult to locate the start time of matches in the rules. Paul Shepherd asked him to send an email outlining his concerns and he will then take the matter up with the ECF Controller. John Foley mentioned that he had contested the election of the ECF Director of Home Chess a few years ago but had not been supported by Surrey.

(ii) U180: No questions but Trevor Jones indicated that he was prepared to continue as captain of the U180 team for the union stages next season or for the U160 team as an alternative. He mentioned that Owen Phillips was standing down as U180 captain for the ECF national stages. Paul Shepherd then expressed thanks to Owen for his work as the national stages captain. Nick Faulks stated that the new ECF Controller managed the running of the competitions very well and he hoped that this would lead to more players making themselves available for matches.

 (iii) U160: No questions.

(iv) U140: No questions but Mike Gunn confirmed that he is willing to continue as captain the next season.

(v) U120: No questions.

(vi) U100: No questions but the team had won the SCCU title and qualified to play in the national stages semi-final against Leicestershire. However, Mike Gunn advised that he been unable to raise a team for the match at Milton Keynes even though before entering his team in the national stages he had asked his players whether they wished to take part and received affirmative answers. Once he advised them about the date most were not available and he could not field a full team. In consequence he had had to withdraw from the competition and the SCCA will be subject to a £100 fine from the ECF. Peter Lawrence suggested that in future he should provide his players with the actual date of the national stage matches as soon as possible and check on their availability before entering the team. Mike acknowledged that his normal squad of 15 players was insufficient for 12 boards. He had tried to get junior players into his team but their parents were not willing to travel long distances to a match. Neill Cooper had provided him with valuable assistance in identifying suitable junior players but unfortunately those efforts were not successful. He thanked Neill for his assistance. For next season it was suggested an approach be made to the Surrey 100 juniors and it be sold to them that it is a great honour to represent their county. Providing each junior who plays in an adult county match with a certificate could further encourage participation. It was concluded that the U-100 team would only be entered into the National Stages in future if compelling evidence that there would be sufficient players available was produced to the SCCA Board.

(e) Junior Team Managers: No questions but Daniel Young congratulated the junior managers for their good work over the past season.

(f) Individual Tournaments Secretary: No questions but Paul Shepherd mentioned that this year 58 players had entered the tournaments, which is a big increase over recent years. He put this down to the positive action of Andy Chesworth and the venue controllers Paul Durrant and Paul Barasi in response to Andy.

(g) Correspondence Chess Secretary: Nick Faulks expressed unease at the undue effect of a small number of double defaults on the League Tables. In response it was pointed out that there has been very good participation in the competitions and most players did not share his views. He should raise his concerns with Richard Tillett.

(h) Grading Officer: No questions. Mike Gunn mentioned that the deadline for results to reach him is 30 June and the results will be sent to the ECF two weeks later. Mike thanked Brian Skinner for the data which he provided as it saved him a considerable amount of work.

(i) Webmasters: No questions. Ed Mospan (Kingston) has been appointed Deputy Webmaster (Technical)

 which is a very positive development.

(j) Curator of Equipment. No questions or report but Peter Lawrence advised that the

 arrangement for storing equipment in a cupboard at Cheam was working well.

(k) Curator of Trophies: No written report. Martin Cath reported that the Croydon & District League has asked whether the SCCA would be prepared to sell the Thorp Trophy. He explained that this trophy was a wooden, shield shaped, trophy with metal shields, and it was last played in 2004. Martin Cath said that, in principle, he was not in favour of selling any SCCA trophies but requested that the Board consider this approach. The Chairman, on behalf of the Board, stated that the trophy would not be sold.

(l) Chairman of the Chess Disputes Committee: No questions.

m) County Match Secretary: No questions.

**7. Report Surrey Chess Congress**

No questions but it was mentioned that there will be a meeting immediately after the AGM between the Board and directors of the SCC about reviving the congress.

**8.** E**lection of Directors.**

The existing Directors are:

President – Paul Shepherd

Deputy President – Russell Granat

Administrative Director - Peter Lawrence

Treasurer – Dan Rosen

Inter-Club Tournaments Director – John Foley

Non-Executive Directors – Alan Scrimgour and Phil Brooks

Paul Shepherd informed the meeting that all of the existing directors were willing to stand for re-election and there were no other candidates. All of the directors accept that in standing for re-election they agree that it is a condition of their office that their contact details are shown on the SCCA website.

A vote to re-elect the existing directors en masse was passed with 21 votes for and none against. They were duly re-elected.

**9. Election of Independent Examiner**

A motion supporting the reappointment of Richard Jones was passed nem.con.

**10. The Presentation of Trophies**.

Results for the 2017/2018 season

Alexander Cup - Surbiton presented to Paul Durrant by Russell Granat

Lauder Trophy - Ashtead presented to Bertie Barlow by Paul Shepherd

Surrey Trophy – Wimbledon 1- presented to John Wilcox by Paul Shepherd

Beaumont Cup – Crystal Palace - no representative present

Ellam Trophy – CCF 2 – no representative present

Centenary Trophy – not run

Minor Trophy – Wimbledon 6 presented to Gordon Rennie by Paul Shepherd

Fred Manning – Ashtead presented to Richard Jones by Paul Shepherd

Ellery Williams – not run

Stoneleigh Trophy – Guildford but the Trophy was not available for presentation

Tommy Dunne Trophy – won by Omeet Atara (Guildford) and presented to Mike Gunn by Paul Shepherd.

John Hawson Trophy – won by Atlaf Choudhry (Surbiton). Mike Gunn reported that Guildford had lost this trophy and would have to fund a replacement.

Photographs of the trophy recipients were taken and will appear on the SCCA website.

**11. Proposal by the Board to change Bye Law 3.7.3. by reducing the number of adjudicators to**

 **consider an appeal from 4 to 3.**

John Foley explained that reducing the number of adjudicators in respect of an appeal from 4 to 3 means that with an odd number it should be possible to bring about a resolution more easily. He clarified that the proposal would involve three new adjudicators and that the original adjudicator would not be involved in the decision-making.

Mike Gunn drew attention to the fact that there was still an appeal outstanding from a game played two years ago. John Foley said that this had occurred when Surrey was going through some changes to how the adjudication process was being conducted. This matter has slipped through the net and he would endeavour to remedy the situation.

The proposal was passed with 29 votes in favour and none against.

**12. Proposal by the Board to change Bye Law 4.5 Best game prizes so that the overall Best game**

 **prize will only be awarded for an over the board game.**

Russell Granat explained that the proposal was in respect of the Frank Parr Memorial Prize and was intended to restrict the award to over the board games. Daniel Young said that he had won the award last year and felt that restricting it to over the board games was sending out the wrong message when correspondence chess is flourishing. Surely the judge could take into account the difference between correspondence chess and over the board chess in his assessment. Peter Lawrence said that he thought that would be a very difficult distinction to make in practice. It was also mentioned that in over the board games the winner normally had to rely on a mistake or mistakes by his opponent.

The proposal was passed with 20 votes in favour and 5 against.

**13. Options presented by the Board for the AGM to decide whether to change the nominations and**

 **multi-Club rules specified under Bye Law 3.2 Eligibility**

Dan Rosen provided a summary of the background to this proposal and referred to the discussion at last year’s AGM. There had been very strong support for a change to the rules in respect of nominations being tightened up.

Phil Stimpson pointed out that under Option 2 a strong club could help another club by getting the smaller club to nominate the relevant player to gain an advantage for both clubs. In short, he was saying the two clubs could collude with one another to achieve a favourable outcome. John Foley expressed the view that that was very unlikely to happen in practice. Dan Rosen explained that Option 2 does not cover the situation outlined by Phil and is not intended to do so. People should vote for Option 3 if they wish to avoid that situation.

Trevor Jones referred to an email which he had sent to the Board and would like to know the response to the questions which he had raised. Details of the relevant questions and answers provided by Dan Rosen are shown below. The answers by Dan Rosen are shown in italics.

**Proposal B:**  add “except the lowest board” after “eligible members”.  *This point was considered but it was decided* *not to do this, partly for simplicity, and partly because a punitive element would be an additional encouragement to submit nominations on time.*

**Proposal 1:**  add something along the lines: “except that the Board or the TC may make discretionary exemptions in exceptional circumstances to be properly explained by the club(s) concerned (e.g. a player moving clubs during the season due to moving house or a dispute with his first club, or a player who inadvertently plays first for his non-main club, or for other good reasons as may be accepted).”  *Players can't change clubs mid-season under the current rules, so I think this is unnecessary.  Indeed, in my opinion, this is out of scope of the existing discussion.*

**Proposal 2:**  add something along the lines: “Anyone not yet nominated for a particular team who then plays (or wins by default) in that team and who is “stronger” [as per usual 10pt etc rules] than any other player already nominated that particular team (whether or not playing in that match) shall be subsequently deemed nominated for that team and so unable to play for another club in a lower division (without invalidating games played on earlier dates in the season)."  *If a player is not declared as multi-club at the start of the season, this scenario can't arise, and if a player is so declared, the existing [deemed] nomination already catches him.*

Brian Skinner raised the issue of a player who played in the first half of the season but not the second half of the season. The proposed rule does not prevent that player being nominated for the following season. In reply it was pointed out that the Controller can refuse to accept the nomination at the start of the new season. The club can appeal to the Controller and set out reasons why he would be likely to play more regularly in the future. It is anticipated that if a reasonable case is made by the club then the nomination will be approved.

Proposal A was passed nem.con.

Proposal B was passed nem.con

Paul Shepherd explained the options and how the voting would work. Those favouring the status quo should not vote.

Option 1 - 0 votes

Option 2 - 10 in favour

Option 3 - 9 in favour

The impact of Option 2 was discussed and it was clarified that no nominations would be required in respect of the Minor Trophy teams.

Votes in favour of Option 2 – 13

Votes against Option 2 – 13

Paul Shepherd then used his casting vote against option 2 as he considered that in view of the tied vote there was insufficient consensus to change from the status quo.

Dan Rosen then described drafting changes to the existing rule that the Board proposed to make that clarified the existing interpretation of the rule but had no impact on its effect. The new drafting of the existing rule was agreed nem.con.

**14. Discussion about how to increase support for County Chess**.

Peter Lawrence described the current situation in regards of player support for the county teams. The U100/120 teams were generally ok with the exception of the U-100 national stages semi-final. The higher teams seemed to have fewer players who wished to play with the result that captains were having to complete their teams with people who were better suited to play in teams two tiers lower. Home matches were much easier than away matches. It was felt that away games were tougher if public transport accessibility was an issue and also that some players will only play if they get a lift. Peter asked if clubs would be prepared to help promote county chess.

Paul Durrant noted that away matches are a problem. However, it might be possible to get juniors to play more away matches if playing for the county was sold as an honour. Paul Durrant indicated that he was willing to approach the Surrey Hundreds junior competition to promote Surrey county chess.

Mike Gunn suggested changing the grading boundaries such that one division was eliminated and that an approach along those lines could be made to SCCU [Post meeting note: SCCU explicitly rejected this during the recent consultation with ECF on the counties championship]

A discussion ensued about how best to utilise clubs to publicise county chess. Paul Shepherd suggested a "flyer" along the lines of "Your County Needs You!" with suitable description of county chess opportunities. Paul Durrant suggested such a communication would be best if it contained actual match dates for the new season. The club reps indicated a general willingness to help to distribute such information to their members.

Nick Faulks raised the issue that some away venues had had poor public transport links and that on some occasions the captains had agreed a shorter than normal playing session. Julien Shepley noted that on one occasion an arbiter had over-ruled the captains on the time control and that when travelling to far venues there was less time to actually play due to travel time. These matters had to be negotiated. Dan Rosen noted that one match had involved a 300-mile round trip. Paul Shepherd stated that he felt that, where possible, the normal time controls should be applied however he could understand why that was not possible in exceptional circumstances. He asked players to support their county captains who are volunteers. Some had quit this season because of the frustrations they had experienced.

A further suggestion was to advertise the SCCA County chess to local schools. Mike Gunn, however, felt that juniors alone was not the answer. John Foley suggested that producing a certificate for juniors who play for their county might be an incentive for participation.

**15. Discussion about ways to increase participation in SCCU events.**

The ideas suggested are shown below.

1. Allow smaller counties to combine to form a single team. This may enable some counties who do not currently enter teams for County chess to do so.
2. The SCCU could set up a club competition which could be played over a weekend or for a couple of selected days. Trevor Jones mentioned that he had put forward a similar proposal about a competition for clubs many years ago when he lived in Kent but it had not found support. Dan Rosen thought that the longer travel involved could be a problem. Paul Durrant recommended that teams be limited to 4 boards. John Foley drew attention to the ECF National Clubs Championship which is now played over a weekend and is considered to be a success. The winner of the SCCU competition could be entered in that event.
3. Mike Gunn mentioned that the SCCU used to stage a Jamboree which was well supported. He also said the SCCU North/South event last year was very well supported and that the social element of that event was much appreciated.

**16. Any Other Business**

1. Trevor Jones commended the 3pm start of the AGM this year and hoped it will be repeated in the future. 2. Marcus Gosling mentioned that Epsom Chess Club have joined the SCCA and are recruiting new members. They currently have 6 members and he provided details of the existing venue. It was acknowledged parking in the evenings may be a difficulty. The club do wish to enter a team in the SCCA league competitions next season and will be applying to do so at the League Composition meeting which will be held on 16 August. 3. John Foley drew attention to the Kingston Rapidplay tournament which will be held on 28 July and further details can be found on the Kingston club website.

The meeting closed at 7.11pm.