

South Shields Chess Club

Minutes of 2026 AGM

Venue: South Shields Customs House
Date of Meeting: Thursday 20th August 2026
Prepared By: Dave Patterson
Apologies Received: Kevin Rowden, Roy Merrin, Asanga Gunasekera

Attendees:

E. Czestochowski	D. Patterson	C. Sayers	P. Pocock
J. Moore	C. Mowbray	K. Ranson	I. Metcalfe
M. Yianni	J. Mills	D. Mooney	D. Walker
A. Blackburn	A. Smith	A. Johnson	J. Boyd
M. Kidd	B. Kidd	R. Ditchburn	S. Johnson

Officials Reports:

Chairman

The Chairman, E. Czestochowski, produced a written report (to be published on the Club's website) and summarised the key points for the AGM attendees:

A very good year for the club with a membership of 30 regulars and a wide variety of occasional visitors.

Celebrated 160th Anniversary of the South Shields Chess Club (SSCC), with a number of Public events, including, the SSCC annual blitz competition renamed the Paul Bielby Blitz, in honour of Paul's long and significant contribution to North East Chess.

Members of the SSCC also attended a number of outside events such as the Cancer Run at Monkton Stadium, Armed Forces Day at Bents Park, and the Mela at Ocean Road.

Awarded a grant of £750 to fund a mobile Gazebo for use at outside events, publicising chess in the wider community.

Continued to support chess on a weekly basis in South Tyneside at additional venues such as the Word, Cleadon Library and Boldon Library.

Treasurer

The Treasurer, D. Patterson produced a P&L statement showing the 2025/26 season's incomings and outgoings and summarised the key points for the AGM attendees:

The finances are in good shape, with a surplus of £177, down slightly on last year, mainly as a result of our increased publicity activities with a view to widening the club membership.

An increase to the annual membership fees was proposed and accepted unanimously:

- £10 per Adult
- £5 per Junior

The club continues to widen the appeal of chess within the community and will seek further external funding where appropriate. Any suggestions from members will be warmly received and considered.

Competitions' Organiser

Friends Bowl

K. Rowden ran this season's Friends Bowl handicap which had a knockout format and reached a successful conclusion.

Alan Blackburn won the trophy and joins a long list of distinguished winners.

Club Championship

S. Johnson ran this season's competition which was split into two divisions; Open and Major, depending on ECF Grading. The format for both was an all play all, which meant that it has been difficult to finish all of the games in a timely fashion.

After much discussion among the attendees and many useful ideas proposed, it was agreed that the committee would consider how best to run this competition next season, to ensure an improved likelihood of completing more games in a timely fashion.

Two new rules have been introduced with immediate effect to ensure that this season's competition is completed ahead of the new season starting.

- Each game will now conform to a 1 hour (per person) fixed time limit, without increment
- A deadline will be introduced such that all games will be finished by 30th September 2026, otherwise defaulted with zero points for both parties for each unfinished game.

Webmaster

No formal report received, however many thanks to Lewis Self who continues to support the club's website. Please send any proposed content to either Lewis or Eddie prior to publication.

Divisional Captains

SSCC operates in both the Durham (1 Team) and Northumberland (4 Teams) Chess Association's leagues.

Durham

A Team

Captained by **C. Sayers**, played in 1st Division, finished mid table in what is an extremely competitive division, with many highly rated players (2000+).

Northumberland

A Team (Arbeians)

Captained by **K. Rowden**, played in the 1st Division, finished mid table in what is an extremely competitive division, with many highly rated players (2000+)

B Team (Sand Dancers)

Captained by **A. Johnson**, played in 4th Division, finished second and gained promotion to Division 3 for next season.

C Team (Custodians)

Captained by **P. Pocock**, played in 5th Division, finished third, just missing promotion in a very intense fight throughout the season. This team drew upon a wider squad in order to give more club players the opportunity to play in League games, suited to their grades.

D Team (Daltons)

Captained by **I. Metcalfe**, played in 6th Division, finished mid table. This team used a broad squad of players ensuring both juniors and less experienced members got the opportunity to play league games throughout the season.

Internal Club Competitions

We run two different types of internal competitions, one is ECF rated, for those who are interested in maintaining an ECF grade and the other ungraded due to the handicap nature of the format which is designed to equalise playing levels in a fun way.

For the 2026/27 season, we have agreed to hold a new internal competition which will have a "rapid" format. Alan Smith has kindly provided a new trophy and agreed to organise the competition. Once interest is confirmed, further details will be published on the website.

So, we will have 3 internal competitions running next season. K Rowden has agreed to organise the Friends Bowl again and K. Ranson has agreed to run the Club Championship.

Congratulations to Alan Blackburn who won this season's Friends Bowl and was presented with the rather grand Rose Bowl Trophy.

Discussion of Teams and Captains for this season

It was agreed that we would keep the same number of teams and the associated Captains for next season. Please contact any of the Captains to express an interest in playing for any of the teams this coming season, which typically starts in early October.

Election of Officials

The following club officials were nominated and agreed:

Chairman:	E. Czestochowski
Vice Chairman:	D. Patterson
Secretary:	A. Johnson
Treasurer:	D. Patterson
Competitions Organisers:	K. Rowden (Friends Bowl) K. Ranson (Club Championship) A. Smith (Rapid Swiss)
Webmaster:	L. Self
Safeguarding Officer:	B. Kidd

Customs House as a Venue

E. Czestochowski confirmed that the Daltons Building would be closed from the end of September, meaning that our home games would need to be played in the main building, with casual and/or internal competitions to be played in the bar area.

The main building may also be closed from 1st January 2027, so we will need to consider and alternative temporary venue to be used for the remainder of next season. This will be confirmed nearer the date, once the Customs House has firmed up their approach and schedule for the redevelopment works.

Matters relating to Northumberland County Chess Association (NCCA)

The League format is still under consideration at this stage, so format and fixtures will be provided once this information is published by the NCCA.

We will ask that our home matches are limited to two Northumberland matches on any given Thursday to reduce any potential overcrowding during the Customs House redevelopment.

The NCCA have been given a £10k donation, left in a will and have asked members to consider how this could be best used, so please provide any ideas directly to E. Czestochowski or A. Johnson.

Some suggestions highlighted during the meeting were:

- Provision of funded training for Juniors (e.g. paying a Chess Master for group or individual training sessions)
- Provision of Good Quality Boards/Sets for League Matches played at our home venue.
- Provision of Smart Boards for use in capturing and broadcasting League matches

Matters relating to Durham County Chess Association (DCCA)

The League format is still under consideration at this stage, so format and fixtures will be provided once this information is published by the DCCA.

Any Other Business (AOB)

A number of wider discussions took place, with the main items identified below:

- The Club Championship has regularly suffered from incomplete or delayed games and as such consideration should be given to a new set of rules which will encourage a significant uptake in the number of completed games for next season.
- The club has an older trophy which could be used for a specific purpose such as:
 1. Most Improved Junior
 2. Most improved Senior
 3. Most improved New member
 4. Within the new Rapid Tournament (Perhaps as a Grading Prize)
- A. Smith has been appointed the Trophy secretary, to co-ordinate the storage, distribution and use of the various trophies owned or won by the club.
- Clarity is required over whether our Blitz or Rapid competitions need entrants to have ECF membership in order to get them ECF rated.
- All outstanding queries or decisions recorded within the minutes will be considered by the club's committee (usually a quorum of the club's officials) and communicated to the wider membership via the website.

