



**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 23rd JANUARY 2019**

Present:

Ian Payn (Vice Chairman) (IP)
Jerry Cope (Treasurer) (JC)
Gillian Fawcett (GF)
Anthony Golding (AG)
Rob Lawy (RL)

Ron Millet (RM)
Graham Smith (GS) (present for items 1-6 & 9)
Gordon Rainsford (Chief Executive) (GR)
Sam Kelly (Minutes) (SK)

1. Apologies for Absence

Jeremy Dhondy (Chairman) (JD)
Heather Dhondy (HD)

2. Appointment of Directors for 2019/20

Up to two vacancies for board members can usually be co-opted. In 2018 there were three co-opted members of the board, owing to a resignation. One of the co-optees had stepped down, another elected to the Board at the AGM, leaving one remaining. That member, GF, was co-opted again. The Officers had approached a potential candidate but he had politely declined.

RL stated that it would be nice for a young person to fill a role. This was agreed generally but GR noted that the financial liability attached to a position such as this might be an impractical commitment for young people.

3. Minutes of the Meeting 31st October 2018

3.1 Accuracy

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

3.2 Matters arising

JC reported some social media issues, asking if the social media policy was available on the website, under Policies. It was confirmed that it is but that it may be hard to find and will be looked into. RM questioned whether the social media policy had been circulated to clubs and counties and if they ought to be. GR and SK to discuss following the meeting the best way to distribute the policy. IP pointed out that the policy was aimed more at volunteers at national and county level, and that the further removed volunteers were from that the less relevant it became. RM stated that maybe the guide Best Behaviour at Bridge was more relevant and should be drawn to members' attention.

4. Chief Executive's Report (GR)

GR had a circulated a report prior to the meeting.

Complaints and Disciplinary matters

An update was given on the Avon court case, which had found in favour of the county, and since 14 days have now elapsed with no new details being presented an appeal is unlikely. The related complaint that was pending the outcome of the court case has been triggered and is in progress.

Competitions

The Point-a-Board competition numbers were disappointingly low with only 15 teams compared to 20 the previous year. However, the overall event ran very well. RL asked about senior events and questioned the location of the Seniors' Congress. GR responded that while the Autumn congress was successfully moved to a new location, the Seniors Congress had resulted in some refunds for dinner due to the location being inadequate. GR will look into this for next time. Members apparently pine for Daventry, a location they reportedly hated when we actually used it. RM invited GR to have a discussion with David Guild (DG) who has produced some research that most members only attend one congress a year and the EBU should focus on getting those that already attend a congress, to attend more. GR's instinct was that the statistic was not helpful but that he was happy to talk to DG in any event.

The clashing of competitions and trials was discussed. GF stated that there are a lot of events to avoid, especially the USA events, when setting trials dates. This year was deemed more difficult for dates due to the volume of events requiring trials. It was agreed that the trials dates should not unduly impact Counties events. A possible solution was that seniors' trials could be held mid-week. Another idea was to hold later trials, although concern was expressed that this could affect players' lead-in times. GR confirmed that counties had accepted the scheduling of events this year but that next year this needs to change and be more thought out. GF stated they could try to plan two to three years in advance to alleviate the problem. There was a general consensus that the EBU should be trying to help counties, and that forcing change upon them when circumstances demanded it was regrettable and to be avoided wherever possible.

The Blackpool Year End congress location is still an issue: a new location is still being sought.

Staffing

Matters relating to the Aylesbury staff were discussed.

Club Liaison

The recent teacher training courses were discussed, with an example from Bev Purvis (BP) and her visit to Abbey Smith's bridge club.

It was discussed about the philosophy of non-affiliated clubs such as Andrew Robson's. GR advised their club philosophy appears to be to keep members in one club, providing a nice environment with simple bidding and social bridge. IP stated it is not a business plan of use to the EBU as there is no income from members staying in their own clubs.

Bridge Warehouse

GR is to meet a Polish supplier in Turkey.

Workbooks and Eiger

The problems with Workbooks and Eiger systems was discussed, with a resolution hoping to be seen early this year.

EBED

GR was positive about a good start to the new year for EBED. RL agreed that he had spoken to EBED's new chair Andy Margetts (AM), with a positive outcome. It was also agreed that the new EBED website looks very good, with GR noting that this work was completed by Adam Lugmayer (AL). IP reported a meeting with AM at which new SLAs and priorities were agreed, along with the moving of the budget from a block grant to a half block grant and half funding for specific projects.

JC iterated that priority should be increasing membership and not to over target EBED.

Other

There was a general discussion about moving forward with an update to the EBU web site. The appointment of a small group of stakeholders to help with specifications, specifically sorting out look and feel, functionality and the back end, was discussed.

Consultation about refusing membership

It was noted that the club concerns are the same as the board concerns and that this gave a clear mandate as to how to progress.

Awards for club volunteers

In response to a query about awards for volunteers at club level It was agreed that this should be handled by the Counties.

JC referred to the issue of GDPR contracts with clubs and counties. Legal advice had been sought and this was expected to calm the concerns of those clubs who felt GDPR was making life very difficult for them.

5. Financial Matters (JC)

5.1 Treasurer's Report & November Management Accounts

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

It was reported that Warehouse margins were down on budget in December, although sales are up. Universal Membership has stabilized. Competitions entries are down. The current model needs adjustment, because competitions and the shop can no longer fund international events. Universal Membership needs to fund the internationals program. It was also noted that qualifications are now more generous with more people qualifying for international events, which automatically increases the pressure on the current model. JC suggested that we should have a more realistic model and a four-year plan, with the focus on the main problems of the competitions and shop.

GS noted that the market is now more fractured and there is retail malaise. The EBU needs to work with the big clubs and competitors with regards to buying prices. It is a reality that in the long term we will not make as much profit.

GR noted that we had previously tried selling on Amazon with no discernible profit. This may have been due to the approach taken and a second attempt may be worthwhile.

The reasons for the decline in competition entries was discussed, with possible factors being new members not interested in competitions and the price of entry.

A new approach to running national competitions is being trialed this year, with the Masters Pairs being hosted in clubs across the country and the EBU charging £5 per player. It is hoped this new approach will work, if so it could be extended to other pairs events such as the National Pairs and the Portland Pairs. It was agreed that this may be the way forward as it will be relatively cheap for clubs to run and will ease new members into playing in a national competition, for a fraction of the higher fees of some other national events. It was also discussed that some members prefer to travel overseas with bridge holidays for their competitions or the higher standards of bridge at competition level may put people off, as this can be intimidating. It was decided that a review was called for.

5.5 2019/2020 Budget

JC noted a pension change in government policy taking place from April 2019 from 5% to requiring a minimum total contribution of 8%. It was proposed that the current employer and employee contributions both rise from 3% to 4%

GF questioned if the 1% increase in the pension budget could be afforded, and to make sure the increase was being permitted for the right reasons. GR confirmed that the current wage bill was somewhat under £1m. JC responded that a split of 4%/4% was part of being a good employer. There is also no news of if the government pension policy is likely to increase above the 8%. GR reported that Tournament Directors are reasonably paid.

JC confirmed costs are down year on year and we are continuing to improve productivity. RM questioned whether international funding should be reduced further. JC noted that that was an argument for the Selection Committee.

RM considered the idea of making the English Bridge magazine fully digital. GR and others noted that this may impact advertising.

JC finished by reminding the board that the year-end was approaching and the expense forms are required after the March meeting.

6. Disciplinary Panel & Prosecution Panel 2019-20 Confirmation

The DP and PP were confirmed. Steve Barnfield is to step down as pro bono advisor with immediate effect. Joy Mayall has kindly consented to take his place.

9. County Working Group – Update re: New Groups (GS)

GS confirmed that the pre-AGM meeting went very well and that more meetings of a similar nature should be sought. South West have tried their best but only got responses from Somerset and Avon. There is a possibility that South West might join the Midland County Working Group.

7. EBU Strategy Review (JC)

There are not many numbers in our strategy plan: an annual plan will be produced and will look to be available for the first week in February. This plan will look to reflect comments and suggestions made by counties. JC requested comments to be submitted over the next week, end date of the 30th January. More allocation of responsibility within the board was noted, the full list to be published.

8. Membership Update (RM)

Whilst the new website by Membership Development Officer Tim Anderson (TA) met with general approval, there were suggestions that too many hurdles to access might be off-putting.

Whilst the Yorkshire campaign continues with some success, other counties are slow to follow. The Merseyside and Cheshire Regional Development Officer (RDO) has resigned because they felt that they were not being supported, and their efforts not met positively. Somerset have now appointed a new RDO, Northants are keen to acquire one.

Norfolk has a new website; Oxford and Cheltenham clubs are running their own membership development campaign. Different approaches are being taken and TA is happy with this flexibility of county to county.

GF questioned why TA's website requires a log-in. GR stated that some discussion had taken place regarding the log-in requirements and that TA felt it better for clubs to approach him first so that he could lend assistance as required. There are also concerns regarding non-affiliated clubs having access to the resources if it does not require a log-in. GF noted that while this was a good approach, it was important to stop unnecessary barriers, for example to make the email address a direct link or having a registration form available for completion by clubs. *(This has now been done.)*

RM also highlighted the need to training of regional development officers, such as class to club training. It was also noted that most new clubs start from a class environment and the students or teacher setting up the club for a specific group. RM noted the problem of "bridge deserts" e.g. Southampton having no affiliated clubs, and the importance of finding people with the drive to expand club membership and run new clubs.

10. Agenda for County Chairman's Meeting May 2019

The board is keen that the Chairmans' Meeting in May should be a productive replacement for the shareholders' meeting. JD is to solicit topics for discussion from the counties themselves, and it was requested that board members think about topics that would be suitable for the meeting and provide suggestions to JD or IP. The meeting may be expanded to some shareholders or secretaries if the chairs delegate to them or bring them as a guest. It should be a meeting where people are open and receptive to ideas, where decisions and a way forward can be agreed.

The membership campaign should be discussed at the meeting, and should be broken into manageable issues as it may be that the counties see it as a problem too big to solve. They will need substantive support from the EBU to tackle the biggest problems.

11. BGB Representative 2019-20

JD has stated his desire to continue in his role as BGB Rep. and to continue subsequent to his stepping down from the board if it was deemed suitable.

12. Any Other Business

None

