

CORNWALL COUNTY CHESS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of Executive Sub-Committee meeting conducted by email correspondence on 7th and 8th March 2020

PARTICIPANTS:

H. Brown (HB), I. George (IG), D. R. Jenkins (DJ), R. Kneebone (RK), R. Smith (RS), C. Gardiner (CG) and R. Gardiner (RG)

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the meeting was to consider what action the county should take, in relation to the coronavirus (covid-19)

BACKGROUND

The covid-19 strain of the coronavirus, which was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, causes a severe, infectious respiratory disease which is potentially fatal. The virus primarily spreads between people in a similar way to influenza, via respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing. The time between exposure and symptom onset is typically five days, but may range from two to fourteen days.

Since then more than 100 countries and territories have been affected. The World Health Organization has declared the 2019–20 coronavirus outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. As of 7 March 2020, evidence of local transmission of the disease has been found in multiple countries across all six WHO regions.

Groups particularly at risk include older people and those with pre-existing health conditions, including cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

The source of the above information is the Wikipedia article on the 2019–20 coronavirus outbreak.

PROPOSALS

IG made the following proposals for decision by the committee

- 1) That all chess activity organised by the Association be suspended and that the 2019/20 team competitions should be completed when the suspension is lifted.
- 2) That no further events be organised by the Association until the suspension is lifted.
- 3) That the Annual Congress, due to be held from May 1st to 3rd be postponed to later in the year.

Note

This is the final wording of the Secretary's proposals, based on agreed amendments to his original text.

DISCUSSION

IG noted that chess players could be considered particularly at risk because of the way the game is played, with players facing each other from a short distance away and touching the same pieces and clock buttons, which are unlikely to have been disinfected beforehand. Moreover, the population of chess players, both in Cornwall and elsewhere contains a disproportionate number of people in the at-risk groups or with family and other contacts in the at-risk groups.

Debbie Smith wrote to the committee stating that, as someone who works in the care sector, she was already having to follow strict measures in her job. Because of the time it takes for testing to be done and the results to be announced, it was possible for someone to have transmitted the virus without being aware that they have it themselves. She felt strongly that, given the certainty that the number of confirmed cases would increase, even though there were at present few

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confirmed in Cornwall, the committee should take immediate action rather than add to the risk through inaction.

IG strongly agreed with this and noted that the fact that we might not have taken action previously was not a reason for inaction now.

RK said that his original view had been that we should not take action yet but, having listened to the views of WHO scientists and other health professionals, he now supported the proposals. He noted that, as Debbie had pointed out, the number of cases was certain to increase, so there was no point in waiting.

HB noted that the decision lay not with the politicians but with the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty, a specialist in epidemiology. If he believed that international rugby and Premier League football could continue can go on, our gatherings were a negligible risk. IG commented that the CMO did not have the power to order us to carry on; that would be for us to decide based on the committee's judgement of the particular circumstances in Cornwall. Moreover, the analogy from rugby and football is flawed as it fails to take into account the special features of chess referred to earlier.

RS, DJ, CG and RG all indicated that they supported the proposals.

DECISION

The proposals were all approved by a majority of 6 to 1.

NEXT STEPS

- 1) IG undertook to circulate to the committee members a draft statement to be posted to the website and emailed to the members.
- 2) CG and RG requested that this be deferred until they had contacted people who had already entered the congress and other chess contacts. This would be done on Tuesday, March 10. IG noted that he wished to publish and email the statement on Wednesday, May 11. As the only scheduled matches for the week involved Liskeard, Bude and Camborne on Thursday 11 and Friday 12 March, this would not cause untoward delay because he would contact the relevant officials of those clubs immediately.
- 3) IG stated that he would raise cheques for the refund of entry fees, etc. to people who had already paid, and send them to RG/CG for distribution.
- 4) He also requested RG/CG to include in their emails to entrants the statement that we would reimburse on request any non-refundable deposits or advance payments that they might have incurred in respect of the period of the congress itself (i.e. Friday to Sunday). As any such payments would be covered by external donation, there would be no cost to the Association.
- 5) CG/RG undertook to contact the Falmouth Hotel with a view to making a provisional booking of a weekend in October or November and arranging for the deposit of £75 already paid to be allocated to that date.
- 6) Over the course of the following weeks the committee would need to draw up proposals for the completion of the 2019/20 season for presentation at the AGM.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no further business the correspondence ceased.

IAN GEORGE (SECRETARY)
9th March 2020