

Notts Chess Association

League Mgt Committee Meeting (virtual meeting via Zoom) Monday 12/04/21

Present: Chris Holt (chair), Nick London (secretary), Andy Robins, Dave Griffiths, Mike Naylor, Simon Scott, Graham Ladds.

Apologies: Phil Morgan (technical issues)

Not present: Chris Budd (no contact)

Notes and Actions

1. Meeting convened to discuss possible options for restarting competitive OTB chess for the assumed league season 2021-22, in the light of government regulations and guidelines re: Covid-19 pandemic
2. CH reported that official expectations are that an upsurge in infection rates may lead to a new period of restrictions in the coming Winter, and any plans we have may be affected by lockdown measures mid- season. Timing and severity of this is uncertain.
3. Appetite for return to OTB play: general view is that some but not all individuals are keen to restart. Some casual chess activity in the Summer/early Autumn is likely but not for all clubs.
4. Barriers to OTB:
 - a. Lack of venues likely to be the biggest hindrance; either not willing/able to accommodate non-core activity or not even re-opening in the case of some pubs.
 - b. Appropriate social distance at venues – not all club rooms are big enough to achieve this
 - c. PPE and cleaning regime – venues may not support (or will levy charges for) necessary cleaning/disinfection at venues. Club meetings would need to be equipped with handwash, masks, ventilation, separate chess boards etc.
 - d. Age of players – those in vulnerable categories may not want to take the risk of contagion in a club setting
5. Possible actions to make competitive chess more feasible:
 - a. Reduced number of matches (smaller divisions; home or away but not both)
 - b. Reduced size of teams (e.g to 4 or 3 for bottom division)
 - c. Option of online matches
 - d. Obtain suitable neutral venue(s) for clubs with no access to premises
 - e. Weekend multiple match event at a central venue (e.g. High School, Mechanics Institute)
6. Format of competition
 - a. With a scaled down season, a swiss system format was considered but this requires all results to be known around the same time to give notice of next fixture
 - b. Smaller divisions preferred with a 'mini-all-play-all' format
 - c. 2 games per evening at faster time limits suggested as an option
 - d. Possibility of 2 cycles (e.g. Oct-Dec and Feb-April), which allows both for a Winter break and for more clubs to opt in later.
7. All agreed that something should be proposed to clubs to attempt a revival of OTB chess. 2021-22 should not be regarded as a normal league season and that anything achieved will be a benefit.
8. Agreed to circulate a suggested plan of action to clubs with feedback required on options and likelihood of OTB participation.