



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED
AT ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION, BROADFIELDS, BICESTER ROAD, AYLESBURY, HP19 8AZ
ON WEDNESDAY 11th JUNE 2019**

Present:

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

Rob Lawy (RL)
Ron Millet (RM)
Graham Smith (GS)
Gordon Rainsford (Chief Executive) (GR)
Sam Kelly (Minutes) (SK)

1. Apologies for Absence

None

2. Minutes of the Meeting 23rd January 2019

a. Accuracy

None

b. Matters arising

The use of Gumtree to sell Bridge Warehouse products, was discussed. Sue Humphries has been asked to pursue the viability of this option.

3. Finance Report

i. Proposed changes for 2020/2021

JC had circulated a report prior to the meeting, he highlighted some aspects of his report.

There was a good discussion at the County Chairman's meeting relating to the budget and balance. The majority of those present were against service cuts. It was decided instead to move the diary to an opt-in system from 2020, the process of which is currently in hand. It is expected that this will result in half the current cost for the printing and posting of the diary. The cost of Master Points is also being reduced by streamlining the process. The Chairmen present were reasonably in agreement regarding the 2p increase that the draft budget requires. For every 1p increase, this gives an approximate extra £18k for the budget.

JC also talked about the discussions in the County Chairmen's meeting around reducing the costs for International teams and the matter of sponsorship for these events was raised.

JC was able to provide early figures for 2019/2020, with Universal Membership (UM) income £5k ahead of target. The previous year 2018/2019 was also reported to have finished on a small upward trajectory so this may, hopefully, be a trend. The Bridge Warehouse reported marginally above on the top line (sales) but below on the bottom line (costs), the extra sales from non-members was not

enough to offset the fall in margin. However, overall the treasurer expressed satisfaction at the start to the current financial year due to the unexpected increase in UM income.

ii. Final Accounts 18/19 (first cut)

JC stated that the surplus for 2018/2019 year-end was bigger than expected, this was due to a National Insurance tax rebate going back over 5 years. This surplus has now been built into last year's numbers, with auditors aware of the details. The formal accounts will require a couple of small changes, with distribution and formal endorsement to take place in September. JC confirmed there will be no surprises with the changes.

4. Chief Executive's Report (including IT Report) (GR)

GR had circulated a report prior to the meeting. He highlighted some aspects of his report.

Staffing

GR started by commenting that hopefully we are coming to the end of an unprecedented period of change in staffing, the final two members of staff still set to leave are Ian Mitchell (IM) and Bev Purvis (BP). It was noted that IM has been employed by the EBU for 20 years. Jonathan Lillycrop will take over from BP and will also take on some of IM's responsibilities. The rest of IM's responsibilities will be split between Nick Doe (ND), who will support with Laws and Ethics, and Nicole Cook (NC) who will work from home.

RL questioned JL's role and how much of it would be EBED related, as BP felt that she was asked to field a lot of queries relating to EBED without a lot of knowledge of their work or processes. He mentioned the Teaching and Learning Advisory Group and asked if it would be beneficial for JL to attend. After some discussion around the purpose of the group it was decided that GR will talk to JL about possibly attending.

GR noted that EBED's free club teacher training courses have been welcomed and successful. There have been a few problems with people booking online for the free places, which are being resolved by changes in procedure and clearer information about booking on the EBED and EBU websites. Feedback from the teacher trainers is that the calibre of the attendees has gone up. EBED have increased the number of courses and nearly all are full or close to full.

RM asked what happens after the course, if there is any help for new teachers or any statistics on how many start teaching. The board decided that this would be useful information to have and possibly should be addressed by sub-committee.

Competitions

The competitions have improved recently. Easter was a successful congress in London, as although there was a new venue, it was well attended and received positive feedback. This was followed by an extremely successful Spring Fours, which saw the highest level of entries for 20 years. There is however a problem as next year's Bank Holiday has been moved to coincide with VE Day, so GR is looking at possible changes to the format. GR cautioned that the contract with the hotel that both the Spring Fours and the Bank Holiday congress are held at, is due for renewal in 2021 and that they are looking to put their price up by 50%.

Website & App

The upgrading of the website has slowed down due to uncertainty over the type of upgrade required. Initially it was intended to upgrade from Drupal 7 to Drupal 8, however this now seems too time consuming and costly at this point and it would be better to improve the website using Drupal 7 and then upgrade to Drupal 8 in 4 – 5 years' time when the EBU will have time to prepare. The original timescale for completion was to be complete by the end of 2019, however, this may need revising. The EBU App is also being worked on, it should be ready in the next couple of months. The first iteration of the App will allow members to login to MyEBU and view some of the most looked at information, including their NGS and master points.

5. Committee Code (IP)

IP stated that the Committee Code approved last November 2018 by the Board has had some minor changes, nothing major. He noted that the code exists to remind people on committees should be mindful of their behaviour on social media and in public.

The Board approved the amendments, although asked that the introductory paragraph be taken out of the formal code as it was not necessary. Following approval, IP will make the minor amend and add to the website.

Note: IP will provide a further minor revision to the next meeting so that the policy also applies to comments made about EBED

6. EBED Matters (JD)

6.1 New Trustees

JD started by confirming that there have been some changes to the EBED board of trustees. Two of the new trustees are in the teaching and learning area and will help improve the number and quality of teachers. The third new trustee has expertise in fundraising and sponsorship, which EBED will need going forward.

6.2 EBED progress

JD referred to the enclosed report from the Chief Executive of EBED to the trustees, which outlined details of changes to come. This includes the process of updating the materials that EBED provides, including books and lesson notes as a number of these as now dated. EBED are also looking at the possibility of including a kindle or e-learning version of books. Lorna Watson (LW) of the teacher's association (EBTA) noted that progress had been made with Bridge for All, their data base, the quality of teachers and the teachers assessments. JD advised there is cause for optimism in the progress report from EBED. He agreed with the changes to EBED's finances from the EBU, and the EBU should have a say in the areas of development e.g. teaching and services. It was proposed that rather than one complete block of funding, the EBU provides some of its funding in smaller chunks for clearly defined projects. The EBU board should be clear with EBED about the requirements for any funding provided and any future funding.

The report overall is welcomed and future funds given to EBED from the EBU will be tied to measurable outcomes. JD noted that the EBU board need to decide the level of input to EBED and the linkage between the EBU and EBED. RM mentioned the possibility of a service Level agreement between the two organisations. It was decided to set up a small working group to preliminarily report to the September meeting consisting of RM GF GS & RL.

7. Volunteer Policy (RL)

RL provided a draft of a volunteer policy and asked the board for their opinion and steer on the matter. It was discussed who should be considered a volunteer for the EBU, it was decided that club and county volunteers would not be included, but that the clubs and counties could use the EBU Volunteer Code as a template if they wished.

RL noted a number of rights and responsibilities that he thought should be included and referred to the enclosed draft code. Following a discussion about the details of what should be included in the code, it was decided that RL along with GR should create a final draft with view for approval at the next meeting.

8. Strategy next steps (JC)

JC started by stating that there was expectation from the Working Groups that the EBU would be transparent about progress or otherwise. The current status is not in a positive position everywhere. This is due both to outside issues and to a limit on available resource. With this in mind it was decided to review all the current objectives to check current progress and if necessary review objectives.

Sustaining and Increasing Membership

- Involve up to 6 counties during 2019 in focused Membership Campaigns

We are struggling with the above action point due to counties engaging. The team was therefore looking at other solutions, which may become building blocks for the above.

- Develop and respond to requests for alternative models, including groups of materials to assist Clubs and County boundaries
- Set up, through our Membership Development Officer, by April 2019 a bank of materials to assist Clubs and Counties to promote food practice in recruiting and retaining members, including converting students to become playing members

Above action points on track

Governance and Relationships

- Introduce a May formal half-year report to shareholders, whilst streamlining the number of meetings
- Complete by May 2019 the setting up and meeting of at least 1 more Regional County Working Group, and by November 2019 hold the first meeting of a National County Working Group or equivalent

The first objective had been met. On the second, we will be unable to meet timescales and may need an alternative approach. Counties have been unwilling to meet, except Somerset and Avon. GS will reformulate the objective.

Financial Sustainability

- Put together a budget for 2019 at a small profit, whilst keeping price increases below RPI inflation

JC has amended the above with board approval, but it is on track taking 18/19 and 19/20 together..

- Formally review by September 2019 the performance and strategy for the Bridge Warehouse, following recent improvements, with a view in 2020/21 to returning profitability at or close to 2018/19 levels (excluding the additional law book sales)

The objective was now stretching with margins increasingly squeezed. GS to complete a review and amend the above.

Tournaments and Regulations

- Conduct a review by October 2019 of our tournament schedule and pricing to ensure it is both sustainable and meeting the needs of Members

IP and GR are planning to have a seminar at the Eastbourne Summer Meeting to discuss this with members

International Teams

- Building on the success of fund-raising for China 2018, launch at least one major fund-raising or sponsorship activity during 2019

The above is slow going but on track. If, however, more teams continue to qualify for more events then we will struggle to fund within the available cash. It was noted it is easier to raise funding for junior events. Two strands of action for fund-raising; sponsor of events and funding of teams.

JD asked for a report at the next meeting even if the outcome of the report is no sponsorship. GF to organise this.

- Rebrand and promote our Bridge England Sim pairs to focus on funding junior international development

The above action is being completed.

Technology

- Update EBU website for launch in early 2020

Slight slowdown with progress, but no change in target needed at this stage.

- Introduce an EBU app by autumn 2019

The app may be slightly delayed but mostly still on track, no change in target needed at this stage.

- Phase in improved technology to support our tournaments including desktop dealers to replace dealing for EBU events, and robots to avoid set-outs, timing dependent on develop timescale

Desktop dealers are becoming less desirable. Robots continue to be rolled out to avoid the need for sit-outs.

Employees

- Provide during 2019 personal development plans for interested employees
- Extend range of employee benefits where economically advantageous to employees and the EBU

Karen Durrell (KD) has been overworked due to staffing shortages, but will be looking at this and there is no need for a change in targets at this stage.

Volunteers

- Introduce by October 2019 a code for Volunteers
- Introduce by the start of 2020 a support package to develop and help our volunteers

The above actions are on track but the support package is a bit of a stretch and may be pushed back a few months.

Archives

- Continue to increase the data etc. available in our archives

The above action is proceeding, albeit slowly; JD is to continue his input even after stepping down as Chairman.

- Improve by 2020 our storage and access to materials, documents etc. to enable easier retrieval

The materials for the above points have been uploaded to Google shared drive, now there needs to be a change in culture and for people to start using them.

The Annual Report will feature comments about strategy and progress to date. JD to ensure this.

9. Membership (RM)

Tim Anderson (TA) gave a short presentation highlighting the current status of the membership campaign. He started by explaining why he was unable to provide solid statistics for the campaign. He went on to describe how the current ageing membership and demographic is an issue in that new members are not competing at the highest levels of competition, they are put off by the competitive aspect and prefer the social side of bridge. The EBU needs to adjust to this new climate, the goal should be to shake off the unfriendly image and turn it around.

He noted there is good news, in that wherever bridge is taught, there is a ready take up of lessons, but resource continues to be the main issue for smaller clubs. He noted that students take two to three years to become regular session players, and the conversion from classroom to club room is a big issue.

TA described his EBU Assured concept, but explained that due to his limited time constraints and resource he is still in the preparation stage and he would need more help if the Board decided it should be completed sooner. GR is to arrange a meeting with JL, TA, SK and himself for July, looking to put more details in place.

10. Award Nominations

a. Diamond Awards

Discussion to be had in September's meeting

b. Tony Priday Award

This would also be decided at the September meeting

c. Silver Award

JD noted that counties can suggest nominees, with the criteria for nominations available on the website.

Final decisions on all above awards to be made in September meeting.

d. Others including Junior Awards

GF stated that squad leaders have been asked to make suggestions with a view to a presentation at the Summer Meeting.

11. BGB Matters

Nothing to report

12. Bye Law Changes (AG)

GR had received a request that the club model constitution be updated with regard to disciplinary procedures and he had asked AG to look at this at the same time as considering changes to the bye-laws to allow the EBU to refuse membership in certain circumstances. Final wording to be agreed in September.

13. AOB

GR wanted to make everyone aware of fraudsters targeting bridge clubs with scam emails. The EBU has sent communications out to all club officials asking them to remain vigilant and also added a news article online. Despite this one or two clubs have experienced difficulty.

Next Meeting: 11th September 2019