

Dear Club Secretaries and SCCA Officers,

The ECF Finance Council Papers have been published

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/about/ecf-council-and-board/>

and the SCCA Board has formed initial opinions about the matters on the agenda (see Items 6 and onwards in C30 ECF Agenda, which is the business end of it). Items 6 - 8 pertain to the Budget and Membership Fees which were subject to the consultation earlier this year and our opinions are based on Surrey participants' feedback from that. In detail:-

1. Item 6 Budget and Fees is exactly the same proposal as was placed in front of Council at the October 2018 AGM. The new supporting papers:

a) Do not provide any target for the number of new female members aimed for with the proposed additional spend on Women's chess.

b) Do not contain any summary of the Admin staff salaries report previously referred to in the ECF papers in October.

c) Contain some additional mention of the recent stress on admin resources and what appears to be a new plan to resource out some admin work re: organising international trips for adults and juniors. There is also mention of a peak in workload that has now passed and that, however, the higher admin budget would be required anyway in future. Its not really possible to draw out a firm conclusion on what is going on based on the information provided in the papers alone.

d) Presents the International Budget as previously, i.e. nil income which effectively doubles the budget vs historic levels. There are separate papers on the KPIs for International. However there is no rationale provided to justify chasing those KPIs at any cost.

At the meeting the SCCA rep will ask again about items a) - c) and see if more clarity can be achieved on those. However d) represents a major deviation from the historical norm and has not been justified.

SCCA Board propose, therefore, to vote against this motion.

2. Item 7 is a proposal from NCCU to limit the fee rises to CPI and get the rest of the money from the Trusts.

Dependent on the answers to a) - c) above SCCA Board believe it is possible that ECF will be able to justify some of their budget increase above inflation. If they can do so then SCCA would vote against this motion. However if ECF do not improve on the level of information we currently enjoy then there could be a case to abstain. We judge it likely that there is some basis for increased admin costs above inflation but feel ECF should help with clearer explanations.

3. Item 8 is a proposal from the Bronze and Silver reps (who between them represent ca. 6000 out of 10000 of the ECF members) to limit the International Budget to £30k per annum. That is consistent with the feedback SCCA received and so we would propose to vote in favour of that motion.

4. Item 9 has not been foreshadowed with any previous consultation. It is a proposal from the Director of Women's Chess to mandate that Open teams in the ECF stages must contain at least one female from next season onwards. The SCCA Board's comments:

a) SCCA has an equality policy enshrined in its articles:

"2.2 Furthermore, the Company will not discriminate against any individual on the basis of any factor not relevant to its activities."

Our interpretation of this article is that SCCA should provide equal opportunity to participate in our events, regardless of gender (or other characteristics that make people different from one

another). SCCA look to put the best players we have available into our Open team, regardless of gender. If the 16 strongest players were female they would be in the team on chess merit. The reality is that the pool of female players is small and so it is not always possible to get a female of appropriate playing strength to play. SCCA provide equality of opportunity but don't force equality of outcome. Mandating that a female takes a place in a team that has up to this point been open to all is, we therefore believe, discriminatory and so we would vote against the motion on that basis.

b) Notwithstanding a), which is sufficient to determine the voting position, it is not clear that the rationale for supposing that such a measure would increase female participation has been properly thought through. Females who play for the Open team are already established players. In order to increase female participation at county level there needs to be a general increase in the pool of female chess players to choose from. Efforts to achieve that ought to be focussed on getting the culture, attitudes and, in some cases, facilities at chess clubs and tournaments into better, more inclusive, shape. That needs to be a bottom up activity, not a top down edict.

5. Item 10 - a question about whether Counties should pay the membership fee even if they don't have any games graded. We are not aware of the context of this issue but note that it is an indicative vote only at this point. We have seen a comment by the SCCU President noting that membership of an organisation confers rights and those go beyond getting games graded or not. That sounds like a reasonable point. We intend to hear the discussion at the meeting and indicatively vote accordingly.

We would welcome your feedback on the above.

Please provide any comments you may have to tv1div1@surbitonchessclub.co.uk by 25th April at the latest."

Regards,
Paul Shepherd
President - SCCA