



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED
via Zoom 4th November 2020

Present:

Ian Payn (IP)	Rob Lawy (RL)
Gillian Fawcett (Vice Chairman) (GF)	Ron Millet (RM)
Jerry Cope (JC)	Bev Purvis (BP)
Gordon Rainsford (Chief Executive) (GR)	Patrick Shields (PS)
Anthony Golding (AG)	Sam Kelly (Minutes) (SK)
Kiat Huang (KH)	

1. Apologies for Absence

None

2. Minutes and Approval from last meeting

2.1 Accuracy

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

2.2 Matters Arising

None

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 Bye-Laws should be added to the agenda. The proposed changes to the bye-laws will be discussed and voted for at the AGM.

An item giving an update on the Strategy will be included. This will be for comment, not shareholder approval.

3.2 Chair's Annual Report 2019-20

IP confirmed he would write an annual report, to be presented verbally at the AGM.

4. Chief Executive's Report (GR)

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

He advised the Board that the BBO price increase started at the beginning of this month. It is difficult to judge at this stage the impact of this increase, due to the small time scale involved and the system issues BBO have had over the last few days.

GR noted that upcoming EBU events taking place online include the Tollemache and the Year End Congress. With decisions needed to be made three months ahead, GR also asked the Board for their

approval to run the National Point-a-Board Teams event online in January. Other competitions discussed were the Ranked Masters Pairs, the Harrogate Congress and the Tollemache Final, with decisions about these events needed by the end of this month. The trials for the Camrose and Lady Milne may also be run online if necessary.

Matters relating to the Aylesbury staff were discussed.

Following a question from PS, GR provided a brief update on the Executive Working Groups. A meeting is due to take place on Friday 6th November with GR, KH, Cathryn Fox (IT) and Teresa Brookes (Marketing). GR noted that for the business side of the working groups there has been no-one yet suitable for the position, this will be a discussion for the meeting on Friday 6th.

5. Payment Services

KH proposed the EBU should create a new payment services platform to increase revenue. This could be used for clubs, counties and members to make payments for services, such as bridge games, event organisers, teachers, clubs and counties. There would be a flat fee for using the service. It would be an independent platform, which may encourage people to play online if they do not want to make payments to third party vendors. This may be welcomed by clubs who struggle to accept payments from members for online games.

Following discussion, it was agreed that there was sufficient interest to investigate the suggestion further. This will be headed by KH, with assistance from PS, BP, RL, RM and EBU staff.

6. Financial Matters (JC)

6.1 Treasurer's Report & September Management Accounts

JC had circulated a report prior to the meeting, he highlighted some aspects of his report. He confirmed that as expected the deficit has improved this month. However, he cautioned that the payments to the World Bridge Federation (WBF) and the European Bridge League (EBL) have not yet been processed. The deficit is approximately 50k for the first half of the year. He concluded with a cautiously positive note, the latest lockdown is potentially good news from an EBU stand point as there will be an extension to the government furlough scheme for EBU staff and people may be more likely to play bridge online over the winter.

It was noted that UMS is currently at about 40% of the pre-Covid revenue. It was noted that lost revenue from competitions and the Bridge Warehouse is balanced by reduced costs in those areas, but UMS income is the main source of paying for our fixed costs. This has been balanced by trying to reduce these fixed costs, for example with staff redundancies.

Options for increased income were discussed, including, encouraging more members to play online and pushing Direct Membership in the New Year. The option of a donation button on the EBU website was highlighted.

It was suggested that more competitions could be run online and that this should continue following Covid. There could also be the option for mixed online and face to face events. The Marketing Working Group will look into publicising the Year End Congress along with future events.

6.2 Schedule for 2021/22 Budget Preparation

JC had circulated the schedule for the Board to note. He stated that the budget planning is more difficult than in previous years; in particular income is difficult to forecast in the current economic climate.

6.3 UM Fees & Structure 2021

JC had circulated the outcome of the UM consultation and proposals prior to the meeting. He highlighted that the outcome of the consultation was clear; there is no appetite for change at the current time, although there were strongly held views by a minority.

JC confirmed the EBU policy is to try to make a small profit over four years, and in any one year to not increase UM by more than RPI. JC proposed that he will strive to have no increase in UM in 2021, but will ask the shareholders at the AGM to agree for the Board to have ability, with appropriate notice and reasoning, to increase by up to 1p during the year, if necessary.

Following discussion, it was agreed that JC would also include in his paper, the option for counties to potentially provide rebates to clubs or members from their element of UM.

JC added that, as part of 201/22 budget planning he was proposing that the English Bridge magazine will be reducing the number of on-line issues per year from six, to four.

7. Cheating

IP gave an update on the prevalence of cheating found in EBU games. He confirmed that due to the current processes, cases are not being dealt with in a sufficiently acceptable time frame. This will hopefully be addressed with the proposed changes to the bye-laws. Currently, people who are under suspicion are still able to play in EBU games until they have been convicted and sentenced.

KH asked how many hours each case takes. It was estimated to take approximately 20 volunteers hour per case, before it is heard by the prosecution panel. Following prosecution panels, it was estimated to be 30+ hours before appeal. [Following the meeting, Sarah Bell provided an estimated time per case of 30+ hours, with complex cases running much longer - certainly into three figures for at least one case]

8. EBED – Update

No formal report from EBED was provided. GF confirmed EBED are continuing with a strategy update and there has been no update since the previous meeting.

9. Bye-Law Changes

AG noted the proposed changes provided to the Board would be modified as the current version is slightly cumbersome and duplicated. The essence of the proposal, apart from some tidying up, is that once somebody has been convicted at a hearing, their sentence effectively starts immediately, whether or not they appeal, and members will not be able to play during the appeal process. There will also be a tightening of the timetable, generally a seven-day reduction of some processes. The changes do not stop people who are being investigated from playing. GF asked for the EBU to fall in line with the WBF and EBL rules, which state, if people are under investigation, they can't play during the investigation. There was discussion regarding at which point during the disciplinary process members should be suspended from play.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the proposed changes should be amended to provide that upon charge a player should not play in any EBU or online club games, and will be ineligible for international selection, until the outcome of the case has been finalised. In this case the details of the charge would not need to be made public. If the accused member plays while under the interim suspension, this may be added as an additional charge, and the initial charge will be made public. The length of any interim suspension would be deducted from the duration of any suspension or ban

given on conviction. AG will finalise the bye-law changes. The amendments proposed with regards to cheating will be decided separately at the AGM.

AG will clarify the wording relating to observers allowed at hearings.

BP also noted that additional amendments will need to be made to the Terms of Affiliation, UM Guidance notes and the EBU Licensing and Master Points Handbook, following amendments to the bye-laws.

10. Calendar of Meetings for 2021

The proposed dates had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Board agreed a change to the proposed date for the September Board meeting – this would be Thursday 9th September.

It was agreed that the 12th January Board meeting will be held online, not face to face. The only potential face to face meeting will be the strategy meeting.

11. Clubs

There was a brief update about clubs, some clubs are still yet to create an online presence. GR confirmed that Tim Anderson (TA) is now contacting these clubs via telephone and offering assistance.

PS asked if the clubs are able to have representation on the Board. While BP currently has responsibility for clubs, it was agreed that direct input from a club representative may be beneficial. BP agreed more direct representation for clubs would be welcomed by clubs. This person will be chosen with input from the clubs.

AG confirmed that currently the Board has filled the maximum number of possible co-opted members allowed within the current Articles of Association. AG will draft an amendment to the Articles of Association to increase this number. The club representative co-opted position will exclude serving County Officials and Shareholders.

Following amendments to the Articles of Association, the Board will then discuss further steps.

12. CWG

PS gave a brief update from the County Working Groups (CWG). He noted that the Midlands CWG has been having regular meetings every two weeks, with minutes from these meetings being added to the EBU website. PS confirmed that the broader topics covered by the Board are also generally discussed at the CWG meetings.

RM stated that the Northern CWG is due to have a further meeting shortly.

PS has had communication with other CWG regions. He noted little appetite and momentum in some regions, but the Midlands CWG are providing support to additional regions, particularly in the South. The Midlands meetings are currently being attended by an average of 15 people, with 8 from the Midlands area and 7 from further afield.

13. EBL/WBF Matters

IP reported that the WBF elections have taken place, three new people have been elected to the WBF committee.

14. Any Other Business

Next Meeting: Tuesday 12th January

FEBU