

Minutes: OCA Committee meeting: 28th May 2025: Cumnor Old School (Cumnor club venue)

Meeting started 19.30

Present: Nalin Kadodwala (NK), John Carter (JC), Paul Bizzell (PB), Roger Thetford (RT), Sara Sengenberger (SS)

- 1) Apologies received: Tony Burcham (TB), Mike Truran (MT), Peter Hemmings (PH), Julian Kennedy (JK)
Not present: Priscilla Morris (PM), Keith Freshwater (KF)
- 2) Previous minutes were agreed – proposed by SS, seconded by NK, carried unanimously
- 3) a) NK reported regarding his role as Chair – he was grateful for the work put in throughout the year
b) JC details winners of competitions and individual awards – trophies have been collected in and passed to SS for engraving. There had been two issues arising which did not have to be dealt with on appeal and involved board order infractions. All clubs for the coming season will have free choice for starring as previous infractions had expired and all starred players this year were satisfied.
c) SS provided a brief update, mentioning the spend on clocks for development and it was noted that TB had mentioned in his report that these had been well received. Looking to 2025/2026, SS proposed that affiliate fees per team should be increased to £15 (note: later discussion on divisional structure amended this later to £15 for teams in Divisions 1-3, while 4-board teams in Division 4 would pay £10). The fee rise is primarily motivated, as our only revenue source, by rising costs of engraving, room hire, a fee paid to our website provider. *{Post meeting, including the impact of inflation. £10 in 2011 is equivalent to £15 in 2025 so this is not a real terms increase}*. Fuller financials will be available for the AGM. This proposal will be put to the AGM. **Proposal Finance**
d) TB provided a brief report to the committee which was relayed by JC – he thanked those who played, noting however a lack of “higher rated” > 2000 players who had been available this season. We had a record of P6 W1 D1 L4. Additionally, personal thanks to Ian Bush, Richard Beckett and Neil Staples were recorded who regularly supported TB throughout the season. TB will report back anything relevant from a forthcoming Chiltern League AGM. PB reported briefly that the “B”/U1700 team had won their competition – which is run under slightly different rules. He thanked all players who turned out for the matches.
e) PB distributed an online report for the committee and he noted there are 32 members registered, with about a quarter “active” in playing the various online competitions. He noted we won promotion to Division 3 in the online county championship for 2025. His report can be read in full at the Oxfordfusion site.
f) PH provided a report into grading this year, noting that he apologised for missing the March list due to ill health towards the end of February. His report is available online at the Oxfordfusion site.
- 4) a) JC had circulated to club secretaries a request for team entries based on a variety of scenarios. These were presented to the committee. There were two options: 3 divisions or 4 divisions – in the former we would have one extra team for 9/9/9 split; in the latter we would have potentially more teams. A return to 4 divisions was noted at the last AGM by clubs as an aim for the OCA and the committee voted **to recommend to the AGM the return to 4 divisions.**

b) Structure and composition of the league will be recommended to the AGM depending on final entries. A deadline for clubs was set for Sunday 22nd June. There are various scenarios where some teams would consider extra teams if the 4th Divisions was played over 4 boards, rather than 6 boards. If Division 4 is played over 6 boards, it was noted only one club had indicated an extra team. Moving to 4 boards initially for the first year was discussed, where feedback and monitoring could take place to see how it was being received throughout the year, and considered a good way to reintroduce the division and maximize the number of teams in the divisions – possibly up to 4 new teams from the clubs. Therefore, the **recommendation to the AGM will be that the reinstated fourth division should be played over 4 boards.**

c) A discussion of the format of the Frank Wood Shield took place. It was noted that some clubs had felt that deadlines for entries had been too strict, and that this had put off clubs from entering teams for this competition. Additionally, finding captains was also noted as an issue that some had mentioned as reasons for not entering teams. However, all agreed that the competition could use a boost, with a format change. A proposal will be put to the AGM that the format be changed to a rapid time control across 6 boards where players would play both colours with 12 points available in a match (it was noted some players at clubs might prefer the change of pace). It was felt that something less than 25 minutes + 10 second increment would be preferable, such as 15m + 10s. Additionally, the handicap would remain and need to be reworked for a 12 point match (RT to look at this). Therefore, **this proposal will be put to the AGM for implementation in the forthcoming season.**

- 5) JC noted that the consultation site set up has registered 17 users, and at its peak at 82 visitors on one day – forums will be updated in June to list recommendations and proposals forthcoming to the AGM, and archive some of the older items. While a cost was mooted previously, this is in fact a free hosted site with minimal features and will remain as such rather than spending on a second site.
- 6) Roles remain outstanding: Vice Chair, Minutes Secretary, Safeguarding officer; while others are likely to come due to be filled shortly such as honorary President; finally, we discussed the issue raised at the last AGM from the floor as to whether the League Secretary role might be split as it was felt that there could be both too much involved in the role and a potential for bias when it comes to adjudicating disputes. JC felt that an “administrative assistant” to shadow and run in conjunction with the League Secretary role would be a positive – and perhaps could be combined with the Minutes Secretary role. It was agreed to put out a call for volunteers on the websites and inform people about possible roles in the OCA committee. JC happy to receive questions on these.
- 7) We discussed the recent events being put on by Psyon Chess – there was full support that more chess is being played in the region. It was noted by PB that the calendar does get quite full, and this might lead to issues around arranging and organising county matches. However, the remit of the OCA is for a general promotion of chess in the area and these events are to be welcomed.
- 8) Prior to the meeting, MT had forwarded to JC info from the ECF about a proposed ECF county event from Autumn 2026. This would involve the “champion player” of each county being involved in a tournament. It was felt that they should be someone who is involved in the league and participates in country matches for example. This may lead to additional criteria in determining the Oxfordshire representative(s) should their be a wish to evolve the Oxfordshire Individual Championship. Additionally, JC was sent a

survey to find out whether and, if so, how counties organise a way to determine such a player. During the survey we were also asked whether we have a “Women’s champion” and “Junior Champion”. At present we do not have these, and discussion involved as to whether we should – this will be added as an item for the full AGM to consider. There was support for the idea and when more information comes out about the format then we can be better informed in how this might affect how we find such champions for these events, beyond the current method of the “Oxfordshire Individual Championship”.

- 9) AOB: SS reminded the meeting and asked that it be widely publicised that the Cowley Summer Blitz will be on 23rd June 2025. RT mentioned he would like to get a date shortly for the Christmas Blitz, to facilitate scheduling the 2025-26 league fixtures.

RT drew attention to the recent passing of Tim Dickinson which he had posted on the main website recently. As organiser of many Oxfordshire chess activities, as well as an arbiter at many events around the region and beyond, he will be sorely missed.

- 10) The AGM is due to be set for the first week in September and will be confirmed shortly.

End: 21.42