



**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 31<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER 2018**

**Present:**

Jeremy Dhondy (Chairman) (JD)  
Ian Payn (Vice Chairman) (IP)  
Jerry Cope (Treasurer) (JC)  
Heather Dhondy (HD)  
Gillian Fawcett (GF)  
Anthony Golding (AG)

Robert Lawy (RL)  
Ron Millet (RM)  
Graham Smith (GS) (present for items 1-7)  
Gordon Rainsford (Chief Executive) (GR)  
Peter Stockdale (Minuting the meeting) (PS)

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Bev Godfrey (BG)

JD advised that BG had expressed her intention to stand down from the Board at the AGM. She was thanked for her contribution, particularly for her work for the L&E committee relating to behavioural matters.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

**2.1 Accuracy**

A minor typographical error was noted and corrected. Otherwise the minutes were approved as accurate.

**2.2 Matters arising**

3.1 – JC advised that, following the Board's approval at the last meeting, he had opened one twelve-month account in order to gain a better rate of interest on some of the EBU's investments.

4 – It was confirmed that the free places on Club Teacher Training courses would be introduced, and this would be formally announced soon.

11 – JD had written to the WBF with constructive criticism of the arrangements for the World Youth Team Championships in China. No response had been received, so he would contact them again.

**3. AGM matters**

**3.1 Draft agenda**

A draft agenda had been circulated. It was approved with two additions, noted below.

It was agreed that although any change to the current schedule of meetings would not require a change to the Bye Laws or Articles of Association, it would be appropriate to discuss the matter during that part of the meeting. It would therefore be added to the agenda immediately following items relating to the Bye Laws and Articles.

An item giving an update on the Membership Campaign would be included.

### **3.2 Resolutions relating to Bye Laws and Articles of Association**

These resolutions were agreed. They relate to changes of wording so that 'General Manager' is replaced by 'Chief Executive', and to the nomination period for Standing Committees.

### **3.3 Chairman's Annual Report**

JD advised that an additional appendix would be added to the report this year, which would give a review of whether the objectives of the 2013-18 Strategic Plan had been achieved. The 2018-2023 Strategic Plan would be an agenda item for the first meeting of the Board during the period in which it was operational – the meeting planned for January 2019.

It was agreed that the Chairman's report should include an explanation as to the role of the Pro Bono Advisor.

### **4. Chief Executive's Report**

GR had a circulated a report prior to the meeting, and a number of matters from it were discussed.

He advised the Board of the new venue for the Easter Festival in London. It was noted that the historic arrangement which had led to the previous venue being used was inappropriate, and in future no arrangements would be made which were 'ad hoc' and undocumented. All arrangements from which anyone stood to gain must be transparent and follow written policies.

GR had visited Eastbourne to see the ongoing refurbishment of the Devonshire Park complex. He was confident that it would be both suitable, and ready in time, to host the Summer Meeting in 2019 – not least because it had to be completed for other non-bridge events earlier in the calendar.

Matters relating to the Aylesbury staff were discussed.

The Bridge Warehouse had begun to sell items through Amazon, however uptake had been slow, and plans to sell through eBay were therefore on hold. Efforts were being made to improve the margins on the items sold, including sourcing potential new suppliers. The shop staff were making efforts to engage with some of the bigger customers to not only encourage more purchases, but also to seek to gain referrals to other clubs and contacts. The possibility of organising a survey to ascertain from clubs why they did not buy products from the Bridge Warehouse was considered.

GR reported that there had been an increase in IT hosting costs due to the need to switch to a dedicated server to host the version of Sage currently being used. The possibility of moving away from Sage and Entrust – the hosts of the remote server – was raised, and would be given consideration by key members of staff.

### **5. Financial matters**

#### **5.1 Treasurer's Report and September Management Accounts**

JC had circulated a report prior to the meeting, but noted some updates which should be made in light of recent information.

He highlighted some aspects of his report.

The returns from the Summer Festival had been disappointing and well below budget. This was further evidence that a return to Eastbourne in 2019 would be appropriate.

The donations received to support the Junior teams participating in China had been £31.5K better than budget, and he expressed his thanks to all involved, especially to those who donated. Although costs had been slightly higher than originally budgeted, there was still a small surplus from the fundraising, and this would be reinvested in the junior squads. He also reported a likely additional donation to the junior squads, and GF added that this would be spent in the coming year on supporting participation in the Channel Trophy and on training weekends.

Although the generous donations had made a positive impact on the budget, the relatively poor performance of the Bridge Warehouse and recent competitions had offset some of this benefit. Whilst the EBU would be striving to hit its budget target, he advised that Bridge Warehouse sales and competition entries could be key to achieving this.

He concluded with a positive note that advertising revenue from the most recent issue of English Bridge had been the highest in many years, and up around £3K on budget.

It was noted that the number of submitted sessions at the full rate of Universal Membership had declined slightly in the recent period, whilst the number of sessions submitted at a reduced rate had increase significantly. Whilst this may be an accurate reflection of current activity, it was agreed that it may be appropriate to conduct more rigorous checks to ensure that the sessions were being submitted accurately.

## **5.2 Schedule for 2019/20 Budget Preparation**

JC had circulated the schedule for the Board to note. He warned that the budget may be harder to balance than in previous years.

## **5.3 Fees/subs for 2019/20**

JC circulated his proposals, and advised that these represented an increase of around 2.5%, a little below the current RPI rate of inflation. It was agreed that the presentation of the information should be amended so it made clearer when the price was per player or per table, and whether it was per session, per event, or a one-off charge.

## **6. Membership**

### **6.1 a) Membership Campaign**

RM reported that the campaign in Yorkshire continued to go well, particularly as those initially recruited were completing the lessons and becoming playing members of their clubs. With regard to the national campaign, he reported that amongst many of the counties with which their had been contact there was a reluctance to make a commitment to a full campaign. This was in part because of the fear of the impact if the campaign were not beneficial – time and money being wasted, and the demoralising effect of perceived ‘failure’. It would require careful dialogue with these, and future groups, to reassure them and encourage their involvement. He was hopeful that a forthcoming presentation which would be made at a meeting of a county’s Chairs would encourage them to become the second group (after Manchester and Merseyside & Cheshire) formally involved with the campaign. In time, if few counties become directly involved, it may be the case that Tim Anderson, the Membership Development Officer (MDO), provides support to individual clubs, or groups of clubs, rather than to whole counties.

RM was pleased with the work being done by the MDO, in creating a shared resource centre for those clubs and counties which will be involved in membership development. This will be available soon, though he advised that there were still decisions to be made on which parts of it would be available to everyone, and which would be restricted only to affiliated clubs and counties and how any log-in process would be administered.

During RM's discussions with counties, some matters which had been noted before were reiterated. One was that there was an apparent divide with regard to teaching, with the clubs which consider themselves to be providing a 'high quality game' rarely involved with teaching, with the bulk of lessons being provided in clubs with a less accomplished membership. Whilst having inexperienced players will inevitably lead to a lower playing standard within some games, it was apparent that the clubs with the most competitive games were reliant on other clubs for their new members, and this may not be a self-sustaining policy as the trend for more relaxed games of bridge increases. It was also noted that the aging membership within clubs not only affects the future size of the playing membership, but also the number of people willing and able to serve on committees and run the clubs. The future of some clubs may be threatened by the lack of suitable options to succeed those currently running the club.

In his written report RM outlined several suggestions for specific action or new initiatives which could be introduced. The Board agreed that these could be introduced as part of the membership campaign as appropriate.

### **b) Statistics update**

RM had circulated various statistical reports and analysis to the Board. He highlighted the small decline in Universal Membership sessions year-on-year. JC advised that the budget was forecasting a 1% decrease, which was confirmed in these figures. RM pointed to figures which estimated the number of players who stopped playing each year, noting that the number of new players coming to the game barely covered the 'natural wastage'. All work being done to date was simply to maintain current membership levels, therefore more needed to be done if the membership was to grow, and the decline in UM sessions was to be halted.

Analysis of county membership figures highlighted certain counties in which the number of members had declined noticeably in recent years. These counties would be asked about why this might be the case to identify areas for action, both within these counties and in others which may be in a similar position. Similarly, others had seen a significant increase, and it was hoped that any successful initiatives in these counties could be replicated elsewhere. It was recognised, however, that simply analysing membership figures was not always appropriate and, as UM receipts were the lifeblood of the organisation, a detailed examination of session data was often needed to reveal a truer picture – though this data was more difficult to extract and more time consuming to analyse.

It was recognised that the work of the membership campaign, and of the MDO, would not be immediately apparent in the session and membership data – there will be lag-time in the effects of recruitment being noticed. It was therefore not appropriate to use figures to judge the success of the work in the short-term – the more accurate indicator would be the mood of the counties and clubs involved, and whether there is a greater feeling of positivity about the future.

### **6.2 Membership refusal**

This item followed discussions at the June meeting at which it was noted that the current Bye Laws do not allow the EBU as an organisation to refuse membership to any individual. Whilst clubs can deny membership through policies in their constitutions, once someone has joined an affiliated club they are automatically members of the EBU.

JD had sought to establish how other similar organisations handle the matter. He identified that the primary problem faced had not been in having such a policy on refusing membership, but in instances where the policies, or how they had been implemented, had been illegal – most commonly

they had been discriminatory. There was also a necessity to ensure a fair appeals procedure for any potential member who was excluded.

The Board was in agreement that they would be in favour of an addition to the Bye Laws which gave the option of refusing membership when it was believed that there was just cause for doing so. They wished, however, to canvas opinion from clubs, as they would likely be directly involved with the potential member in question. A consultation document would be circulated to the clubs with the intention of preparing a formal proposal to be put forward at the AGM in 2019. GR would action the consultation. A summary of the position to date could be made at the meeting at the mid-point in the year (or in the written 'half-year report' if no meeting was held).

One matter which would need to be addressed would be instances where the club was happy to accept a member that the Board would have otherwise refused.

## **7. Use of club premises**

The Board discussed the continued use of club premises for meetings, trials and national competitions. It recognised the financial benefits when compared with hiring hotels and other commercially available rooms.

## **8. County Working Groups**

Due to unexpected circumstances GS left the meeting prior to this item. PS gave a brief summary of the plans for the pre-AGM discussion to which members of the counties in the regions which were not active had been invited. GS reported to the Board by email that evening in which he said that all but one county in the Eastern region would be attending the discussion. Only a handful of counties from the other regions had confirmed their attendance, and he asked the Board members in those areas to contact those who had yet to reply to encourage them to attend. Whilst a suggested agenda had been proposed to the counties in the initial invitation, GS was keen that they discuss whatever topics they wished. To that end PS had contacted those from the Eastern region who were attending to ask them to suggest matters they wished to cover – to date no appropriate responses had been received.

## **9. Social media**

### **9.1 Guidelines for committee members**

The draft code of conduct for members of EBU committees which had been circulated was approved. This was to be passed to the Chairs of each Standing Committee for them to circulate amongst the members of their committee. It would also be added to the policies on the EBU website.

### **9.2 Draft policy**

A draft social media policy was circulated. It was approved, pending some minor amendments which were suggested. JD would make these updates and the final version would be passed to the Chairs of each Standing Committee for them to circulate amongst the members of their committee. It would also be added to the policies on the EBU website.

## **10. WBF/EBL matters**

JD reported that the EBL had announced the reassignment of medals from the European Championships in 2014, with Monaco promoted to first, and the England team to second. The Board

expressed surprise and disappointment at the decision to promote Monaco to the vacant gold medal position.

**11. Any other business**

JD expressed thanks on behalf of the Board to PS for his work taking minutes of the meetings over the previous five years.