

Minutes of the
**Bury Area Chess League
Annual General Meeting**

Held 26 August 2020 online @ 7:30pm on Jitsi.org

1. Welcome

a. Present

Club	Attendees	Count
Bury (max 7 votes)	Steve Lovell (SL), Bob Jones (BJ), Colin Roberts (CR), Steve Ruthen (SR), Dick Myhill (DM)	5
Cambridge (6)	Norman Hutchinson (NH), Stephen Pride (SP), John Daugman (JD), Philip Fallon (PF)	4
Ely (3)	Mark Szymanski (MS), Oliver Lenton (OL)	2
Linton (7)	Alan Richardson (AR), Paul Kemp (PK), Chris Davison (CD), Margherita Boroni (MB), Paul McMahon (PM), Michael Osborn (MO)	6
Stowmarket (2)	David Green (DG), Stephen Lewis (SLe)	2
Sudbury (2)	N/A	0
Total (27)		19

b. Apologies

Ed Player (Bury)

2. Ratification that this online meeting may serve as our AGM due to exceptional circumstances

This was unopposed.

3. Minutes of the previous AGM, 16 July 2019

AR commented that these seemed to him an accurate record of events and noted that while a few actions had been required all appeared to have been addressed. With no comments to the contrary, the minutes were accepted and no matters arising were raised.

4. Officers Reports

a. Chairman (AR)

As the chairman's report included no items for voting and mostly served as an introduction to other items on the agenda, AR was happy to move to the next agenda item without discussion.

b. Treasurer (PK)

PK presented the accounts for the 2019-20 season, noting the small surplus of £23. However, the balance is healthy, and suspecting both that any 2020-21 season would be a short one and that club finances may be tighter, PK proposed to waive club fees for any league competitions which are held. However, if there are any fees from the ECF relating to non-ECF members playing matches, those fees will be charged to clubs as usual. This proposal passed unopposed.

c. Internet Officer (SL)

SL commented at that issues raised at the last AGM about the bonus point had been handled by the LMS, and noted only a small number of issues with the LMS relating mainly to confirmation of fixtures (no chasing email, hard for the confirming captain to find the match to confirm it) and to determining the Player of the Year standings from the available views of the data. The LMS developers are aware of these issues and are working to improve the system.

d. Congress Secretary (SL)

The surplus for the 2019 event mostly related to rebates from PayPal due to overcharging in previous years. Without those the figures would have shown that the congress approximately broke even. The 2020 event has been cancelled, due to COVID-19 and the financial risks associated with expensive venue hire and low turnout. An online event for 2020 is being considered.

We hope to hold a congress in 2021. However, as the future course of the pandemic is unknown, there is still a material risk of outright cancellation, which could see league funds entirely consumed by non-refundable venue hire costs and other outgoings. The Executive proposed, and the meeting approved, that the 2021 congress should run in accordance with a business plan supported by the Executive. The plan should assess the level of financial risk in proceeding with the 2021 event, particularly such risk associated with COVID-19, and outline actions being taken to mitigate that risk.

Action: Congress team to put together such a plan in spring 2021.

5. Further Matters for the Consideration of the Meeting

a. Trophies Report and Recommendation

NH briefly outlined the problems he has experienced as trophy officer, noting the difficulty of keeping track of trophies and the expense of engraving, particularly if done on the high street rather than with a specialist. Adding to this the poor state of the trophies and low regard in which they seem to be held, the executive asked the meeting to consider four proposals in relation ceasing to award trophies. OL spoke in favour of retaining trophies, feeling that it would be unfair to retain only the Division 1 trophy as many players (and indeed some clubs) are not in a position to compete for this. After some discussion, the meeting approved the following approach:

- That all team trophies other than for Div 1 and Roger Goldsmith Div 1 cease to be awarded.
- That memento Player of the Year trophies continue to be awarded.

The meeting further approved the proposal that retired trophies (Div 2, Div 3, Goldsmith Div 2, Jamboree) be offered first to clubs who have won them most frequently, but with the proviso that no club should receive more than one, unless the offer has been declined by other clubs.

Action: Admin Sec (OL) to locate trophies and implement the above proposal for retired trophies.

b. Flattening the Executive structure to facilitate engagement with clubs

AR outlined a proposal to amend rules 1.4 and 1.5, and therein to remove the concept of a “core Executive”, which has created a two-tier leadership structure, and replace this with a single tier in which all officers are considered members of the Executive with equal standing

NH and SP expressed some concern that not all officers were equally needed at all meetings, and that removing the notion of a core member would therefore make it harder to arrange meetings and force some officers to attend meetings in which they had little to contribute. CR commented that the trophies officer, for example, was on the Executive not only to fulfil that office but also represent his club and to generally contribute to all decisions related to the running of the league.

The meeting generally supported the proposal to move to a single-tier executive but found the wording of 1.4 in particular problematic and asked for a change to 1.5 for quoracy to require two thirds of the executive to be present at a meeting (rounded down).

In response to BJ’s comment that clubs not represented on the Executive should be allowed to contribute a representative, SL responded that this was already permitted under rule 1.6. SP noted that the wording of rule 1.6 was also problematic, suggesting that to participate in meetings a club representative must also bring a proposal to the meeting. It was agreed that this was not what was intended in the rule and that a revision should be made.

Action: SL to redraft rules 1.4, 1.5, 1.6 within the expectations of the meeting.

c. Suspension and Resumption of League Activities

i. Results of consultation

These were included in the papers for information, but it was not necessary to review these here.

ii. the Completion, or otherwise, of the suspended 2019-20 season

AR outlined the basic options that the meeting is presented with (a) to “cancel” or “void” the suspended season, (b) to attempt to complete it when over the board chess resumes or (c) to determine final outcomes based upon the available results.

Voiding the season was felt to be undesirable since such a large proportion of the matches had been completed, while completing the season when over the board chess resumes was rejected because club and therefore team membership is likely to be very different by that time and the resulting completion would be merely notional. Only two methods for determining the outcomes of the 2019-20 season based on available results were given any backing: NH and others argued for teams being ranked based upon the percentage of available points they had scored. CR and others argued that this would create unfairness as some teams will have played a weaker team twice and others will have played a stronger team twice. CR’s counter proposal was, for the purposes of deciding the final ordering of teams, to use only the first meeting of teams and to disregard the result of any second meeting. Opinion was sufficiently divided that it was necessary to hold a vote, which resulted in a victory for the percentage based approach, mostly on the grounds that it made it unnecessary to disregard any match results and tended to “even-out” any large differences in performance between the first half of the season and the remainder.

JD asked for, and received, confirmation that while titles would be awarded on this basis, no promotions or relegations would be effected and when the league resumes the make up of the divisions will be approached with the aim of giving putting all teams into divisions where they are well suited to play.

iii. Formation of a committee to make decisions about next steps

AR explained that it would be neither possible nor desirable for the league to mandate the return of a club to league chess and that therefore it would be necessary for all clubs to be engaged in discussions of when league chess can resume.

JD raised a possible concern about a club effectively vetoing the resumption of normal activities by refusing to recommence play under conditions that other clubs found acceptable. AR agreed that while it would obviously be preferable to include all clubs at the point of resumption, it will be for the committee to decide whether that is necessary. Including all clubs in the discussion will at least mean that clubs are aware of this situation should it arise.

CR was keen to ensure that any committee saw its primary duty as deciding upon when it will be safe to resume normal league activities and not to determine the exact shape that those activities should take. PK agreed but wanted to expedite the process of commencement by making sure that relevant officers (principally the Match Secretary and Roger Goldsmith Organiser) are involved in these decisions and so can begin making plans at the earliest opportunity.

Most discussion focussed on the make up of the proposed committee, with consensus eventually settling on the following membership:

- A representative from each club

If not already included as a club representative, the following officers will also be included.

- Chair
- Match Secretary
- Roger Goldsmith Organiser

Action: All clubs to notify AR of who will be the representative of their club on this committee. AR to establish channels of communication and meetings (face to face or online) if felt necessary.

iv. Consideration of online chess until normal activities resume

PK explained options available to the league, either to run its own competitions or to join with competitions which have already been established, with the latter being the recommendation of the Executive. PK and SL recommended that clubs consider entering teams into the Icen Live League event and that individuals could also enter the Icen Live Classic. The Icen League is an all play all league with divisions determined by ECF grades of players involved with a team. Matches are double-headers using a time control of 15m+10s. The Icen Classic is a Swiss individual event using a time control of 45m+15s. These may attract different players, though people could feasibly play in both. These competitions are available to clubs across Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, parts of Lincolnshire and possibly also Bedfordshire.

SL asked whether with these competitions available it was necessary for the BACL to run any additional events of its own whether using different time controls or employing a different format. He offered to run an online Jamboree if there was interest. PK, echoed by SL, suggested that having too many events risked spreading players too thinly and could result in poorly supported events.

The meeting agreed that there was no need for BACL sponsored online events.

Action: Clubs to consider entering teams into the Icen Live League and inviting individuals to join the Icen Live Classic. Clubs with members who are interested but who cannot support a full team may wish to contact PK or SL about joining a Linton or Bury team as a “guest”.

6. Honours

Based on the decisions made about completing the 2019-20 season, PK was able to confirm the following competition winners.

Competition	Winning Team	Player of the Year
Division 1	Bury Scarabs	Jaden Jermy
Division 2	Cambridge Oddfellows	Trevor Robbins
Division 3	Linton Lemurs	Oren Pilowsky-Bankirer
RGT Division 1	Linton Linnets	
RGT Division 2	Linton Lapwings	

PK commented that no decisions had been made about Game of the Season, and that he had planned to extend an invitation submit games for consideration at around the time play was suspended. He proposed extending this invitation now with a deadline at the end of September, and the meeting approved this.

Action: PK to email clubs inviting their members to submit games from the 2019-20 season for consideration in the game of the season competition.

7. Election of Officers

Other than those who had already stepped down from their roles, all other officers were happy to continue. MS who had taken over as acting Match Secretary MS was happy to continue in that role. OL agreed to stand for the role of Admin Secretary. All were (re)elected en bloc.

Office	2019-20 Officer	Status	2020-21 Officer
Chair	Alan Richardson		Alan Richardson
Vice-chair	Vacant		Vacant
Match Secretary	Chris Davison	Stepped down	Mark Szymanski
Admin Secretary	Stephen Pride	Stepped down	Oliver Lenton
Treasurer	Paul Kemp		Paul Kemp
Congress Director	John Wickham		John Wickham
Congress Secretary	Steve Lovell		Steve Lovell
Internet Officer	Steve Lovell		Steve Lovell
Roger Goldsmith Organiser	Mark Szymanski		Mark Szymanski
Grader	Bob Jones		Bob Jones
Handbook Editor	Bob Jones		Bob Jones
Jamboree Organiser	Bob Jones		Bob Jones
Trophy Officer	Norman Hutchinson	Stepped down	Vacant / Role Retired

8. Upcoming Events

No upcoming events were noted.

9. Any other Business

a. Refreshments at over the board games

SL relayed an item from the Bury club about availability of refreshments, which we'd like to see made easier at some venues. This was acknowledged but might prove problematic in upcoming future due to coronavirus measures.

b. BACL Handbook for 2020-21

BJ queried whether a handbook for any 2020-21 competition would be required. Amidst much praise for BJ's efforts producing the Handbook each year, the meeting agreed that no printed version would be necessary for 2020-21, but depending on how much of a 2020-21 season takes place a PDF version would be welcome. CR suggested that in any event a cut down version to maintain continuity of records might be worth producing.

Close of meeting: 9:44pm