

Junior report to Annual General Meeting 2 June 2010. (By Jon Melsom)

Last year in response to a request from the Exec, I volunteered to see whether I could help re-vitalise junior chess in the county, which has been struggling on for a number of years. This report summarises my activity and observations on the state of junior chess. It has taken some time to understand the extent of activity within the county and to get a reasonable feel of the challenges which arise. And I have not made as much progress as I hoped. **On the plus side there is probably rather more junior activity going on than people might have been apparent** from recent reports to this meeting, but there is a constant shortage of volunteers, and there is considerable scope for improved organisation of individual efforts, so that volunteer resources can be used more effectively and in a more strategic manner. It is a moot point whether the shortcomings can be addressed by more meetings, as the most recent attempt to do so was a mixed success, but that more volunteers are only likely to come forward if there is a coherent strategy and properly identified roles for them to fill within the organisation delivering that strategy.

Detail

As you will all realise any chess activity relies heavily on volunteers and to some extent on individual initiatives. We should be profoundly grateful to all those who seek to increase participation in chess within the county, and seek to moderate our criticism when things go wrong. Praise should be extended to those who continue to coach in primary schools, and for the limited activity at secondary level. Although the county failed to enter teams into EPSCA events this year, we should acknowledge the significant number of qualifying events for national competition that have been organised in recent years. In this respect Bucks makes a significant contribution to regional and national chess above its playing strength and resources.

However, my over-riding impression is that sometimes the voluntary effort can be put to more effective use, and that sometimes the individual initiatives are at the cost of the overall project.

Going forward the junior organisers in the county need to ensure;

- Proper communications between one another.
- Proper record keeping – so that accurate individual players details are accessible by all officers
- A clear overall strategy and appropriate division of effort. It is increasingly unclear where the dividing line between primary and secondary school activity is.
- Individual initiatives have the blessing of the central committee.
- Team-working rather than a tendency to pick and choose roles.

If these points were taken on board, then those who currently volunteer would find their life considerably easier and start to rediscover some of the pleasure which can come from seeing young players develop and enjoy playing chess. At the meeting last week we took initial steps to re-form the Committee. It already has two possible candidates for Chair, an events organiser, and somebody to look at strategy with specific reference to secondary schools. It needs more people and a note will be circulated shortly identifying the potential roles to be filled, including those of Treasurer and Secretary. If anybody wants further information please contact me.

Child Protection

In the midst of the discussion last year I said that I would try to address these issues as they affect the junior organisation and what might be termed the adult/junior interfaces. I have made limited progress, but am of the view that our position with respect to junior activities is reasonable, but perhaps needs formalising, whilst that at adult level arguably still needs work. In respect of the adult activity I wrote to Chiltern League counties. I received no response from Oxon, a detailed response from Berkshire, but they also accepted that the adult club context was a bit unclear, whilst Hampshire saw no need for a policy at all.