

An historic meeting in the history of Cheshire Cricket was held at Widnes Rugby League Club on Monday 12th October.

Prior to the formal business of the evening the CCCL announced the four players who had been voted as 'players of the season' in their respective divisions. They were: Kieran Maher (Runcorn, D3); Ben Istead (Haslington, D2 – Ben's second such award in the last three seasons); Andrej Yaksender (Bollington) D1; Dan Newton (Lindow) Prem.

The Cheshire County Cricket League and the Cheshire Cricket League were then both formally dissolved as separate associations and a new single organisation – under the name of the Cheshire County Cricket League – came into existence once the proposed constitution had been accepted.

Derek Barnett, the highly respected President of the CACO, conducted matters in between the joint dissolutions, with Brian Horrocks (long-serving CCL Secretary) overseeing the practicalities of organising the voting on the night. This process, whilst a little 'clunky', was nonetheless very effective in ensuring every club received their two voting slips.

The first voting slip, to accept the new constitution, was counted by the two tellers – Simon Burley (Toft) and Mike Cook (Oulton Park), who have both served with distinction in the former CCCL administration. The new constitution was overwhelmingly accepted by 67 votes in favour, with 7 against, and one abstention. With 13 clubs not represented on the night, this was an 85% turnout.

With this in place, Derek announced that only one nomination had been received for the position of chair, with Martin Roberts voted in on a show of hands – the overwhelming majority of those present. Currently the CACO chair and a respected league official, Martin is a prominent figure within Cheshire Cricket and began his tenure by paying tribute to the chairs of the former CCCL and CCL, David Humpage and Selwyn Stephenson, who came forward to warm applause to receive momentos marking their time in charge. Martin also paid tribute to all those officers currently serving who were standing down.

Both David and Selwyn were voted in on a show of hands to serve as joint-Presidents of the new CCCL, as were the following officers: Mike Cook (Deputy Chair); Matt Beckley (Treasurer); Barry Harwood (Competitions Manager); Tandy Palmes (Administration Manager); Emma Slater (Engagement & Communications Secretary); Lee Dixon (Player Representative).

Martin then gave a brief overview of the process leading up to the proposal for the new 'open' structure in 2027, which had been revised significantly following the four county-wide meetings held during May and June, with the final proposal published on August 14th, and all documents available on both Play-Cricket sites of the former leagues.

The vote was then conducted and the result announced as 37 in favour, 37 against, with 1 spoiled vote. Under the terms of the new constitution, a 51-49 majority would have sufficed to carry the vote, but with a 50/50 split, the chair announced that the motion had been rejected.

A separate and brief meeting was convened with the 12 representatives of Div 1 clubs, to get their view on a move to a hybrid format in D1 (as in the Prem) in 2027. The chair announced that 11 clubs were in favour and 1 against, so this would be formalised at the AGM in the New Year. This 11-1 vote reflected the continuing support for the hybrid format in D1 that had first been made public at the 2026 AGM, where a majority of clubs expressed support, but not the required two-thirds to pass it.

I have covered CCCL cricket via the newsletter since 2018 and attended this historic meeting as an interested non-voting observer. Having talked to many people over the season – those both in favour

and opposed to the open structure being proposed – I was personally surprised that the vote was as close as it was. No-one who contacted the newsletter, or who I had contact with, expected the vote to pass – some felt it would be emphatically rejected – but there is clearly an appetite for change. At the same time there is an equally clear resistance - at least to changes being voted on last evening - and all in all the newly appointed officers will be straight down to business as the 2027 season gets organised to determine how to help the new structure find its feet, given the variance of views.

It will be a matter of conjecture what difference the 13 non-attending clubs' votes would have made, but what is not in doubt is the fact that many people – on both sides of the open structure argument – care passionately about Cheshire cricket. It will not be the last that has been heard about the open structure, but as those discussions and debates continue, every club must have, as its overriding priority, to keep the game in a good and healthy place, with a competitive structure, firm but fair disciplinary procedures, and ever-increasing engagement. All of these are essential for the new competition to flourish.

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