



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED
AT YOUNG CHELSEA BRIDGE CLUB, GOLDHAWK ROAD, LONDON, W12 8HA
ON WEDNESDAY 25th OCTOBER 2017**

Present: Jeremy Dhondy (Chairman) (JD)
Ian Payn (Vice Chairman) (IP)
Jerry Cope (Treasurer) (JC)
Heather Dhondy (HD)
Anthony Golding (AG)
Robert Lawy (RL)
Ron Millet (RM)
Graham Smith (GS)
Gordon Rainsford (General Manager) (GR)
Peter Stockdale (Minuting the meeting) (PS)

1. Apologies for Absence

Darren Evetts (DE)

2. Minutes of the meeting of 13th September 2017

2.1 Accuracy

The minutes were approved as accurate.

2.2 Matters arising

2.2/2.2/2.2/5 – JD reported that at the most recent meeting of the Laws & Ethics Committee, the matter of the perceived disparity in the punishments given for certain offences was raised. One of the members of the committee had agreed to collate the relevant documents and put forward a proposal for discussion at its meeting in January.

13. The Laws & Ethics Committee had requested two minor corrections to their Terms of Reference, and these were approved.

3. AGM Matters

3.1 Draft Agenda

The agenda for the AGM was discussed and approved.

Whilst it was usual policy that questions should be submitted in advance, it was agreed that this was not necessary for questions in response to the EBED report given by Andrew Petrie.

3.2 Resolutions for AGM

AG was thanked for his work in writing the proposed changes. It was noted that, in response to feedback at the last AGM, versions would be given to the Shareholders which showed the changes which were being made, rather than just the proposed new version.

3.2.1 Articles of Association

This change covered the role of the General Manager in relation to Standing Committees. IP explained that this change was intended to move the GM role towards having an involvement in developing policy, rather than being simply administrative. It was recognised that as the Board has final approval of all policy there would not be any conflict of interests resulting from this change.

3.2.2 Bye Laws

Changes to the Bye Laws to address issues relating to 'hate crimes' had been discussed at the last meeting, and the Board approved the wording of the changes which would be proposed at the AGM. It was recognised that whilst these changes were a good, and important, update, it was an evolving subject within society, so it may be necessary to make further updates and improvements in future.

3.3 Chairman's Annual Report

Some minor changes to JD's draft report were agreed.

4. General Manager's Report

GR had circulated his report prior to the meeting. He commented that he felt he had settled in to the position, and although he was still "keeping on eye on competitions" he was now able to spend less time working in this area.

GR had attended the meeting of the Northern County Working Group (CWG) as part of his intention to visit CWG meetings to provide a bridge between the groups and Aylesbury.

He had continued to have meetings with individual staff members, and summarised the discussions which were also covered in his report.

The introduction of new software for the Bridge Warehouse had been postponed until after Christmas so that the change was not made during the busiest period of the year. This would also give the staff more chance to trial some of the features.

GR reported that he was still getting comments regarding exemptions from the NGS. He had asked Mike Christie to look at the statistical and technical aspects of some suggestions which had been received.

A meeting of key staff had taken place regarding the General Data Protection Regulation. GR mentioned that Donna Wright, as a former Data Protection Officer, had been particularly helpful in adding to the knowledge he had gained from attending a course on the issue. Karen Durrell was looking at the options which were available for staff to receive online training on the subject. The intention was to make all the relevant updates, and prepare all documentation, by mid-January, thereby allowing time for clubs and counties to implement any necessary changes. The creation of an online system to deal with county membership would be postponed until the requirements and implications of the GDPR in this area were fully understood.

The Editorial Board had begun to consider the possibility of trying to reduce the number of households receiving multiple printed copies of the magazine. The Board were interested in this being given further consideration.

5. UM Rebates

JC advised that at present any member playing more than 150 sessions per year receives a rebate on Universal Membership. He suggested that a way to contribute to a reduction in the forecasted deficit in future years would be to remove this rebate with effect from the new financial year. It was agreed that a recommendation to this effect would be put to the Shareholders at the AGM for their consideration.

6. Financial matters

6.1 Treasurer's Report & September Management Accounts

Prior to the meeting JC had circulated his report, and he advised that a six-monthly report to Shareholders and the figures for September would be circulated in the next few days. He reported that the accounts were £1.4K down on budget, however the figures included final legal costs which had not been included in the budget, so the general performance had been good. Universal Membership figures had recovered after a slow start to the year, the Bridge Warehouse was performing substantially better and ahead of budget, and the financial performance of competitions had stabilised and we're showing signs of improvement. The figures were also beginning to reflect recent savings on salaries, which represented the first aspects of the financial 'recovery plan'.

6.2 Schedule for 2018/19 Budget Preparation

The schedule for this process was circulated.

6.3 VAT Policy

It was expected that a decision from the EU Court on the VAT exemption would be announced the following day (26th October). It was agreed that no hypothetical discussions about how to deal with a positive result should take place and, as any benefit would not be seen immediately as the decision would need to pass through the British system first, these discussions could wait until the next meeting. It was, however, recognised that:

- in the result of a positive decision, the benefit to competition players would not be a simple reduction by 20% as VAT relief which the EBU was receiving on some of the costs of running the event would be removed. It was therefore not possible to put a figure on the benefit, or the size of any possible rebate, and professional advice may be needed, particularly on the latter issue.
- the timescale for any positive result coming in to effect was unknown.
- there was the possibility that HMRC would require the rebate to be reimbursed to the players who had paid it.

There was a belief that if the court's ruling was not in favour of bridge being considered a sport, then there was unlikely to be any further action that could be taken.

Note: The board will discuss the ramifications of the decision at its next meeting

7. Summer Meeting

It was reported that the 2017 Summer Meeting had made a modest profit, despite expectations to the contrary given that the attendance was marginally lower than in 2016. This was in part due to: a reduction in the number of TDs employed at the event; and a rebate from the venue due to the excessive noise from the adjacent building works. GR reported it was likely that the event would

return to the newly refurbished venue in 2019 as previous efforts to find a better alternative had proven fruitless.

For 2018, he expressed the intention to try to keep going the majority of the competitions usually held at the Summer Meeting. This would be done through holding the main Swiss Pairs and Swiss Teams at the Royal National Hotel in London on non-consecutive weekends, and running the midweek events as multi-venue competitions on days adjacent to those weekends. The One Day Swiss Pairs would be held at the University of London Union – five minutes from the Royal National – on the second weekend. There would not be any Seniors competitions during the event, but new Seniors competitions had been added to the Scarborough Congress, and it was hoped they would attract those who would have normally played in the Seniors competitions at the Summer Meeting.

GR advised that the timings of the main weekend events would be adjusted to accommodate those who wish to ‘commute’, rather than stay in London. No decisions had yet been made on prices, but it was expected that they would be similar to those at the Summer Meeting.

8. EBED report

JD reported that there had been not been a meeting of the EBED Trustees since the last Board meeting. He added that Sue Maxwell had finished in her role as Education Manager, and in the coming period EBED would be looking to appoint new members of staff. There would also be advertisements for two new Trustees – one appointed by the EBU and one by EBED.

The possibility of changing how the EBU contributed financially to EBED in 2019 was discussed – it was raised that it may be appropriate for the EBU to make a donation to specific projects, rather than make a general donation for EBED to spend as it saw fit.

When RL attends meetings of the Educational Advisory Group he would provide to them a list of items that the Board would hope that EBED had achieved by the end of 2019. One topic which would be addressed through the EAG would be ‘teacher qualifications’.

9. County Working Groups

Prior to the meeting GS had provided a report from the County Working Group Task Team. This summarised the current position, and also gave some recommendations which had emerged from various discussions with key stakeholders. The Board thanked GS and the Task Team for their work to date.

The report identified five major themes which should be addressed, and the recommendations attempted to do this. It was agreed that it was important to empower the counties, and for them to invest in the process. They had been given the chance to express an opinion on the group to which they wanted to belong, and the regions had been redrawn a little in response to this. To break down perceived barriers between the counties and the Board/Aylesbury staff a decision had already been made that key staff would attend CWG meetings (in person where possible, but otherwise by Skype). This had been well received by the Counties. It was also agreed that a Board member would ‘sponsor’ each group to reinforce the idea of cooperation.

With regard to encouraging clubs to affiliate, GS explained that the Task Team believed that this should not be done on a national scale, from a central point, but should instead be done on a county or regional level. The EBU would provide support and resources, but these would be used by a national network of those acting locally, rather than someone trying to work nationally. The report

recommended that introducing additional types of affiliation may have not have a positive effect, and that rather than recruiting new clubs it may instead lead to 'cannibalisation'.

To support clubs, the report recommended that training could be provided to help clubs to recruit more volunteers, and to give those volunteers the skills which were needed.

GS reported that the idea of 'Beacon Clubs and Counties', who could act as examples of best practice and share ideas, had been well received within the CWGs. The Board recognised that some clubs and counties already acted in this role, though were in favour of giving them a formal status to encourage others to do likewise, and to recognise the contribution of those which do. The report also suggested having online forums where ideas could be shared. GR responded that one was being established for TDs and that others could be added, though it may be more appropriate for counties to have their own smaller discussion groups, rather than centralised forums.

The report also raised some recommendations with regard to the benefits of affiliation for clubs, and the benefits for members, which were discussed. It suggested that buy-one-get-one-free on TD training, and a free place on teacher training course – both of which benefits were ended by EBED – should be reinstated by the EBU. JC explained the cost of so doing, and it was agreed that it was an expenditure which could not be justified given the likely returns.

The Board gave a positive response to most of the suggestions raised in the report, and requested that GS work with GR to report this back to the CWGs and start taking steps to implement some of the actions as appropriate. It was hoped that the two groups which were currently active would continue to grow their activities, and that it would be possible to get a third (or more) groups active. The Board also requested that GS develop Terms of Reference for the Groups.

10. Membership

RM had circulated two reports on the Membership Campaign in Yorkshire to date. The first dealt with the developing statistical picture on membership and applied that to the EBU as a whole. The second reported on the experiences so far in working with selected clubs. The Board thanked RM for these reports.

The statistical report reviewed the static levels in membership numbers for England in recent years and the gradual rise in occasional and non-players as an increasing proportion of that membership. A review of the age profile of the membership indicated an average age range of 70 -75 years. This, compared with national life expectancy figures of 83 years (85 for women), posed challenges for the future of EBU membership. It was estimated that 3500 new members are required every year just to stand still.

Arising from the statistical report, the Membership Campaign adopted a policy of working with clubs under pressure. The response from those clubs had been good: they had all been receptive to the advice and assistance which the Membership Campaign had offered. Every club had agreed to contribute to the costs of the publicity materials element of campaigning as well. The experience in Yorkshire to date is that the Campaign with any individual club did not start immediately but once it did there was an enthusiasm from that club that led to new campaigning ideas and successes in recruitment. It had been noted that word of mouth and social media could be the most effective form of publicity for bridge, and for bridge lessons. It was recognised that the survey which was undertaken last year showed that on average only one-third of players completing lessons went on to play in club sessions. So there may be other areas on which time and money could be focussed, rather than simply trying to recruit people to lessons.

A further Report was intended for a Board meeting in the Spring. This would provide more information including a possible template for extending the Campaign to other areas as well as allowing clarification of the financial aspects.

11. Sponsorship

Knowing he would be absent from the meeting, DE had provided in advance a report on the work which he had done to date in relation to raising sponsorship for the Junior teams' participation in the World Championships in China. He also provided a draft version of his information for potential sponsors. This was approved by the Board, who thanked him for his efforts.

The Board agreed with DE's assertion that this fundraising effort was only in part related to balancing the budget – it was also a key opportunity to engage with clubs and counties to support junior bridge, and for them to use the junior teams to try to introduce bridge in to the consciousness of their local community. To that end, it was agreed that although efforts were being made to identify individual sponsors who may make a substantial donation, DE should start implementing fundraising ideas which could be undertaken by clubs and members at a local level.

12. EBL/WBF Matters

JD reported that the EBL would be asking for suggestions for players who should be honoured in either the 'active' Hall of Fame, or the 'posthumous Hall of Fame' which would be established in 2018. The Board agreed the players which would be proposed for one of these honours, and JD would make the proposals.

13. Safeguarding procedures

The EBU's safeguarding procedures had been updated by GR in consultation with Gillian Fawcett – both in her role as Chair of the Selection Committee and due to her professional experience in the childcare sector. It was recognised that EBED's activities differed from those of the EBU, so it was appropriate to have different policies. The Board approved the policy. It was recognised that it should be made available to clubs and counties for their use.

14. Calendar of meetings for 2018

The calendar was circulated and agreed.

15. Any other business

JD reported that he had written to the Portland Club concerning royalty payments historically made in respect of the publication of the Laws and the club had generously agreed that it was no longer appropriate for them to be paid royalties and payment would end with immediate effect.