

Combine Bronze and Silver membership categories?

(a) Arguments for

- Simplification of the membership scheme. No need for Bronze-to-Silver upgrades.
- An incentive for those who would otherwise be Bronze members to play in tournaments.

(b) Arguments against

- No extra benefit for those not interested in playing tournament chess.
- Effectively those who would otherwise be Bronze members would subsidise Silver tournament players (assuming an increase in membership fee).
- Increases the barrier to entry into graded competitive chess (assuming an increase in membership fee).

- Fees should be in proportion to benefits received. The current split in membership types provides the best available (albeit a somewhat rough) approximation of benefits received. Silver members play more graded chess on average (see Dave Thomas's Membership Analysis paper) and are more serious about their chess.

- Other remedies may be available to address two issues (a process could be created to fix the anomaly whereby those who pay the ECF tournament Pay-to-Play fee and then acquire Bronze membership don't get an automatic upgrade to Silver; a new 'Bronze - tournament player' category of membership could be added - possibly renaming the current 'Bronze' to 'Bronze - club player'. If a Bronze (tournament player) plays a graded league game then the league would be liable to pay the Bronze-to-Silver Pay-to-Play fee (and the player will have their membership upgraded to Silver).

(c) Also

- How many Silver members play only tournament chess and not league chess? This information is vital to the discussion.
- A phased merging of the membership rates is a bad idea as Bronze members would pay more for no extra benefit. If the two categories are to be merged it would be better to do it in one go.

Increase the Bronze membership fee (from £13 to £15 for adults and from £9 to £11 for juniors)?

(a) Arguments for

- The proposed increase, at £2, is small and will help support the ECF.
- The proposed fee, at £15 (£11 for juniors), is small.

(b) Arguments against

- members already see little benefit for the current £9/£13 fee. They may play only the occasional league game and some cases feel coerced into paying the membership fee for the administrative convenience of their club.

- the proposed increase is some way above the rate of inflation.
- it raises the barrier for entry into graded competitive chess.
- it would be better not to increase the reserves (or to increase them less quickly). £100K is an arbitrary target. The budget aims to reach the £100K target in one year but the Strategy Statement suggests three. The ECF can call on other funds if needed (as the FD's discussion paper makes clear).

- it would be better to reduce expenditure. In particular: (i) why fund new Commercial Directorate expenditure when reductions in sponsorship are budgetted/forecast (and the proposed increase in expenditure should at least be explained); (ii) Bronze members feel little connection with the English international teams and are reluctant to fund an increase in expenditure in that area (oughtn't Council to review its policy of putting out the strongest teams: the policy isn't achieving its aim of attracting sustained sponsorship; we now know there is a significant difference in the budgets for the Open and Women's teams; we now also know appearance fees for open team players make up a significant portion of expenditure; our teams have no realistic prospect of achieving medal positions; and expenditure of £35K or so on ten players in a single event is quite a lot. Why not spend less on player fees and support up-and-coming players more); (iii) why spend £2.5K a year to store a library which is hardly used?; and (iv) is it really worth spending £1.5K for "games inputting" at the British Championships?

- there would be no need for increases if the ECF FIDE Academy raises £17.5K by successfully launching in late 2015 (see Junior sheet of the Finance Director's Detailed Forecast and Budget).

(c) Also

- How about reduced fees for pensioners?
- The proposed increases for juniors are greater percentage-wise and this seems unfair; if anything increases for juniors should be less to support the future of English chess.