
SUSSEX COUNTY CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

A meeting of the Management Committee of the SCCBA took place at Patcham
Community Centre on Thursday 10 May 2012 starting at 7 pm

Present:

Mr M Pool	President
Mrs J Mayall	Chairman
Mr G Stanford	Vice-Chairman & Tournament Manager
Mr D Galpin	Hon Treasurer
Mr D Wheeler	Hon Secretary

Mr D Armstrong, Mr P Bates, Mrs H Beveridge, Mr D Ellis, Mrs A Galpin, Mr N Hardy, Mrs H Kent, Mr R Lowe, Miss J Simpson, Mr A Southwell, Mrs C Watson and Mr M Wotton.

Mrs L Hoskins also attended as delegate for Old Barn Way BC.

Opening Remarks

JM welcomed MC members to the meeting with particular reference to Hazel Beveridge who was attending her first meeting, and to Norman Hardy who returned to the Committee after a year's break. JM recalled her recent e-mail about the importance of spreading as widely as possible the County Association workload. She had received some replies for which she was very grateful and would be following up with others in due course.

AGENDA

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Jackie Clinton, Eddie Williams (Membership Secretary) and John Williams

2. Minutes of the meeting of 13th January 2012

2.1 Accuracy

2.1.1 The following amendments were proposed and agreed:

- Para 2.2.1 – Replace the 4th, 5th and 6th sentences with “JM was very grateful to the Survey Group of Jackie Clinton, Andrew Southwell, Dave Armstrong and Gerry Stanford for their contributions. JM also expressed particular thanks to Mervyn Wotton, who had created the survey document, and to Yves Lebrech, who had made arrangements for publication. The paper version would be issued with the next newsletter in February.”
- Para 2.2.3 – delete the word “also”.

Subject to these changes the Chairman signed the minutes as a true record.

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 DW reported that the actions attached to items 2.2.1, 3, 5.3, 6.4, 6.5.2, 7.1, 7.3, 7.4, 13.2, 14, and 17.3 had all been completed.

2.2.2 Item 2.2.2 License Arrangements for BB and VP Events

GS reported that this issue had been considered before following concerns about the use of weak twos. His view was that the current practice of Level 2 in VP events and EBU simple systems in BB events should continue. Both types of event were intended to encourage those who were newer to tournament bridge. DA observed that the ‘tick-box’ convention card was very widely used in the USA and Europe but the important point was that Organisers and Directors should have discretion. MC members agreed that the Tournament Committee should consider further the possible use of Stratification and/or handicapping. Such measures would help address previous concerns about the more experienced dominating some of these events.

Action - GS

2.2.3 Item 5.2 Selection Committee - Membership

See section 8 below.

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2.2.4 Item 8.2 Bridge Development & Education

DA reported that consideration (with Eddie Williams) of the EBU initiative and the complementary action(s) which the County might pursue had not progressed. DA believed that he needed further support to take this forward. JM invited him to consider who might be approached to take on this work. DW reported that he had indicated to the EBU an outline of the County's possible future approach:

- Past strategy had focused primarily on opportunities for young people. We plan to review the results of that initiative at the end of 2012 to inform a wider strategy for 2013 onwards.
- We wish to develop our strategy in conjunction with the principal teachers in the County. A Management Committee sub-group may be established to drive this forward.
- Core training and development is alive and well at several local Clubs.
- We wish to build on that core activity to improve availability and accessibility.
- There is no central intelligence of that core activity, therefore no understanding of any geographical 'gaps' we should be seeking to fill in conjunction with Clubs in those areas.
- There will also be scope for improving awareness of learning opportunities.

DW agreed to work with DA to prompt progress on these matters in due course.

Action – DW

2.2.5 Item 10.2 Search for Sponsors

JM reported that she had been able to sell a page of the Calendar for £75 – a rate suggested by the Newsletter Editor. Beyond that other attempts to identify sponsors had been unsuccessful thus far. The need to replace cards shortly might provide a specific opportunity for a County-wide business, eg Solicitors or Garden Centres. RL and HK agreed to pursue this accordingly.

Action – HK & RL

2.2.6 Item 17.2 New Year Swiss Teams

MC Members agreed that making this one of the County's Blue Pointed events in 2013 should make it more attractive and thereby increase entries.

3. Chairman's Report

JM said she was extremely pleased with the composition of the new Committee and was looking forward to working with what she saw as a strong team.

4. Proposal for SCCBA HQ

4.1 JM outlined the history of this proposal. According to MC Minutes records it had first been mooted some six years ago and had been discussed at regular intervals since but until now had not reached a decisive position. The previous Chairman had received a call a few weeks ago indicating that, following the Warden Park (Cuckfield) school's change of status to an academy, plans were now emerging for a building project in conjunction with West Sussex BC (WSBC). There was now an opportunity for SCCBA to enter into an agreement with WSBC to create a permanent HQ at least to provide space for furniture/equipment storage and dealing with the additional possibility of rights to a playing area of up to 28 tables at weekends. MP had attended the WSBC AGM (on 24 April) and had discussed matters briefly with Chris Jago who was leading the project on behalf of WSBC. CJ had indicated that if SCCBA wished to take part in the project he would need an indication in principle by the end of May with a broad specification of our space requirements.

4.2 Subsequently, MP had produced and circulated to MC Members a number of documents outlining the history, the options for participation and a broad indication of costs and savings. MP introduced these documents saying that he saw the possibility of SCCBA participation in the project as a "once in a lifetime opportunity". In a wide-ranging discussion of that opportunity a number of points were made:

- How much would we be committing (to pay for plans and any obligations following withdrawal) if we communicate our decision in principle to WSBC by the end of May?

MP had attempted to contact an Architect for an estimate but this was still

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outstanding. MC Members agreed that this needed to be clarified before any commitment could be given.

- Are current arrangements at Patcham under 'threat'? It was suggested that current arrangements with Patcham would continue whilst they were content to act as host to the County but it would be prudent to have an alternative location for dealing, etc in case circumstances changed in future.
- Centralising some competitions may not be popular and may impact on future entries. Conversely, the savings possible from investment in our own playing area might allow us to reduce entry fees and thereby attract more entries.
- The most pressing need was for storage rather than a central playing area. Therefore our involvement should be restricted to the space required for storage alone. Whilst the need for storage was indeed urgent there were significant additional benefits from investment in a central playing area as well.
- Should we use another survey rather than an EGM to consult Members on the proposal? Perhaps but surveys are very expensive and the Constitution suggests the EGM route should be used for a major decision like this.
- This proposal seems only to benefit the tournament players and therefore they should pay for it, not the reserves. Conversely, the reserves have been accumulated over many years from competition surpluses so arguably the use of the reserves is fully justified. P2P fees pay for administration only and the costs of that, particularly for newsletters and the calendar, have risen substantially with the increase in membership numbers following P2P.
- Are there any other realistic locations to achieve the same objectives? Although there might be other locations which could be hired, the WSBC proposal represented an apparently unique investment opportunity to reduce permanently County costs. Current arrangements for storage were wholly unsatisfactory and the furniture/equipment stored was at risk of serious deterioration. A proper environment was needed urgently. In addition, costs of hiring playing areas continue to rise and the proposed investment would allow us to 'lock in' a reduced cost regime.

4.3 MP suggested that the MC should first decide whether it wished to obtain permanent premises because if it didn't there was little point in further discussion of the detail. MC Members agreed and a vote agreeing in principle to pursue permanent premises was carried by 14 votes to 2 with 1 abstention.

4.4 JM suggested that a sub-group should be established to examine the proposal in more detail and report back to the MC at an extra meeting towards the end of May. JM proposed that this group should be chaired by GS working with MP, AS and DG. MC Members agreed. *[Post Meeting Note – Subsequent to the meeting, DG indicated that the other demands on his time made it impossible for him to play a full part in the sub-group's work. He would however be able to input to MC consideration at the next meeting.]*

4.5 Further discussion established that the sub-group would report back on three issues:

- How much would we be committing (to pay for plans and any obligations following withdrawal) if we communicate our decision in principle to WSBC by the end of May?
- In that communication, which option should we indicate as our primary requirement? The sub-group should flesh out the three options already listed as far as possible so that the comparative value for money is clear.
- How does our preferred option match up to a base case option of hiring similar accommodation to achieve the same objectives over the same period, ensuring that the comparison is clearly seen to be like with like.

Action – GS/MP/AS

5. AGM Follow-up

5.1 Resolution on League Promotion/Relegation

MC Members reviewed the vote at the AGM which had been very close. DA observed that the closeness meant that the MC could simply ignore it. Others agreed but indicated that the overall weight of the desire for consistency (as reflected the AGM 2011 poll) would be difficult to ignore. NH proposed that there should be a change to one up/one down for all divisions and this was seconded by CW. A vote was taken and this showed 15 for, 0 against,

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with 2 abstentions. DW asked MC Members to confirm that they did not wish to discuss further the options of either the status quo or two up/two down for all divisions. MC Members agreed unanimously. DG suggested that the one up/one down arrangement should be introduced for a trial period of two years. MC Members agreed. DW would e-mail Muriel Bailey to inform her of this decision and DG would advise Team Captains.

Action DW/DG

5.2 Appointments and Organisers

DW had circulated the list of appointments and organisers for MC approval. Subject to final agreement between GS and Peter Langston regarding his membership of the TC, MC Members agreed. DE observed that he had offered to organise a second competition and GS agreed to discuss that with him outside the meeting.

Action – GS/DE

6. Membership Survey

6.1 JM had arranged with MW for a summary of the results of the Survey to be published on the web site. A similar summary would appear in the next newsletter. The return rate had been a little disappointing at only 5% but this compared well with that achieved by the EBU (3%) and the Readers' Digest (4%).

6.2 The highlights of the Survey had been the strong interest in the establishment of a mentoring scheme, the support for mixed heats and the clear wish for mid-week events. The first of the latter was already planned for 31 October 2012 at Patcham. [*Post meeting note – the location of this event was subsequently confirmed as Henfield*] JS had kindly agreed to lead the co-ordination of mentoring activity and she had already e-mailed those who had volunteered to get their views on the way forward.

6.3 Frank Sansom (a member of Crawley BC) had been selected by draw as the winner of the free entry to a County competition.

7. Treasurer's Report

7.1 DG reported balances of £6887 (current account) and £22739 (deposit account) as at 10 May. These totals excluded a commitment to charity donations (£1100) and included advance receipts in respect of upcoming GP events (£1900). Assuming the need for £4-5000 working capital, only approximately £22000 was available for the possible investment in the HQ Proposal.

7.2 Action was in train to authorise JM as a finance signatory, replacing Jackie Clinton.

7.3 It had been suggested (by Bognor BC) that the County annual financial report should be published on the web site. MC Members agreed.

8. Selectors' Report

DG reported that the Selection Committee was due to meet next on 18 May. This would discuss the possibility of an additional selector. JM and GS indicated that they both hoped to be able to attend that meeting. Other views on the need for independence in the selection process were:

- MP was strongly of the view that no selector should be able to select himself/herself for the Tollemache. DA and NH strongly agreed.
- JM observed that the use of a rolling membership for all MC sub-committees might be advantageous in future. DG and DA agreed but observed that volunteers to serve on sub-committees were in short supply and 'enforced' turnover might present problems.

9. Tournament Committee Report

9.1 Directors' required skills – Progress

DW said that EW had reported at the last Officers' meeting on the continuing initiatives being undertaken to raise County Director skill levels. A further course on Bridgemates was planned for immediately before the autumn congress. In addition, a test paper would be issued to all County Directors to confirm the up-to-dateness of their knowledge/understanding.

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9.2 Competition Rules – Correction Periods

MW had circulated a paper on this subject. MC Members were content for the revised rules to be adopted and published in the Calendar and on the web site.

Action - MW

9.3 Tournament Manager's Report

GS had circulated a paper summarising the returns from 2012 competitions thus far. The overall balance was reasonably healthy. GS advised against any attempt to draw comparisons with other Counties. Sussex had always tried to provide a full range of competitions and other Counties did not necessarily provide the level of comprehensiveness. The TC had not met since the last MC meeting but GS had reviewed various issues with TC colleagues by e-mail.

10. Secretary's Report

DW reported that the 2012/13 Calendar was nearly ready to issue. A recent meeting of those involved had dealt with most of the outstanding issues and DW paid particular tribute to AS for his work in producing the first draft.

11. EBU Matters

DW said that EW had attended a recent meeting of EBU shareholders. The development of the application for charitable status was proceeding and there would be a consultation exercise in this respect shortly.

12. Membership Secretary's Report

12.1 Dual Members and Borderers

DW updated MC Members on this issue. Dual Members were those who had declared another County as their County of allegiance and had paid the required dual membership fee when entering one of our competitions. A separate database of these members was maintained to ensure they were included in County mail shots. Borderers were those who had also declared another County as their County of allegiance and played in a Sussex club (and thereby qualified as Sussex members through the P2P paid fees to the County) but had not sought to enter a competition or had done so but had not been invited to become a dual member. Because the EBU membership details for Sussex excluded these members Sussex had no easy way of identifying them and including them in mail shots. DW had sent an e-mail to Clubs on this subject a few months ago inviting those involved to provide contact details to the Membership Secretary. DW would repeat this invitation from time to time to Borderers a regular opportunity to be included in future mail shots.

Action - DW

12.2 On behalf of EW, DW reported that the County membership total continued to be well over 3000. DW had contacted the EBU as to the precise criteria under which Sussex may justify a fourth EBU Shareholder. The key criterion was the number of members at 31 March 2012. This test would be applied by the EBU on or before 15 August to determine the number of shareholders for each County association for the year beginning 1 September 2012. If required, DW would add to the agenda for the autumn MC meeting regarding the appointment of a fourth shareholder.

Action - DW

13. Newsletter Editor's Report (Item 10)

JM reported that pressure of other commitments would prevent YL attending MC meetings pro tem. The next newsletter was nearing completion and would be issued with the 2012/13 Calendar shortly.

14. Communication Officer's Report

CW indicated that there was nothing specific to report. She continued to draw on the web site for communications material and welcomed any other information from MC Members for press release purposes.

15. Webmaster and Master Point Secretary's Report

15.1 Web Site – Members Only Area

MW had circulated a paper on options for the use of a Members Only area on the County web site. MC Members agreed to the introduction of this facility. Initially it would be based on 'Find a Partner for a County Competition' and if successful used for other purposes in due

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course. MW agreed to monitor content carefully and, if necessary, deal with 'difficult' contributions as appropriate.

15.2 MW reminded MC Members (and through them competition organisers) that the recent changes in P2P arrangements made it essential that EBU numbers were collected from all entrants.

16. Conduct Committee Report

16.1 LH reported that there was no current conduct issues requiring attention.

16.2 In response to a request from JM, LH had established a working group of herself (Chair), AS and Jill Armstrong to review the County Constitution with a view to bringing it fully into line with the EBU model. This group would also look at the criteria for and rewards of County Life Membership and report back on both issues to the MC in due course.

Action – LH

16.3 JM reported that following the recent changes to the conduct and discipline provisions within the Constitution, which made explicit the need for separation between the investigation of a complaint and the judgement of it, she had established a panel from which a number would be selected to act in judgement in future. Jill Armstrong, Tony Harris, Peter Langston, Bill Nicolle, Pyers Pennant and Sheridan Stevens had agreed to be members of this panel.

17. Education Report

DA reported that he planned to take 15 youngsters to the Junior Teach In at Loughborough this year. There was also demand to extend this work to adults. DW referred to the planned review of investments in this area (see paragraph 2.2.4 above) which would prompt consideration of future strategy. JM added that there probably needed to be a link between this work and the emerging approach to mentoring.

18. Charities

JS reported that she had provided an article for the next newsletter inviting ideas for future beneficiaries. PB observed that previously presentations to charities had been publicised through local media benefiting both SCCBA and the charities concerned. He suggested that this should be done again this year. MC Members agreed.

Action - JS

19. Date(s) of next MC meeting(s)

19.1 The next (extra) MC meeting was agreed to be at 7pm on either 24 or 25 May. DA agreed to explore the possibility of holding this meeting at the Adur Indoor Bowling Club.

Action - DA

[Post Meeting Note – The date of this meeting has been confirmed as Thursday, 24 May at the Adur Indoor Bowling Club, Recreation Ground, Old Barn Way, Southwick BN42 4NT]

19.2 The summer MC meeting would take place at 7pm on 19 July at Patcham.

20. Any Other Business

20.1 Equipment Audit

JM had asked Malcolm Wright to review and update as necessary the County's equipment asset records.

20.2 Trophy Management

20.2.1 At their last meeting, the Officers had agreed that closer attention to trophy receipt forms would help avoid the difficulties which HK had experienced over the last year or so. HK agreed and emphasised that competition organisers needed to be reminded to pursue these.

Action - GS

20.2.2 HK said that she was surprised to learn that the recipient of the Gladys Hakki award did not receive anything by way of a memento to keep after the trophy is returned each year. MC Members agreed that this should be considered further at its July meeting.

Action - DW

20.2.3 DA observed that engraving charges were substantial at his club and wondered whether the County had the most competitive source of supply. He had identified an

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engraver near his club whose rates were very competitive and agreed to advise HK accordingly in due course.

Action DA/HK

The meeting closed at 10.10pm