



Queens Park CHESS CLUB

MINUTES OF THE 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: 1 August 2023, 7:00-9:15pm.

Venue: The Bungo, Nithsdale Road, Glasgow.

Present: Philip Blaber, Paul Cumming, Harvey Dellanzo, Greg Forrest, Alex Lane, David Logue, Thomas McAleer, Caitlin McCulloch, Ryan McGill, Jordan McNaught, Rhys McCrosson, Alex Radevic & Derek Rankine.

Apologies: Jass McNeill.

1 Introduction & Previous Minutes

Caitlin chaired the meeting, which started just after 7pm, and thanked everyone for attending. The minutes of the 2022 AGM were agreed as an accurate record. There were no questions or comments beyond noting the significant decision taken to change the name from Govanhill Chess Club.

2 President's Report

Caitlin summarised 2022/23 as a “year of change”, highlighting the Club changing venue, greatly expanding its membership numbers, and refreshing its Committee. Caitlin noted achievements in competitive matches, participation levels, and media profile, and paid gratitude to everyone attached to the Club for being part of a successful season. She formally thanked the Committee Members who were stepping down at the AGM - Harvey Dellanzo, Alex Lane, Jass McNeill and Alex Radevic - and noted Harvey and Alex intended to move into Team Captain roles in 2023/24.

Looking forward to next season, Caitlin said the Committee were aware of a general membership demand to expand the Club Championship and the number of league teams, and that consideration would need to be given to capacity and sustainability, especially as there was potential of membership levels staying the same or declining. Reflecting on her role as President, Caitlin said her objectives were to bring added stability to the Club by implementing the Constitution, supporting the new Committee and voluntary roles, and setting processes in place to help the Club operate efficiently and meet the expectations of Members and visitors.

3 Secretary's Report

Derek briefly highlighted the story of the season in six statistics, drawing attention to: membership growth of 557%, from 7 paying members to 46, compared with season 2021/22; 44 team matches played across six competitions; 11 players who achieved a national Chess Scotland grading for the first time; 45 players, including 29 ungraded, taking part in the Club Championship; an 100% division record in the Glasgow Chess League, winning Division 3b in the Club's first full league campaign; and an average score of 4.67 out of 5, on the overall impression of Queens Park Chess Club, from 31 Members who completed the mid-season Members Survey.

The Survey reported that Members particularly value Queens Park's mix of casual and competitive chess, its community atmosphere, and welcoming ethos. Derek said the Committee agreed it was a very successful season, and that he hoped the Club would continue to see high levels of participation, achievement and enjoyment in the new season.

4 Treasurer's Report

Harvey said the Club was in strong financial health. The main risk the Club faces is its ability to meet its biggest expense - rent. He provided context on the necessity of changing venue in January 2023, as a result of the Club becoming too big for its previous Bowling Club venue and needing to regularly operate past its 9pm closing time. The Bowling Club had hosted the Chess Club for free, but the Club had agreed a £100 per month rent arrangement with the Bungo. This was to avoid a situation where Members felt pressured to purchase food and drink to justify use of the space, and to enter into a more formal and stable agreement.

Harvey said as a result of the Club accruing membership, sponsorship and community grant income in 2022/23, there were reserves of £413 in the bank. He added that bank statement copies would be made available to any Member who requested them. Investments in infrastructure - a Club Championship trophy, four wooden Staunton sets, and a new domain name with a five year website hosting package - would provide added value to the Club in the season ahead.

Noting his decision to stand down as Treasurer, Harvey said one recommendation he would make would be to consider increasing membership fees, as he felt £40 standard and £20 concessions were too low to comfortably sustain rent and other costs.

Caitlin invited questions and comments. Several exchanges followed:

- The Club's status as a **non-profit community group** was highlighted. The Committee has no plans to seek charitable status as a result of an assessment of the burdens involved and the lack of benefits available.
- Difficulties in finding a **suitable long-term venue** for the Club were noted. Harvey said the Committee agreed that The Bungo presented a generally good fit and strong value for money at present, although some compromises were involved. He clarified that the Club would not be actively seeking to change venue for the coming season.
- Some predicted a drop in Members, in the context of low engagement from a significant proportion of the existing Members. Matched with higher costs including an increase in league and national body registration fees in addition to rent, several felt it would be prudent to

change the membership fee structure to increase income while continuing to provide inclusivity and good value.

- It was argued a **marketing push** at the start of the season could be helpful in alleviating or eliminating a potential drop in membership; and that the Club could not manage an excess of 50 Members in current circumstances.
- The new Committee aimed to issue a **membership renewal call** in early August to support retention of existing Members and minimise any drop-off.

5 Constitution

Caitlin explained the Committee's decision to adopt a Constitution and the iterative process that led to the circulation of the final draft ahead of the AGM. Caitlin's work in drafting a Constitution - which sets out the aims and objectives of the Club, the remit of the Committee, and the roles of volunteers, Members and Visitors - was applauded, and significant contributions by Greg, Rhys and Derek were noted.

Caitlin invited additional comment on the current draft, and none were raised. The hard work that went into drafting the document from scratch was welcomed. AGM participants unanimously approved its formal adoption as the Queens Park Chess Club Constitution. It will be made available on the Club website.

Caitlin paid tribute to Lanark and Troon Chess Clubs, which had well-written Constitutions that were drawn upon as inspiration, and which were fully acknowledged in the final text.

6 Committee Elections

Caitlin noted that pre-AGM call for Committee Members had neatly resulted in four nominees for four available roles:

- Secretary - Derek Rankine
- Treasurer - Paul Cumming
- Competitions Manager - Jordan McNaught
- Communications Manager - Rhys McCrosson

With no contested positions, and no objections, there was no need for any votes, and the four appointments were confirmed. Caitlin welcomed Paul and Jordan to the Committee for the first time, and said she looked forward to working with all four during an exciting new season.

7 Call for Volunteers

Caitlin reported that expressions of interest for a number of non-Committee volunteer roles had also been sought and received. She stated that four Members had put themselves forward as **team captains**:

- Harvey Dellanzo
- Alex Lane
- Thomas McAleer
- Rhys McCrosson

Caitlin welcomed the interest and said the Competitions Manager would pick up with all of them ahead of the new season.

In addition, Caitlin noted a need for additional support with **setting up and putting away chess sets** during Club nights. The following agreed to regularly help Committee Members with these tasks, subject to their availability at the start or end of Club nights:

- Harvey Dellanzo
- Alex Lane
- Thomas McAleer

Caitlin expressed gratitude for the support.

8 Discussion Points Raised by Members

The following four topics identified by Members were the subject of special discussion:

8.1 Operation of League Teams

- Views were shared on the **number of regional league teams** the Club should operate, with concerns that three was too few to accommodate all interest, and four was too many and risked regular defaults. Noting league registrations deadlines were at the end of August, it was agreed the new Committee would make a decision on this later in the month when early renewal numbers could help inform the choice.
- A number of ideas were shared on the practicalities of **assigning people into teams** and encouraging regular participation. There was a consensus that assigning Members to specific teams with their own WhatsApp groups would help people feel part of a team and make it easier for captains to manage selection processes.
- There were different views on whether the Club should have a **dedicated team for less experienced players**, or if it would be preferable to mix those players with intermediates.
- The challenges of captains managing **committed players alongside those who preferred to play occasionally**, was noted. It was suggested a balance should be sought so all captains had a core group of motivated players plus several less active reserves available to fill teams, with possibilities of drawing from other teams (within league rules) where required.
- The need to ensure a **willing driver** was present in away teams was highlighted.
- The existence of **fixture pileups** was raised, with an example of 11 team matches in March 2023. This has implications for player availability.

8.2 Club Championship

- Some expressed a desire to **expand the Club Championship** from five to six, seven or nine rounds. It was argued more rounds would help provide extra opportunities for graded games to newer players, more competition between stronger players with higher chances of an outright winner, and “second chances” to players who suffer one disappointing result and would like the opportunity to pick up extra points.
- Some current and previous Committee Members noted **capacity challenges**, highlighting the busy Club calendar and the time required to process each round by generating pairings, notifying Members of upcoming matches, monitoring games, and recording and reporting results.
- Caitlin said **six rounds** would be an achievable target, using one month for each round and avoiding three months of the season - September, December and May - which were too close to the start of the season or holiday periods in which player availability was very poor.

- The high number of **defaults**, and the negative impact on lower rated players who were seeking graded games, was raised. Some suggested that asking Members to formally opt in to the tournament, alongside information on the commitment involved, could help reduce defaults. It was noted not all Members wished to take part in the Club Championship.
- Some felt the Club was too generous in allowing Championship games to be played in a window of typically four, and sometimes up to six, weeks. It was argued a **two week window** would be easier to manage. Noting objections to use of private residences, it was suggested those unable to play during one of two Club nights, should agree an alternative public space in this window of time, or default the match. Some would like to see an observer present at all games, and others felt this wasn't realistic in the case of alternative venues.
- The challenge of deciding **which player was to default** in situations where both players have poor availability, and are unable to agree a match time, was noted. It was suggested the Competitions Manager set out a clear policy ahead of the competition to specify what should happen in these circumstances.
- Several Committee Members reported it being too difficult to communicate one-to-one with Members on their pairings and availability. It was agreed consent would be sought for participants to have their mobile numbers shared with each other, and **take responsibility for communicating with their opponents** in the event of not being available on a designated date.
- It was noted that **GDPR consents** would be required for the sharing of personal contact data with other Members.
- There was a suggestion the Club do away with **designated dates** altogether, and let players decide where and when to play among themselves, although some felt setting a date provided a sense of occasion and helped encourage participation.
- The **tiebreak system** was discussed. While suggestions for co-champions and blitz playoffs were raised, most felt a tiebreak would be preferable in identifying a single winner at the end of the Club Championship in the event of a draw at the top of the standings, in line with Chess Scotland tournaments including the recent Scottish Championship. Caitlin shared that the system used by Chess Scotland - Tournament Performance Rating - had been recommended to Queens Park by the Glasgow Chess League Secretary. Caitlin said this was calculated as standard by Chess Scotland when grading the tournament, and was widely seen as a fair way of identifying which player had achieved better results in the event of a tie for first place by assessing the strength of positive results against respective opponents. There were no objections to this replacing Sonneborn Berger as the tiebreak system in the new Championship.
- Splitting the tournament into **major and minor sections** to reduce mismatches was proposed. There was limited appetite for this in the context of some welcoming the opportunity to face significantly higher rated players, and the design of the Swiss format in seeking to pair those who lose initial rounds with each other, in doing so providing everyone, in theory, with winnable ties. Some felt the introduction of a grading prize would help compensate for mismatches by providing lower rated players with an opportunity to win an award.
- The pros and cons of new Members **joining the tournament midway** were aired. While the Swiss format enables an inclusive and flexible approach with new Members able to join at any round, and others to withdraw, some disliked the idea of stronger players joining the tournament on zero points and facing weaker players, who should be ideally paired with others

of similar strength as the Championship progresses. Others felt those who join the Club after the season is underway should get the same opportunity to take part as existing Members.

- There were extended views on whether the existing time control of 60+0 should be retained, or whether an **increment** should be brought in, such as 60+5 or 60+10. The arguments in favour of no increment included predictable maximum game lengths, utilising the shortest classical time allowed by Chess Scotland to help introduce those new to longer time controls, and punishing players who get significantly behind on the clock. The arguments against included no longer dealing with the complexities of quickplay rules, eliminating the injustices of one player winning in completely drawn endgame positions, supporting more meaningful chess with extra time being allocated to each move late into the game, and the low impact of 5 or 10 second increment on the overall length of most games. **Caitlin called the matter to a vote:** 10 voted in favour of introducing an increment to the Club Championship, two voted against, and one abstained. It was agreed the Committee would select a time control with increment for the new season's competition.

8.3 *Blitz Tournament*

- Noting the exclusive focus on classical chess in Club competitions, a **blitz tournament was proposed**. Some welcomed this idea. It was suggested September or early December would make a natural date for a blitz competition evening.
- Management of the tournament would involve use of software and Bungo-Lo screens to **generate and display pairings** between rounds, which would need to be prepared and tested.

8.4 *Welcoming Newcomers*

- Instances of **visitors feeling confused** about what to do on their first visit to the Club were raised. It was agreed the Committee and all Members should make an extra effort during the 2023/24 season to welcome newcomers and briefly explain what to expect during Club nights and how to join the Club should they wish to. The potential use of welcome signs, QR codes and leaflets were raised as helpful resources that could help visitors settle in more easily.

9 *Close*

Noting the exceeding of an intended maximum running time of two hours, Caitlin called the meeting to a close at 9:15pm. She thanked all for attending and contributing, and said she was confident the Club was in excellent shape to manage the season ahead.

Minutes by Derek / 2 August 2023

Further AGM info is available on the Queens Park Chess Club website:

<https://queensparkchessclub.com/annual-general-meeting/>