

Shropshire Chess Association

Minutes of 2024 Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 16th July 2024 – Unison Club, Shrewsbury

Present – Matthew Clark, Tony Preece, Chris Lewis, Paul Billington, Steve Szwajkun, Roger Brown, Steve Wilson, Shane Sweeney, Charles Higgie, Dan Hilditch-Love, Nick Graham, Ivor Salter, Steff Gornall, Ethan Parker, Adrian Bailey, Jon Smith, Richard Szwajkun, Rudy van Kemanade, Gary Slegg, Glyn Pugh, Nick Holmes, Phillip Zabrocki, Vincent Crean, Munroe Morrison, Steve Tarr, Gary White, Paula Maher

- 1. Apologies** – Nick Rutter, Mark Smith, Richard Thompson, Dennis Bonner, Toby Neal, Phil Love, Dan Lockett
- 2. Minutes of the 2023 AGM** – one amendment regarding the timing of the Cox trophy which would be run throughout the season rather than at the end – this was a trial for the 2023/24 season. Agreed as true record of that meeting.
- 3. Presidents Report** – Matthew Clark

Many thanks to everyone here for such an enjoyable season. All three divisions of the Classical League and both Rapid Play divisions were as competitive as ever. I want to thank all trustees and officials of the Shropshire Chess Association for their hard work this year. We have been a charity for more than a year now and we have continued to pursue our aims and objectives energetically. I want to thank particularly Jonathan Smith, Richard Thompson and Peter Kitchen for joining the board of trustees and we will be looking to broaden the committee of trustees soon with the aim of having each Shropshire club represented at our trustee meetings. The trustees develop and scrutinise association policies. We make sure that the association's finances are secure. We also aim to make sure that the association promotes the study and practice of Chess for the benefit of residents of Shropshire.

A real highlight this year has been the continued growth of Junior Chess in Shropshire and I want to pay particular tribute to our own Chris Lewis this evening. Last September Chris was announced as the winner of the English Chess Federation's contribution to junior Chess award. He has continued to organise Junior Clubs, Schools Championships and Megafinals. We have seen many positive consequences from this. There is a clear pathway for juniors to join our clubs and to play for our teams. Shropshire Juniors are making an impact at the regional and national levels. We are particularly proud that Rudi Bedford is ranked in the top 10 in the UK for his age group. Chris has also re-engraved the Unity Cup as the Alan Shaw trophy and I am delighted that we can honour Alan who was one of my first friends in Shropshire Chess when I started playing here more than 30 years ago.

We had another successful Shropshire Chess Congress at the Wrekin Housing Trust. Many thanks to Chris and Phil for their superb organisation of this event. Another hero of the Shropshire Chess Association is Dan Hilditch-Love. Dan has taken over as League Controller this year and he has carried out his duties efficiently and meticulously. As well as being a very strong player, Dan is a wonderful organiser and I have been very grateful for his calm and wise decisions this year.

You may remember that we voted to create a number of new posts last year and I am delighted that a number of these posts have been filled. I want to congratulate Kate Walker and Paula Sharp for taking on the positions as joint Heads of Women's Chess. I want to thank Steve Sz wajkun for taking up the position as Safeguarding officer and for writing our new safeguarding policy, which is now available on our website. I also congratulate Paul Billington for all his work introducing new players to Shropshire Chess and for taking on the role of Inclusion Officer. Paul has completed a qualification in understanding autism and he has started a quiet chess club here at Unison. We wish Paul all the best for his projects next season.

Moving on to individual tournaments, the County Individual was another exciting competition this year and I want to congratulate Nat for retaining the title and Chris for coming 2nd. I particularly enjoyed my games against them, even though I lost both of them.

We do still have a number of vacant roles. I am particularly keen to fill the role of Head of Amateur Chess, so please do let me know if you would like to take on this role or if you know someone else who might be interested in taking on the position.

Once again, I congratulate all players and officials and we look forward to further success and expansion in 2024/25.

Matthew Clark, SCA President

4. Other Officers Reports – including trophy presentation

- a. League Controller** – Dan Hilditch-Love. There were 22 teams and 3 divisions which was 1 more than last year. Also, three junior teams which made for a very competitive league with 1 point between 1st and 2nd place. A new league is planned to be in place by September and teams should be submitted by mid-late August.
Winners: Division 1 – Telepost A, Division 2 – Maddocks B, Division 3 – Maddocks C.
- b. Rapidplay League Controller** – Chris Lewis. Report follows:

Rapidplay League 2023/24

Division 2:

TEAMS	PLAYED	WON	DRAWN	LOST	FOR	AGAINST	POINTS
Newport B	12	5	5	2	24	15	15
Telford B	12	5	4	3	24	16	14
Telepost C	12	4	5	3	23	17	13
Maddocks C	12	0	6	6	0	23	-6

It was a bumpy ride for division 2 with only 4 teams initially entered. The division was rating restricted to only players with an August rating below 1640. Unfortunately, Maddocks C were unable to successfully field a team and after the 2nd round of defaults dropped out of the division. It was agreed by the remaining captains to change the format of the league so that only 2 teams would attend a match evening and play against each other twice to cut down unnecessary travel.

The league then continued and was actually really close and in a super tight race congratulations to Newport B for coming out on top with 15 points followed by Telford B on 14 pts and Telepost C on 13 pts.

Division 1:

TEAMS	PLAYED	WON	DRAWN	LOST	FOR	AGAINST	POINTS
Telepost A	18	15	2	1	59	13	32
Newport A	18	8	4	6	41	31	20
Telford A	18	5	7	6	35.5	36.5	17
Shrewsbury A	18	9	2	7	31	41	17
Maddocks A	18	5	4	9	33.5	38.5	14
Maddocks B	18	6	3	9	30	42	12
Telepost B	18	2	4	12	22	50	8

Division 1 saw an increase in entries on last year but whereas the previous year was one of the closest seasons on memory, this year Telepost A bulldozed their way through all opposition. It worked out that Telepost had wrapped up the title and finished their own fixtures before the final fixture night leaving the rest of the teams competing in the big finale at Unison in what was a much closer battle for 2nd place. Newport A triumphed on the night to finish 2nd on 20 points, a distant 12 points short of Telepost's mighty 32 points.

The biggest upset in the season was clear. Telepost A only lost a single match all year, against Telepost B. Despite having a full team of Nigel Ferrington, Nathanael Paul, Phil Zabrocki and David Hodge they were still taken down by Dan, Shane, Kate and Dennis.

The league controller expressed a special thank you to Dan Hilditch-Love for doing some whizzy statistics in order to create a template for a set of fixtures for 7 teams, something the league controller wouldn't have been able to do on his own.

Both divisions ran extremely smoothly with no issues arising for the league controller other than Maddocks C dropping out.

Congratulations to the 23/24 league winners – Newport B and Telepost A.

c. Online League Controller – Charles Higgle.

Online League report

The league has two Divisions with four teams in each Division. Teams were permitted to play on different nights to the scheduled fixtures and sometimes particular boards were played on different nights. This enabled many players to fit in both over the board and online chess.

This season, as well as the actual online league, the league controller introduced end of season cup competitions, to match the over the board end of season competitions, and a summer online chess league.

The results, both the league, and the cup were incredibly close, with Shrewsbury A winning them both by the narrowest of margins. In Division 2 Oswestry C won the League very convincingly, with 5 wins and 1 draw. The league controller everyone who played in the league and the various captain who ran the sides.

d. County Individual – Nick Rutter

There were 12 entrants this year and the winner was Nathanael Paul with 6.5 out of 7 who retains the title and has now won it 3 times.

Second place Chris Lewis with 5.

Grading prizes U1900 shared Glyn Pugh and Shane Greenwood with 4 points each.

U1600 shared Julie Van Kemenade and Gary Slegg with 2.5 points each.

The trophy was first presented in 1926 and so there are only 2 years to go before it reaches its 100th anniversary!

e. Minor County Individual – Dan Hilditch-Love

As at the date of the meeting, this competition was unfinished. It was noted that arranging matches had proved problematic and suggestions would be welcome as to how to improve this in the future.

Post AGM edit – Congratulations to Archie Flavell who defeated Krish Thimmegowda to claim the title
<https://www.shropshirechess.org/announcements/live-on-saturday-12pm-minor-individual-final/>

f. Cox & Minor Trophies – Dan Hilditch-Love

As at the date of the meeting, this competition was unfinished. As a trial, it was run throughout the season rather than at the end but Round 1 wasn't completed until May which was much later than the planned January which has had a knock-on effect. The Minor knockout final will be between Telepost B and Maddocks B and the Cox final will be Oswestry A v Maddocks A.

Post AGM edit – Congratulations to Oswestry A for winning the cox trophy. The Minor Knockout will be played at Unison on Tuesday 13th August.

g. Summer Quickplay – Toby Neal

The summer quickplay competition is scheduled for Sunday 22nd September at Maddocks.

h. Congress Organiser – Phil Love & Chris Lewis. Report by Phil Love follows:

Congress Report 2024

Good evening everybody,

This is the annual report for the Shropshire Congress 2024.

The Congress built on our return in 2023 and went far more smoothly this time around, to the point the event directors even enjoyed themselves at times.

The Congress was advertised widely in the run up to the event and we obtained entrants from all over the UK after pdf flyers reaching the Exmouth, Bristol and Scarborough Congresses.

Flyers were also shared with events in Crewe and Birmingham, while online the event details were shared with the ECF calendar, the ECF Forum and both Staffordshire and Worcestershire chess Facebook groups.

As a result, we achieved 149 entrants which was a new record. Our Health & Safety plan agreed with the venue a maximum of 150 participants and Wrekin Housing held us to this limit so we had to close entry before the event took place. Reaching maximum entries was a fine achievement since we again clashed with the 4ncl weekend.

This year we used a new table and chair hire company which worked much better.

We also employed a permanent door person which helped ensure people were signed in and out as well as answer simple queries which freed up the organisers to concentrate on more pressing matters.

Live boards were set up covering all sections from Open to Minor and displayed in the reception/dining area and the Hub practice area, as well as on the internet for anyone unable to attend.

Catering was once again provided by the Wrekin Housing Group and proved very popular over the 2 days with many positive comments being received. The catering manager said income had increased substantially from the previous years.

Financially the Congress recorded another profit in line with the previous year.

Shropshire players experienced success across all sections.

Huge congratulations must be given to Alex Brims (Telepost) and Andy Jones (Newport) who shared 1st prize in the minor section. Andy has been trying to do that for 30 years.

Also of particular note was Nigel Ferrington (Telepost) coming 2nd in a crowded field featuring 2 FM's and the aforementioned absolutely terrifying 11-year old.

2 Telepost junior players (Sam Hollands & Archie Flavell) shared 2nd place in the inter section whilst Toby Neal (Telford) came joint 2nd in the Major.

Dan Hilditch-Love (Telepost), Nick Holmes (Telepost), Gary Slegg (Oswestry) and Rudi Bedford (Telepost) all won grading prizes.

Looking forward we hope to agree an increased capacity with Wrekin assuming we can provide enough extra seating to cater for them all.

Finally, a big thank you to all those volunteers who came and helped out over the weekend, it was greatly appreciated and helped us enormously. This includes Dan Hilditch-Love, Nick Holmes, Dennis Bonner & Kate Walker who all assisted with set-up this year. Thank you to Rudy van Kemenade who annotated all the games in the open section for players enjoyment.

And an extra special mention must be given to James Holyhead who, after a long congress, seemed to single handedly lug 60 chairs from the 3rd floor back downstairs to be collected.

That concludes the Congress report for 2024.

i. Head Of Junior Chess – Chris Lewis

Link to the report:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uEzeWMIHHkDkbPWnEAEcaqdhDdtWhRNQ/view>

j. Head of Women's Chess – Kate Walker & Paula Maher

A new role created at the last AGM. The new heads confirmed they will be aiming to promote chess to girls during 2024/25 and will be targeting girl groups e.g Brownies.

k. 4NCL OTB - Charles Higgle

In 2022-23 Shropshire & Friends finished bottom of their group in Division 3 of the 4NCL over the board. This season there was a massive improvement, with the team finishing next to last! Shropshire players were either from Maddocks or from Oswestry, with Andy Grillage and Glyn Pugh from the former and Charles Higgle, Richard Bryant, Adrian Bailey, Gary Slegg, Bob Taylor and Peter Fisher from the latter. There was also a player from Wrexham called Marcelo who played two rounds for us. Chris Lewis from Newport also played in one match for us. The captain again expressed his thanks to everyone who played this season. Charles would love to hear from existing players whether they are keen to play again next season or not and also from new players if they would like to join the team.

l. 4NCL Online Team – Charles Higgle

There have been two seasons of the 4NCL online, September to December 2023 and January to May 2024. The first team easily held its own in Division 1. In September to December 2023 the team finished in the top two of their group, and so qualified for the play offs. They won the semi-final but lost in the final by the narrowest of margins.

The second team held its own in Division 2, but the third team consistently finished towards the bottom of Division 2, but 4NCL don't relegate it despite it often finishing in the relegation zone. In a similar way the fourth team always finishes towards the bottom of Division 4. The squad has lost a player or two because they get fed up with playing stronger players every time, but thankfully most of the players keep on playing, and the league controller expressed his gratitude towards them.

m. County Captain – Charles Higgle

Shropshire has not played any county chess this year. There is potential for a new format of county matches next season with all matches played over a single weekend.

n. MCCU Delegates – Glyn Pugh & Roger Brown

Nothing to report.

o. Best Game Prize – Toby Neal

Only one entry so far for the Colin Roberts Trophy. Request for entries to be submitted to Toby. Any game by a Shropshire chess player will be considered.

p. Live Boards Controller – Phil Love

Thanks were given to Phil Love for keeping us all entertained throughout the season.

q. Treasurer Report – Chris Lewis. Report follows below:

Treasurer's Report 2023-24

The accounts will be published on the Shropshire website once they are signed off by the auditor.

<https://www.shropshirechess.org/admin/financial-statements/>

Draft accounts were presented at the AGM.

Profit and Loss

Another active year for Shropshire Chess resulted in a growth in income from £9,031 to £10,578. This was driven by the growth in numbers attending adult and junior tournaments. The association's surplus increased from £455 to a healthy £704. If we break our activities down into the different revenue streams:

- The league administration made a surplus of £168 before depreciation. The increase in subs followed an increase in league entries including three new junior teams.
- Income from individual entries were similar to previous years and the individual made a surplus of £41.
- The 4NCL team broke even.
- Junior chess activities (excluding the tournaments) made a surplus of £107. The club takes in around £30 each week and only pays £10 for the table hire. The surplus it generates supports other junior expenditures including entry fees for our county teams. There was a slight dip in our income in the middle of the year as the numbers attending temporarily dropped although new juniors have now replaced them.
- The junior tournaments reported in the accounts are the 2023 megafinal and the 2024 junior chess congress (but not the recent 2024 megafinal). The 2023 megafinal had an incredible 116 entries and thus made a surplus of £310. However the 2024 megafinal had a reduction in entries to 77 (not reflected in these accounts) and made a loss of approx. £300. The Junior Congress increased its entry fee by £5 and made a surplus of £455. It looks likely that the surplus generated by the junior congress will have to subsidise a loss-making Megafinal going forwards.
- A new expense was incurred last year for the trophies/medals of the Shropshire Primary School Championships. Schools were not charged an entry fee and so a similar expense is anticipated to be incurred going forwards although I plan to explore sponsorship opportunities.
- The association continues to provide subsidised equipment to local schools and community groups. The equipment was purchased at a 20% discount and then is sold at half price or in certain cases donated for free. The total cost to the association last year of this project was £441.

- The Shropshire congress made a surplus of £410. Despite there being an increase in entries and an additional £5 added to the entry fee, our costs also increased due to added requirements imposed on us by the venue including a new obligation to hire a door attendant.
- The association received £250 from the ECF which forms part of Christopher Lewis' Contribution to Junior Chess Award. An additional £100 was received from Staffordshire Chess in exchange for Chris acting as chief arbiter at their junior event.
- Shropshire Chess hired its live boards to two tournaments last year and received contributions of £240. £200 was received from the Isle of Man where our live boards were used by the likes of Nakamura and Caruana in the FIDE Grand Swiss. An additional £40 was received from the Hereford Megafinal.
- The overheads of the association have increased. This includes an increase in insurance costs, £157 expenditure to purchase spares for the Live boards including cables which do periodically fray. Additional expenditure was incurred purchasing tournament printer ink and a bottle of champagne for Francis Best. We anticipate these overheads to remain at this higher level going forwards which reflects how much more activity the association is undertaking.

Balance Sheet

- The accounting value of our fixed assets increased from £174 to £401. This resulted from the purchase of a copy of Swiss Manager Software for the association, plus the repurposing of the old unity cup into the Alan Shaw Trophy which is now awarded for 1 year to the winner of the primary school chess championships. Not reflected in these accounts is our recent take-up of the ECF offer to purchase 25 DGT clocks at a cost of £525.
- The association held stock of £1,454 at the end of the year. This figure includes 34 sets and 5 clocks being held as part of our discounted equipment for school's project. There were also leftover medals and other sundries from the junior tournaments that can be used at next year's tournament.
- At the end of the season the association was owed £92 in 4NCL subs. This debt is now cleared.
- The prepayment figure reflects costs paid in advance to Charlton School for the Shropshire Megafinal.
- At the end of the year the association owed £428 to various creditors including prizes for the individuals
- Our bank balance at the end of the year was £4,135.01, an increase of £500 reflecting our strong tournament results and the sale of school's equipment purchased in the previous year. When the income from the 2024 megafinal is received the balance rose back up to closer to our target reserve of £5,000 although then quickly dropped to £4,500 when we purchased the DGT clocks.

League Fees

Last week the trustees met and agreed a budget for the association. We agreed we need an increase in income from league fees from £410 to £490 in order to contribute to meeting the rising costs of the association. These costs include additional equipment purchases, inflationary increases on the website and rising insurance costs plus the running cost of the live boards. Simply, the organisation is growing and our overhead costs are growing alongside it. This increase translates to roughly an increase of £2/team, raising team entry fees from £10 to £12.

Proposal – Increase team fees to raise £490 in income. Voted for unanimously.

r. Auditor – no report

s. Safeguarding Officer – Steve Szwajkun.

ECF proforma has been adapted for the Shropshire Chess Association (see point 6 below). The trustees thanked Steve for the work he has put into this role.

t. Special Needs & Inclusion – Paul Billington.

Paul explained how he has taken a course on Autism but also wants to encourage all marginalized players in general e.g stroke victims. A Quiet Chess Club has been set up at the Unison club with one soon to follow at Telford Autism Hub. The Telford club is already oversubscribed!

The Head of Junior Chess gave an example of the impact Paul is having for autistic players. “At the Megafinal one boy came into the noisy waiting area and put his hands over his ears. Recognising the symptoms Paul approached the boy’s family and offered the autistic boy a quiet space at the top of the stairs. This small gesture would have transformed this boy’s tournament experience and ensured he enjoyed the day. Paul is doing the most amazing job”.

The association also collectively thanked Paul for all his work in this area.

u. Publicity Officer – Peter Kitchen.

It was recognised that Peter does a great job getting stories on the website and in the Shropshire Star. Unfortunately his new teaching role means he can’t post quite as many stories as he would like but he still promotes Shropshire Chess whenever he can.

v. Rating Officer – Nick Rutter.

Results are submitted monthly to the ECF. There are quite a few events to rate, 3 club tournaments, standard and rapid leagues, 2 county championship events, Shrewsbury Town, Cox and minor trophies and some weekend tournaments.

However, it all works fine and there are few problems.

The association thanked Nick for his hard work.

w. Website Editor – Nick Holmes.

Nick thanked Peter Kitchen, Vinnie and Graham for providing the content and keeping it working behind the scenes. He also thanked the people who update their own sections of the website. Nick would like to hand over the role during the next season.

The association thanked Nick for keeping the site going.

x. **ECF Delegate** – Chris Lewis. Report by Chris follows:

ECF Representative Report 2023-24

Nick Rutter has stepped down as our ECF representative and I first want to thank him for his many years of service.

In April I attended the ECF finance council meeting on zoom from a Starbucks in Shrewsbury as Shropshire's acting ECF representative. Here is a summary of the points most relevant to Shropshire:

- At a previous meeting the council voted to merge silver and gold membership categories into a single membership priced half-way between silver and gold. For silver members you will see a significant increase in your ECF membership fee this season from £27.00 to £35.00. Gold members will see a small drop.
- The congress pay-to-play fee will also rise from £9 to £15.
- All membership fees have been frozen for a number of years but there will be an inflationary increase this year on all membership categories. The budget was set to ensure the ECF operational finances break-even this year. Failure to set a breakeven budget would seriously jeopardise the ECF's hopes of securing additional government grants in the future.
- Summary of next year's membership fees:

2023-24		2024-25	
Category	Price	Category	Price
Bronze	£18	Bronze	£20
Silver *	£27	<i>abolished</i>	
Gold	£39	Gold	£35
Platinum	£75	Platinum	£77
Supporter	£10	Supporter	£12
Junior Bronze	<i>suspended</i>	Junior Bronze	£6*
Junior Silver	£6	<i>abolished</i>	
Junior Gold	£19.50	Junior Gold	£12
Junior Platinum	£75	Junior Platinum	£77

* Free in the first year

Rating-Related Fees	2023-24	2024-25
FIDE-rated pay-to-play	£12	N/A
Congress pay-to-play fee	£9	£15
Congress pay-to-play, junior	£2.50	£3.00
FIDE admin fee – players who are of non-ENG federation and not gold members	£1.50	£1.50
Non-members game fee	£18	£20
Non-members game fee, junior	£6	£12

- The only other notable point was an update on the government funding. Last year the government announced a £1million support package for English Chess. £500,000 was invested in disadvantaged primary schools (a couple of which were in Shropshire) and also 100 new chess tables. An additional £500,00 was invested in the ECF to support elite level chess and they must fully invest this by the end of 2024-25. This investment then frees up £140,000 in the 2024/25 ECF budget that was previously earmarked for international chess which the ECF have decided to redirect to grassroots initiatives.
- The ECF is still working on these initiatives but one of them was the recent offer to clubs to purchase discounted clocks from the ECF.
- The ECF is currently looking to establish regional coordinators to help allocate the remainder of the funding. Organisations and clubs can then apply to these regional coordinators for funding in their areas.
- Examples of support potentially available to clubs include new club's start-up support, advertising campaigns, 2 annual GM simuls and lectures for each county and support for social chess clubs.
- There will continue to be new developments in this space which I will be watching very closely to ensure Shropshire doesn't miss out.

All ECF Council Papers (including the full grassroots paper) can be read here:
<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/about/ecf-council-and-board/>

- The ECF AGM will be held in London on Saturday 26th October.

5. Nomination of New Officers

- Rapidplay Tournament Organiser
- Head of Senior Chess
- Head of Amateur Chess
- ChessFest Committee
- Outreach Committee

All positions remain vacant but work will continue to fill the positions.

6. Safeguarding – Matthew Clark (Safeguarding Lead) & Steve Sz wajkun (Safeguarding Officer)

The Safeguarding policy has now been created. It has been scrutinised by the Trustees and reflects best practice. Each club acts an entity and should have its own safeguarding policy. It is not just about protecting children but protecting everybody involved in chess.

It was reiterated that adults should not give lifts to lone children, there should be no 1-1 contact with children and no child should be invited to a clubs WhatsApp group.

The safeguarding policy has now been published on the Shropshire website and all club officials, captains and players are strongly encouraged to read it:

<https://www.shropshirechess.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/SCA-Safeguarding-Policy-Approved-08.07.24.pdf>

7. Proposals

A) Rewritten Rapidplay Rules

The Rapidplay rules were written in short form a long time ago. The rules refer to applying all rules of the Standard League with exceptions. The league rules have since become more complex including the introduction of rules covering junior teams and the blue badge rules, neither of which apply to Rapidplay. The rules have hence been re-written as a standalone document (see appendix b). There should be very minimal practical differences to the rules as they currently exist but separate rules should provide for more clarity and prevent future misinterpretations.

- proposed by Christopher Lewis

Voted for unanimously.

B) Reduction of all teams to 4 boards

a) From the 2024/5 Shropshire chess league season, all classical OTB teams are reduced to four boards.

b) From the 2024/5 Shropshire chess league season, division 2 teams are reduced to four boards resulting in divisions 2&3 having four board teams with division 1 remaining with five player teams.

Proposer's Argument. I propose that from the 2024/5 Shropshire chess league season all classical OTB teams are reduced to four boards in order to alleviate pressure on clubs & club captains due to the following reasons:

1. Finding a fifth player for matches can at times be very difficult especially for the smaller league clubs. Our league currently has a few small clubs so helping support them is vital. Having four player teams will also reduce the risk of defaulting matches.

2. Reducing to four boards will help with transport for matches because more teams will be able to travel together in one car. This feels particularly pertinent in our current league climate due to the fact there are a few junior teams. That is great for the league but does mean more travelling for our adult teams so being able to have four player teams will help clubs and their captains significantly with transport.

3. An argument against this motion is, reducing teams to four players shows a decline in our league. I strongly disagree because reducing teams to four players will give clubs the opportunity to field more teams. More teams means a stronger and more competitive league with more scope for growth. Having more teams will also give more opportunities for club captains to give players, especially lower rated players like juniors, match experience in higher divisions.

4. Reducing teams to four players will not lead to more drawn matches. There is no basis to this assertion especially as we have seen over the years clear match wins in both the Cox and Minor Knockout trophies where teams have only four boards.

5. Some may argue division 1 should remain five boards because that is how it has always been, it is a tradition. Well all I will say to that is, would you rather see clubs continue to struggle just to keep a tradition, or would you want to change for the better by reducing to four players in order to help clubs, and the league, flourish?

6. I have included option b) within this proposal as an extra option in case the majority strongly believe division 1 should remain with five player teams. My argument against proposal b) is the fact that all clubs would have to find an extra player for their promoted division 2 teams. This could create great difficulty for clubs especially for the smaller clubs who would struggle to field five players leading them to struggle to compete in division 1. We want to help clubs, not make it difficult for the smaller clubs in favour of our larger clubs. However, if the mood of the meeting is to accept proposal b) then at least clubs can be helped due to the fact two divisions will only need four player teams

- proposed by Nat Paul

Proposal A defeated – For=10, Against=13

Proposal B defeated – For=11, Against=12

C. Darwinian Knights Club applies to join the Shropshire League.

The new Darwinian Knights Chess Club, based at Unison Club Shrewsbury, is applying to compete in the Shropshire League.

- *Proposed by Dennis Bonner.*

Voted for unanimously.

D New Rule for the Shropshire Online League.

Only players who have played for the club in the over-the-board league during the current or previous season are eligible to play for that club in the online league.

- proposed by Richard Thompson

Richard's proposal Defeated – For=2, Against=9

Amendment – ‘Only players in the British Isles or who have a close association with Shropshire Chess as agreed with the league controller are eligible to play in the online league. Failure to comply with this rule will result in that player's results being defaulted and a penalty of 1 match point for every match the player is fielded.

....’ – proposed by Charles Higgle, seconded by Chris Lewis.

For=11, Against=3.

E New Rule for Shropshire Over the Board Competitions.

A nominated player MUST play on board 1. I have for a number of seasons had concerns regarding the inclusion of substitute players – at times very strong players have come in to ‘B’ or ‘C’ teams to play on board 1, which I believe to be totally unfair on opposing teams. This unfairness could be very easily resolved with the following new rule:- “A nominated player MUST play on board 1”

Obviously, the rest of the team then follows in rating order, so any shortfall in a team can ONLY make use of players rated within the extremes of the normally used players within that team. I do hope that everyone can see this to be a logical step forward to ensuring fairness throughout the Shropshire League.

- proposed by Gary White.

Amendment – A nominated player must play on board 1 unless they are a new member of the club in which case they must play in 50% of the remaining games left in the season. Failure to comply with this rule will result in that player's results being defaulted and a penalty of 1 match point for every match the player is fielded.

For=11, Against=2

F Draw Rules.

I would like to propose that, as far as online league games are concerned (and possibly OTB ones) "Sofia" rules are introduced - preventing people from accepting draws after only a few moves.

- *proposed by Gary Slegg*

Defeated – For=2, Against=12

8. Re-election of Current Officers

All re-elected unanimously.

9. AOB

Paul Billington thanked Matt for his steady leadership of the Association.

Meeting closed at 10.32pm.