

Bury St Edmunds Chess Club

Annual General Meeting

Held: 3 September 2020 at 7:30pm on Jitsi.org

Note from the Admin Secretary:

Some of the items on the agenda were closely related and as such the actual order in which topics were discussed did not always follow the order in which those topics appeared on the agenda. Where possible without distortion, the order in which topics are presented below reflects the order they appeared in on the agenda.

1. Welcome

Present: Steve Ruthen (SR), Steve Lovell (SL), Hugo Smith (HS), Colin Roberts (CR), Ed Player (EP), Dick Myhill (DM), Rob Lepley (RL). (7 Members)

Apologies: Bob Jones (BJ)

Noting the low attendance, CR queried whether the meeting was quorate. SL responded that there is no club constitution and therefore no definition of a quorum.

2. Minutes of the 2019 AGM

SR noted that the minutes had been circulated previously and requested that the meeting either approve them or raise any issues. They were approved without amendment. SR asked if anyone saw any matters arising from the minutes which need to be addressed. SL noted two: (a) club sponsorship and (b) the club safeguarding policy.

(a) SL had approached a couple of organisations, but had had no success, though one had not actually responded. When time allows, he intends to make some additional approaches.

(b) The last AGM had agreed to adopt the SCCA's safeguarding policy as our own, with BJ to make such amendments as were necessary to make it refer to our club rather than the SCCA and our officers rather than the SCCA's.

Action: SL to update the website to show the minutes of the 2019 AGM are no longer provisional.

Action: BJ to finalise the Safeguarding policy and send to SL for publishing on the club website.

Action: SL to resume work on finding sponsorship for the club.

3. Officers' Reports

Treasurer (HS)

Hugo outlined the financial position of the club, noting that we had continued to operate at a slight loss during the season just completed. Rather than continue to drain our now rather small reserves, HS proposed to increase the various membership fees (£30 → £36, £20 → £24, and £10 → £12). Though there were some minor changes for the concessionary rates a few years ago, for the full membership fee this is the first increase we've seen since the ECF introduced the membership scheme in 2012. The proposed membership fee increases were approved by the meeting.

HS further proposed, and the meeting approved, that no membership fees be levied until over-the-board chess resumes, at which point the figures above would be prorated according to the proportion of a full season they are expected to cover.

DM queried whether we would be liable for venue hire during the current hiatus. HS and SL assured him that this was not the case. This led to a further question from RL as to whether when we are ready to resume the venue might already have been booked for use by others. SL explained when communicating with the venue manager he'd said they would not be meeting again until at least January but would appreciate it if our usual Thursday evening slot be reserved for us from January forwards. If resumption is further delayed, the approach will be the same: allow bookings in our slot up to some specified point and request that the slot be held in reserve for us from that date onwards.

Admin Secretary (SL)

SL briefly outlined his activities on behalf of the club since the beginning of lockdown. Amongst other things, he has sent approximately 30 emails to all members, organised 14 online tournaments, the Simul with GM Matthew Sadler, and completely reworked the club website. As noted by EP, some of the tournaments were well supported with a dozen or so entrants, but interest tailed off over time. It is hoped that interest will be reinvigorated by new online competitions beginning this Autumn.

4. Election of Officers

With all officers understood to be willing to continue in their roles, the group was re-elected *en bloc*. The club's officers are therefore as listed below.

Office	Officer
President	Steve Ruthen
Match Secretary	Bob Jones
Admin Secretary	Steve Lovell
Treasurer	Hugo Smith
Social Secretary	Alan Watkins
Safeguarding Officer	Bob Jones
Club Championship Organiser	Vacant
Ex Officio	Colin Roberts
Ex Officio	Ed Player

5. League Matters

The committee of the SCCA suspended play in March and will presumably lead on when SCCA league chess will resume. The Executive of the BACL has delegated this decision to a committee, which needs a representative of each club. SL commented that he would suggest BJ is best placed to play this role for our club due to his close involvement with setting up the venue each week.

Action: SL to approach BJ about this.

Both leagues have endorsed the Icen Live League and Icen Live Classic events and encourage clubs and their members to enter. Those events are successors to the Norfolk Live League and Norfolk Live Classic and will run on the same basis, only now additionally inviting entries from Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, parts of Lincolnshire and possibly also Bedfordshire.

SL noted that despite attempts to raise interest in these events, he's had little response. We have 4 or 5 players interested in the League event and no entrants to the Classic. RL hypothesised that lack of interest may be a result of the event seeming "abstract" and unrelated to the club, the teams and the players that people are familiar with. This might be a particular issue for the Classic (individual) event where one would not generally know one's opponent. CR and EP suggested that we really should be able to sustain at least one team for the League event and should enter a team there. For those wanting a longer time control option against familiar opponents, RL suggested that we should instigate an internal competition on a similar basis to the Icen Classic. This would be much like previous Club Championship events but held online, commencing in November to allow enough time to promote the event internally. The meeting approved both suggestions.

Action: SL to enter a Bury St Edmunds team into the Icen League and seek a captain for the team.

Action: SL to promote the online "Club Championship", with the intention of commencing in the event in November.

In connection to the BACL, SL noted that the rules adopted to determine final standings in the otherwise unfinished competitions resulted in Bury Scarabs being declared Division 1 champions. In addition, Jaden Jermy was named as Division 1 Player of the Year.

6. Teams and Captains for Next Season

This item was understood to have been adequately addressed under item 5.

7. Club matters

Club Approach to Resumption

SL mentioned that the ECF had produced guidance for clubs, including a template risk assessment, which outlined the steps that a club would have to undertake to re-open safely. These requirements are very onerous and would both increase the workload for those setting-up and setting-down the venue and lessen the enjoyment for the players. We'd also need to be able to reassure visiting clubs that our measures were adequate and be assured that the measures of clubs we visit are adequate. Consideration would also need to be given to making travel arrangements "COVID-secure". All agreed that it was not sensible to resume at the current time.

Online Community: Slack

SL outlined the benefits of this system which he'd implemented for the club during the lockdown. At present only the committee members plus one other have joined. Slack has many of the benefits of a WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger group, including instant notifications and all members being able to interact despite not necessarily knowing email addresses or phone numbers. As with those platforms, members can be blocked, banned or simply ignored if they become a nuisance. Unlike those systems, discussion is organised in "channels" and notification options can be different for each. Members may wish to hear about player requests for Division 2, but not about Division 1, having these in different channels means members don't need to be bothered by notifications that aren't of interest.

SL explained that Slack is available (free) on iOS and Android, but can also be installed on Windows, Mac and Linux, or simply used in a web-browser.

EP noted that Slack should not be used for all communication, and that more formal announcements by email would continue to be necessary and noted that some people may be reluctant to sign up for "yet another" communication tool. Despite this, the general feeling was that the current trial of Slack should continue.

Action: SL to continue to promote Slack to members as and when appropriate.

8. Any other Business

Club Approach to Resumption Revisited

Although we had already discussed this question, SL was concerned that we hadn't determined our next steps and how we might ever decide to resume normal club activities. At this juncture, we agreed that the decision would be taken by the club committee, which would convene periodically (every month or two) to review the situation and initiate such actions as are required.

Action: SL to diarise "meetings" of the club committee (real or online) for this purpose.

Close: 8:30pm