



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED
via Zoom 9th September 2020

Present:

Ian Payn (IP)

Gillian Fawcett (Vice Chairman) (GF)

Jerry Cope (JC)

Gordon Rainsford (Chief Executive) (GR)

Anthony Golding (AG)

Kiat Huang (KH)

Rob Lawy (RL)

Ron Millet (RM)

Bev Purvis (BP)

Patrick Shields (PS)

Sam Kelly (Minutes) (SK)

1. Apologies for Absence

None

2. Minutes and Approval from last meeting

2.1 Accuracy

Correction - KH was present at the previous meeting.

2.2 Matters Arising

None

3. Financial Matters

a. Treasurer's Report for July 2020

JC circulated his report prior to the meeting. JC noted an unusually long set of papers.

Treasurer's report for July. Remarkably the EBU nearly broke even for the first four months of the year. This was due to better than expected competitions receipts and the support from the Government, which was at its maximum. The Bridge Warehouse also performed better than expected. However, looking forward, the government support is running down.

There are also two large bills due to be paid in December - the World Bridge Federation and the European Bridge League. In addition, a VAT bill is due in March 2021. This means that our cash reserves will fall by approx. £100k. Hopefully this was a pessimistic projection, but would leave the EBU on the minimum amount of reserves, according to the current Board policy. However, JC stated that the EBU still needed to invest for the future, for example in a new EBU website. As a further investment JC proposed paying EBED £3k per month from September to December and get first ten modules of Year Two of Bridge for All in place for January 2021.

The Board approved JC's proposals for making payments to EBED tied to individual projects rather than general funding.

b. 2019/2020 Financial Statements

c. Final draft Management Accounts for year ending 31st March 2020

JC asked for the Board's formal approval of the accounts. He noted that for the first time in many years, there was a management letter from the auditor, raising only minor points relating to items not being signed, and manual input of some data. JC will respond to auditor that these issues will be addressed.

The Board approved the accounts.

d. Reserves Policy

JC gave an overview of current expenditure and reserves and noted that due to current circumstances, the EBU could be in breach of the current reserves policy by January.

JC noted the EBU are required to examine the reserves policy once a year. In March we were clear of the minimum by approx. £100k, and the latest report suggests we will use £100k by Christmas, so will be getting close to reserves policy limit. We need to look further at Q4 this year.

RL asked JC to explain the current reserves policy. JC confirmed not all reserves are cash, and the ratio of liquid reserves to total reserves should not be less than 1.5.

JC would need formal approval from the Board to amend the reserves policy and may need to look at underlying cost areas if the current situation continues. One big asset is the property held in Aylesbury at the current EBU headquarters. It would be possible to raise income on this property by either mortgaging or selling the property, although this would take time.

The board agreed that the current reserves policy was satisfactory, but that it would be kept under review in the coming months and there might need to be some short-term flexibility.

JC noted that an 18-month plan would be more practical than a 4 year plan given the current situation. He will draft this along with a budget for the next financial year.

4 Chief Executive's Report

GR circulated the report prior to the meeting.

GR stated that Pairs Tournaments have performed well online and that online competitions have the potential to outperform face-to-face competitions financially. He confirmed that the Summer Meeting made a discrete profit. Future online congresses should be improved from the lessons learned during the Summer Meeting.

The next competitions planned are the Autumn Congress and the Tollemache Cup. Details will be sent to counties this week.

GR noted that online play could continue for congresses, even if there is a return to face-to-face play. Online play could work well for the Tollemache Cup and the Year End Congresses. The online play could also be in addition to face-to-face play for the latter. GR confirmed that both the Autumn Congress and the Tollemache Cup would be played on the new online bridge platform Real Bridge and this might need updated Online Regulations. More details will be added to the EBU website once available. Test events will also run prior to the first events. GR mentioned the pricing policy has been added to the website, to explain to our members why the price for events has been set at the advertised level.

GR stated that the Covid-19 advice on the website has been updated, following requests from counties to make the EBU guidance clearer. The current Government guidance is not always clear

and we are doing our best to interpret the details and then update the information on the EBU website to reflect this.

Knockout events were discussed. GR confirmed that a few months ago some teams did not wish to continue the knockouts online, but these opinions may have changed. GR will contact teams in ongoing Knockouts. It was also noted that additional Knockouts could be started if the existing ones are not finished online.

5. AGM – Voting Procedures for Elections

GR noted that the legal position regarding online voting has been clarified and that it will be acceptable to hold voting for the AGM online. Karen Durrell (KR) (Office Manager) will confirm the details for the AGM and explain the voting procedures to the Shareholders.

6. Approval of Members of Disciplinary and Prosecution Panels

Formal approval of the Members of the Disciplinary and Prosecution Panels was sought and approved.

7. EBED Update

Andy Margett had supplied a report prior to the meeting.

BP asked about online TD training. It was noted that a few months ago the EBU were completing the online TD training due to lack of resources from EBED. GR said she would feed back to EBED as they may be interested in running online TD training now.

KH noted he has spent a lot of time working with EBED to get their English Bridge School up and running, although this arrangement has now ceased.

8. Membership Update

RM circulated a report prior to the meeting. He confirmed the report relates to the building blocks of the next levels of EBU vision for membership. Membership has become far subtler and more complicated as to whether people are members playing in a club, and this may remain the case for the future due to new ways of playing online. RM asked for comments or questions about his report. PS stated he would be spreading the discussion on strategy on the EBU forums in the near future. RM noted that resources are needed not just for encouraging new members, but for keeping our current members. JC confirmed he is aware of this and agreed that investment in this area is needed. JC noted that in preparing next year's budget, we need to decide where to invest and in what quantities, but that we can't stand still. We will have a better idea of where our priorities lie in the New Year.

GF asked what the routes are for new learners. RM stated that the work that GR is doing needs to continue and that people should be encouraged to start learning online. RM confirmed virtual play is the way forward for a lot of people, so this should be one focus. RM noted a lot of people that had not played in a club are happy to play online, so this group of people may be a potential source of membership.

BP has had much success teaching bridge online and sees that this should be a focus for EBED going forward, with more supervised online play. Counties and clubs may be best placed to capitalise on this type of learn and play. There is a need to help clubs become comfortable with assisted play and expanding their understanding of the options available to grow their club. We should be encouraging and helping them to run the assisted play sessions, possibly with a step by step lesson.

IP suggested BP to run classes for clubs, along with JL (Jonathan Lillycrop). BP to work with JL and PS to produce a plan to push to counties and clubs. BP suggested contacting teachers via counties, as some teachers are not EBTA teachers.

RM asked for any other comments to be directed to him following the meeting.

9. Awards

The nominations for awards were discussed by the Board (in the absence of PS for the submission by his county) as the sub committees for awards were disbanded.

IP noted that although the award winners are usually presented with their glass trophy in person at the AGM, this year the trophies will be sent either to a local club or to their home address.

10. EBL/WBF matters

IP noted that subscription payments to the EBL and WBF has been discussed previously in this meeting.

11. Calendar of Meetings for 2021: Approval

The calendar for 2021 was deferred and to be dealt with via email.

12. Any Other Business

Strategy: PS asked for Board approval of the latest plans for the EBU Strategy document.

GF asked what the next steps are for strategy. PS confirmed he has identified six components to the overall strategy and for each of those we must identify the issues and potential solutions, before deciding the best course of action for each component. This is to be completed over September and October, with a view to having a firm outline at the beginning of November in preparation for the AGM.

Next Meeting: November 4th 2020