

Dear ECF Bronze member,

2015 ECF AGM

I am writing to you to tell you about the ECF AGM which takes place on 17 October and to seek your input on how, as your representative, I should vote.

(For some background on the workings of the ECF and its Council meetings, please see the section below. Also below is a brief report of April's Finance Council meeting.)

The agenda for this month's AGM is [here](#). Supporting papers, including election addresses and Director/Senior Officer reports can be found [here](#). Also relevant are Board Meeting minutes which can be found [here](#) (second list from top). And there is discussion on both the official ECF Forum (<http://www.englishchess.org.uk/Forum/> - see the 'ECF Matters' section) and on the unofficial EC Forum (<http://www.ecforum.org.uk/> - see the 'ECF Matters' section).

In my view, the key issues for the meeting are:

1. Election of the Chief Executive
2. Election of two Non-executive Directors. This is a contested election with four candidates.
3. Election of the Home Director. This is contested election with two candidates.
4. Election of the Director of International Chess. This is contested election with two candidates.
5. Election of the Commercial Director
6. Report of the Governance and Constitutional Review Commission and its recommendations.

In relation to the above, I would draw attention to the following documents:

7. From the documents provided for the meeting.
 - a. [Report of the Chairman of the Governance Committee](#)
 - b. [Report of the Chairman of the Finance Committee \(the concerns listed on pages 2-3\)](#)
 - c. [Election Address of Malcolm Pein](#) (standing for Director of International Chess)
 - d. [Report of the Independent Governance and Constitutional Review Commission](#)
8. [Minutes of the ECF Board Meetings](#) held during the current Board's tenure, in particular the [minutes of the July meeting](#).

At the time of writing, a number of papers have yet to be published, these include reports from the Chief Executive and Non-executive Directors and also the minutes of the important Board Meeting held on 18 September (at this meeting appeals were heard concerning the suspension of the Home Director of Chess).

How does all of this impact Bronze members? Well, for one thing, sponsorship of the English teams for the European Team Championships and the Olympiad is in decline and members have been and likely will be asked to make up any shortfall through increases in membership fees. Malcolm Pein promises to bring in new sponsorship if elected (though couldn't he do that anyway?). Board disharmony presumably doesn't help sponsorship prospects.

There are a lot of interesting and, I think, good recommendations in the report of the Governance and Constitutional Review Commission - for example on the structure and operation of the Board. However, I'm not impressed by what the report says about voting issues and representation on Council (see section 5) as I don't believe members are adequately represented. For the last Council meeting in April, I calculated that 102 of 317 votes weren't exercisable (as either no representative attended or no proxy was appointed or no voting instructions had been directed). Two of the three leagues in which I play didn't consult their affiliated clubs. I'd prefer it if One-Member-One-Vote was used to elect Council representatives. This would improve the link between members and those who make decisions on their behalf. It would make Council representatives more accountable.

Please let me know your views on the above - and anything else on the agenda - so that I cast my vote as your representative accordingly and possibly ask questions at the meeting. **PLEASE send replies to angusmisc@angusf.myzen.co.uk.**

Finally, I have put my name forward to be a Bronze Members' Representative for 2015/16. Apparently I'm the only person to have done so and there will again be a vacancy for a second representative. If you are interested in applying for this position, please write to the ECF Company Secretary, John Philpott at company.secretary@englishchess.org.uk. Having two representatives and two votes would give Bronze members a bigger voice on Council.

Background on the workings of the ECF and its Council meetings

Most ECF decisions are taken by the Board and Officers but the more important decisions are taken by ECF Council. ECF Council meets twice a year:

- in October for its AGM, to receive reports from Board members and senior officers, to consider proposals and to elect a new Board and senior officers; and,
- In April for its Finance meeting, to approve the previous year's accounts, to set a Budget for the following year and to consider (typically finance related) proposals.

For the most part, Council is made up of representatives of the leagues, tournaments, unions and other groups which organise the playing of graded chess. Each membership category also has up to two representatives. Board members and senior officers are also members of Council. Council meetings are usually attended by forty to fifty individuals (some of them acting as proxies for other representatives) with, in theory, over 300 votes at their disposal. Bronze members' representatives have a single vote each to cast.

I put myself forward to be a Bronze Members' representative as I thought Bronze members – who at 1 March 2015 numbered just over 4,003 of a total membership of 9,251 – deserved representation and a voice. (There had been no bronze member representatives since 2012 when the ECF switched to membership scheme funding.) I also represent the Croydon & District Chess League and have attended the last eight Council meetings. I was briefly, from May until October 2014, a Board member of the ECF - as a Non-executive Director - though by no means am I an ECF insider.

2015 ECF Finance Council Meeting

This took place in April. I wrote to Bronze members and asked for feedback on two issues in particular:

- A proposal to narrow the gap between Bronze and Silver membership fees with a view to merging the two categories.
- A proposal increase membership fees for 2015/16. For Bronze members this meant an increase from £13 to £15 (from £9 to £11 for juniors).

I received 64 responses which are summarised in the documents available [here](#). All the points, both for and against the proposals, were made at the meeting – either by me or by John Wakeham, the Silver Members' Direct Representative. Respondents were overwhelmingly against both proposals and I therefore voted against. The first proposal was lost but the second proposal was won: 104 votes 'for' to 103 'against'.

Regards,
Angus French

PLEASE send replies to angusmisc@angusf.myzen.co.uk