###

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held at 19.30 on Teams on Wednesday 10 May 2023

**Present** Cath Fox, Pat Johnson, Marcia Levan-Harris, John McCoy, Paul Mollison, Val Mollison, Ian Moss, Sue Thorburn

**Apologies** Linda Fleet, Ashley Sawyer

1. **Welcome** John McCoy welcomed those present.
2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 8 March 2023** These had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was agreed that the minutes were a correct record of the meeting. A copy was signed on behalf of the chairman.
3. **Matters arising from the minutes not already included in the agenda** No matters arising.

1. **Introduction from Chairman** All the topics John wishes to discuss are included in the agenda.
2. **Reports from Officers**
3. **General Secretary** (Sue Thorburn)

Notice of the AGM has been circulated. An informal bridge session will be arranged on the day if there is sufficient interest.

Cosmetic changes have been made to the constitution. They will be circulated to the committee. Although the changes are small, they will need to go to an AGM for approval.

1. **Treasurer** (Linda Fleet)

**Bank Balance at 31.03.2023**

Barclays £10,416 (£10,442 -31.03. 2022)

Skipton £16,555 (£16,282- 31.03. 2022)

**Essex Competitions**  There was a small loss on the Gwen Herga and, provisionally, on the Championship Pairs. The latter is largely due to paying for the large room at Barleylands which was not needed.

**National Pairs** There was a surplus of £503.

**Results for 2022-23** The overall loss was £900 largely because of an increase in competition expenses of around 150%. This was mainly due to the cost of room bookings following the resumption of F2F. Petra, the independent examiner, has the provisional accounts in preparation for the AGM.

1. **Tournament Secretary** (Val Mollison)

**Competitions** As we don't have anyone with BBO authorisation/training to set up and run BBO events Val had found the administration required to run the National Pairs on BBO very time consuming and we were dependent on Gary Conrad who agreed to run the events. Although it should be easier next time as she now has some experience, she felt we should only run RealBridge events. John will talk separately to Val about how it could be simplified.

With the exception of the Cornell and Fletcher the large room at Barleylands will not be booked. If necessary, entry will be limited to the capacity of the smaller room.

The Cornell winners, Chelmsford, will play in the Garden Cities on 13 May.

1. **Shareholders** (John McCoy)

Nothing to report.

1. **Programme Secretary (**Pat Johnson**)**

It was agreed there would be a handicap competition so the programme is now complete and can be published on the website. Val will arrange room bookings and licenses.

1. **Webmaster** (John McCoy)

John has briefed Sue and she will now routinely update the website. The role will now be part of the Chairman’s and Secretary’s responsibilities and the post of Webmaster will no longer exist.

1. **Essex Bridge Academy** Summer events have been arranged in conjunction with Barleylands.
2. **Herts/Essex joint venture** John has been in touch with Herts so the distribution of funds should be made soon.
3. **Update from Chairman of Selectors**

Ian outlined the way squad selection will be run in the current season. He also described the communication he has had with large clubs in Auckland and Ontario. The possibility of friendly matches with other counties is being considered.

The B are taking part in the NICL final.

Ian’s report is attached.

1. **Essex Leagues** Marcia said the league season had been extended to the end of May to allow matches to be completed. The season will start earlier next year.
2. **Date of next meeting** The next meeting will be held on Teams 7.30pm on 2 August 2023. John then closed the meeting.

Statement to ECBA Committee from Chair, Selection Committee (SC) 10th May 2023

1. Early this year the SC had two major issues to consider, a substantially reduced squad and underwhelming results in the Eastern Counties League (ECL).
2. We decided not to allocate players to the usual three small squads (A/B/C) and instead adopt a one squad approach.
3. The outcome of this would not be inconsistent with the way we have been managing players in the recent past.
4. Some pairs were already playing across divisions and we had also played hybrid pairs, both as a means of encouraging progress and for reasons of expediency.
5. The new policy does little more than formalise what we have already been doing.
6. Concerns were expressed by a few squad members that this policy would disenfranchise players from the old C squad. It Is not the case that we will not use those players. All the division captains can select any of those players as they see fit.
7. Concern was also expressed that promotion of pairs performing well in the ECL would be inhibited. I remind everyone that it has always been the case that players did not move up the divisions purely on their performance in the ECL. Results in regional and national events had, and still have, more significance.
8. The new policy is not an impediment to upward mobility. Division captains will have discretion, match by match, who they want to include in their team.
9. In addition, the SC is well aware who the aspiring players are and will take steps to encourage their progress.
10. We cannot guarantee that a small number of players will not miss getting a least one game in any given season. It has always been the case that not everyone is guaranteed to get a game.
11. The SC will strive to give opportunities to all squad members, and players who aspire to join the ECL squad, to play in representative matches.
12. In pursuit of this we have been in consultation with RealBridge (RB) about our options to play matches further afield. Shireen Mohandes at RB is very supportive about our plans as they mesh with what is going on in the wider world.
13. Shireen has introduced me to a contact at Auckland Bridge Club New Zealand, which has an on-line membership of 1600, and to Prince Edward County Club, Ontario. Both, time differentials notwithstanding, runs sessions internationally. I am currently in discussion with Auckland and Ontario about the possibility of a representative match. The prospect of a team match, or a combined pairs session with Prince Edward County (both by invitation for the Essex cohort) is very promising and may be arranged fairly soon.
14. I have also approached Devon and Gloucestershire associations about a friendly match as I believe they have a similar interest. Both have indicated they will respond shortly.
15. We envisage that these types of matches will give more diverse and interesting opportunities for Essex members. Initially we would invite our aspiring players from both in, and on the fringe, of the current squad. However, the potential for Essex for all our squad is considerable; we should keep in mind that the ECL is not “the only game in town”. The town is now the world.
16. It is early days with these negotiations but we will push on to make this sort of event happen.
17. I recommend to the ECBA committee that we proceed in the manner I have described.

Ian Moss