

Surrey Chess



ECF AGM 16 October 2021

Dear SCCA Participants,

Herewith a summary report of the above meeting and how Surrey voted on each key item on your behalf. Please refer to the meeting agenda and supporting documents on the ECF website [Council Papers – English Chess Federation](#).

The meeting was held for the first time in hybrid form with some people in the room and the remainder online via Zoom. Regrettably, the people online were at a substantial disadvantage as the audio pick up in the room was poor at times, as was the view of in-room participants. The chair also missed several attempts by parties online to make a contribution. Significant improvements need to be made for any subsequent hybrid meetings. Frustratingly, I was one of those on Zoom as, having planned to attend in person, I contracted a bad cold just prior. It would have been irresponsible to risk spreading that to other members of Council.

I confine this report to the key issues:

Item 6 – Non-Exec Directors (“NEDs”) report and Governance Committee reports.

Both of these reports were challenged by Chris Fegan, who made various allegations in relation to the conduct of the NEDs, Governance Committee chair and CEO. Those were variously denied, rebutted or ignored. Chris then demanded a card vote in relation to the acceptance of each report.

The card voting results were announced (as far as I could hear!) as:

NEDs’ report accepted with 260 For and 120 Against.

Governance report accepted with 254 For and 55 Against.

I understand that the above figures are still subject to final due diligence checks.

Surrey supported both reports. Natasha Regan of Surrey (one of the NEDs) and Robert Stern (Governance Chair) are people of integrity and high professional standards and so, as they were signatories to the respective reports, it was appropriate to support them.

Item 7 – Audited Accounts.

The Finance Director stated that the reserves position was in a healthier position than had been expected at the time of Finance Council in April 2021. A resolution at that meeting, which allowed the ECF Board to vary the Budget in light of the uncertainty due to the pandemic, expired at the AGM. The Board did not present a new Budget for approval at the AGM and so we revert back to the Budget approved at the April meeting.

Item 8 - Elections.

Uncontested Elections

Surrey supported all of the candidates in the uncontested elections. They were all elected by Council. The final voting figures are on the ECF website [ECF AGM Election Results – English Chess Federation](#).

The CEO election was uncontested following Malcolm Pein’s withdrawal. A statement previously sent to SCCA in relation to that development has already been circulated to SCCA participants [MP MT Joint Statement](#).

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It is unclear whether the terms of an “agreement” between Mike Truran and Malcolm Pein, as communicated by Malcolm in an email on 14 October to “Dear Chess Friends”, [ECF Election Update from Malcolm Pein](#) is agreed by both parties. Time will tell. For the sake of English Chess, I sincerely hope that they can find a way to work together moving forward.

Of the other uncontested elections, Aga Milewska stood for Director of Women’s Chess, while also being a current Bronze Direct Members Rep. She was asked whether she would stand down in her Direct Members Rep capacity if elected to the Board. She indicated that she would not do so immediately but might stand down next June, when the Direct Members elections occur. ECF need a Director of Women’s Chess and, preferably, a female in that post, which is why she got our votes. However,

Aga is the second person, after Rob Willmoth last year, to have stood for a position on the ECF Board while not intending immediately to relinquish their Direct Members Rep role. The concept of Direct Members Reps was to make ECF Council more representative of ordinary chess players. In my opinion there is a clear conflict of interest in holding both a Board position and a Direct Members Rep position in relation to that objective. I will be writing to the Governance Committee Chair to request that the ECF Regulations are reviewed and that amendments are proposed at a future general meeting with the objective of preventing people holding such dual roles in the future.

Chair of Governance

Robert Stern was re-elected with 225 votes vs 119 votes for Chris Fegan. **Surrey voted for Robert Stern.** I explained our rationale in our consultation document: [Consultation](#). Only one of our respondents supported Chris Fegan. The remaining, significant, majority supported Robert Stern.

Items 10 and 11 – Transferring currently Trustee over-seen funds into ECF

Malcolm Pein withdrew these motions. Mike Truran used his election address to describe a tidying up exercise of the PIF and Chess Centre funds that bore little relation to the two withdrawn motions. We can expect further motions in relation to those funds to come before the April 2022 Finance Meeting.

Item 12 – Instruction to ECF Board to lobby the UK government for more funding.

I was surprised that no one on the ECF Board argued against this motion on the principle that it was overreach on Council’s part. I asked Malcolm Pein, who will be tasked with running this activity, what the budget implications were. Malcolm confirmed that there were no monies budgeted for the activity currently. On the basis that the ECF Board appeared supine on the matter and that there were no immediate cost impacts prior to the next Finance Council meeting I decided to abstain rather than vote against, which had been my original intention. The motion was passed comfortably on a hand vote according to the chair (I couldn’t see via Zoom).

Paul Shepherd – SCCA ECF Council representative

18 October 2021