ECF Finance Council Meeting 27 April 2019 - Brief Report

Dear SCCA chess participants,

The following key issues were dealt with at the ECF Finance Council:-

Budget and Fees

During the course of the discussions the Director of Women's Chess (DoWC) committed to providing a KPI at the October 2019 ECF AGM setting out a target of how many additional women would become ECF members. Information in relation to the report on ECF Office salaries was not available because of a long-term sickness absence of a key staff member. However the Finance Director gave his opinion that the planned Office cost budget increase was, nevertheless, justified. The Director of International Chess gave his opinion that a lower than proposed International Budget would result in having to either not send teams to events or sending amateur (weak) teams. He also said that he would be prepared to accept a limit on ECF member contributions to the International budget if it were inflation indexed, but at the level in the ECF Board proposal and not at the level in the Bronze and Silver rep’s proposal.

My conclusion was that the Office salaries adjustment alone warranted an above inflation increase in Fees. This is also in light of the ECF reserves being predicted to be around 40-50% of their target level throughout the budget period and the reliance on membership growth of ca. 500 members per annum for additional income. I welcomed the commitment to produce a KPI for Women's chess in October although I would have preferred it to have been made at the Finance meeting to underpin the budget increase requested. The International Budget remains an act of faith in my opinion. It was clear that many in the room felt that fielding the strongest English teams with an increased budget was appropriate. It is not clear to me that the majority of Bronze members, in particular, share that view if it costs them more in membership Fees.

The NCCU proposal to limit Fees rises to inflation was defeated. I voted against it.

The Bronze and Silver rep’s proposal to cap ECF members contributions to the International Budget to £30k per annum was defeated. I voted in favour.

The ECF Board proposal on Budget and Fees was modified so that the vote was taken in relation to 2019-20 only and separate votes were taken on Fees and Budget. These were passed. I abstained on the Fees (some rise was warranted due to Office salaries) and voted against the Budget (because of the increase in the International budget).

I should note that the overall results of the above votes were all quite predictable in advance of the meeting when one examined the voting register and noted the number of direct and proxy votes in the hands of the ECF Board and their satellites. That troubled me from a governance perspective. An issue for another day....

Mandating Female Members into County Teams for ECF Stages

This proposal was from the DoWC and not from the ECF Board.

After some discussion the original proposal that a county should field at least one female (who did not have to qualify to play for the county as per normal regulations) in its Open team during ECF stages was agreed to be amended by the proposer and by the meeting.

The revised proposal now covered all teams in the ECF stages and was that a county would start with an extra game point in a match if they fielded a female player but normal county qualification criteria would apply. The revised proposal was defeated narrowly by 3 card votes.

I voted against because, like the original proposal, it is discriminatory and SCCA articles have a non-discrimination statement that I must comply with. It is also far from clear why the proposal would have actually brought any more women into chess when the front line for their entry into the world of chess is at chess clubs and not at county matches.

I was encouraged by some of the comments made by the DoWC during the budget discussion in relation to his plans to hold future forums to determine what will attract women into chess. Seeking women's opinions on what they want is the way forward I believe, rather than men creating artificial targets. I intend to communicate with the DOWC to ask ECF's advice on how to create and foster an inclusive environment in chess and hope that Surrey can play its part in the process of understanding women's views on what would attract more of them to chess.

A fuller report will be made available at the SCCA AGM.

Paul Shepherd - SCCA President and delegate to ECF Council - 29 April 2019