
SUSSEX COUNTY CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

A meeting of the Management Committee of the SCCBA took place at the Adur Indoor Bowling Club, Recreation Ground, Old Barn Way, Southwick BN42 4NT on Thursday 24 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 E Williams	Membership Secretary

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

Mrs J Armstrong and Mr R Roberts also attended as delegates for Old Barn Way BC and Patcham BC respectively.

AGENDA

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Peter Bates, Jackie Clinton, Richard Lowe, Andrew Southwell and John Williams

2. Minutes of the meeting of 10th May 2012

2.1 Accuracy

2.1.1 The following amendments were proposed and agreed:

- Para 2 Heading – The date should read 13th January 2012.
- Para 2.2.2 – Delete the word “no weak twos” in line 2 and replace with “Level 2”.
- Para 5.1 – Insert the word “down” before the word “arrangement” in the antepenultimate line.

Subject to these changes the Chairman indicated that she would sign the minutes as a true record.

2.2 Matters Arising – As this extra meeting had been organised specifically to consider item 3 on the agenda, matters arising from the previous meeting would be rolled forward to the next meeting and would include DA's concern to clarify further the County's policy on BB and VP events.

3. Proposal for SCCBA HQ

3.1 JM welcomed Members to the MC's first meeting at the Old Barn Way BC (OBWBC). It was useful for MC Members to see the building and its environs. She was, however, disappointed that it had not been possible to issue the papers which had been requested at the meeting on 10 May 2012.

3.2 GS agreed that there was benefit in seeing the Old Barn Way location and explained that the information requested from West Sussex BC (WSBC) regarding their proposals had not been forthcoming in sufficient detail to allow an update to that option. Initial discussions had been held with the Adur Indoor Bowls Club (AIBC), who own the building in which OBWBC is situated. These had established that hire charges per person/per session (for playing purposes) were broadly comparable with typical commercial rates. A new storage area was planned and SCCBA's needs could be added at a potentially competitive cost because it was the practice to use volunteer expertise/labour for local building works. The AIBC Clubhouse had been built that way. However, further discussions were needed before a definitive proposal could be presented.

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3.3 Before opening the discussion further. JM alerted MC Members to the results of her discussions with Hon. Counsel for the EBU concerning potential conflicts of interest. Following the MC meeting of 10 May 2012, she had made enquiries as to the approach the MC should use to avoid a conflict of interest on the part of MC Members who were members of Clubs which might be seen to benefit from SCCBA investment. Hon. Counsel's advice was that those who were members of such Clubs could vote on issue/proposals related simply to the storage facility required (because no benefit would accrue to them personally) but should not vote on issue/proposals related to playing areas as the latter would involve some benefit to them as members of the Clubs concerned. Following this advice, she had established that there were 23 entitled to vote at MC meetings, of which 16 would not be entitled to vote on WSBC playing area proposals. DA declared that he would not vote in relation to OBWBC playing proposals. DW added that if and when votes on playing area proposals were planned in future, it would be important to ensure a full attendance as the quorum for MC decisions was five with voting rights.

3.4 A wide ranging discussion followed in which the following key points were made:

- The current estimate of the storage space required by the County was 15 sq.m. DA suggested that a detailed manifest of what was to be stored should be prepared to confirm the sufficiency of 15 sq.m. Currently the equipment assets were thought to be worth £25000.
- The OBWBC location could only be used for bridge tournaments during the summer because of bowls requirements at other times. It did, however, represent another possible playing venue come what may.
- MP had updated the estimated costs of the WSBC storage proposal and the SCCBA area would cost £24000 based on £1350 per sq.m for 15 sq.m. This figure included VAT and would reduce to £21000 if VAT was not applicable. For a building designed to last for at least 60 years, £24000 represented £400 per year and this compared with the current estimate (from MP's own enquiries and those of Peter Langston) of the hire cost of £1300 per year for the same space. If the MC wished in principle to participate in the WSBC project, it needed to signal this by the end of May and spend £1000-£1500 on the development of detailed plans/costings.
- GS questioned the extent of County wide support for investment in a permanent playing area. CW observed that hire rates were rising all the time and the savings from such an investment would only increase over time.
- DW reminded MC Members that for each option to be considered there needed to be a clear view of the value for money compared with competing options and, when that revealed the preferred option, MC Members needed to be able to compare that with 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.
- MP said that producing such comparisons was difficult without a clear view of the events to be held at a County HQ. Based on a selection of the smaller events there were potentially savings of £1600 per year.
- DE questioned whether the County had sufficient funding for playing area investment if the storage area alone would cost £24000. MP indicated that there was the possibility of an application for a Lottery grant and a Members Loan scheme could also be organised.
- RR wondered whether there might be empty public sector buildings which could be used at favourable rates. He also observed that the WSBC proposal was perceived as being of benefit to a relatively small 'section' of the total membership of over 3000 and the pressure to make a quick decision was unhelpful.
- MW questioned the wisdom of 'centralising' a significant number of events. The range of locations currently employed provided the widest choice for those Members who did not like to travel too far. A number of other MC Members commented that the need for storage was clear but the wisdom of indicating agreement to the WSBC proposal was not.

3.5 In light of the last point recorded above, NH proposed a vote on whether the MC should indicate agreement in principle to participate in the WSBC storage proposal. DE seconded.

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The vote was 3 in favour, 5 against with 7 abstentions. GS agreed to continue discussions with WSBC and OBWBC to enable production of clearer proposals. MC Members acknowledged that this decision might mean that the option to participate in the WSBC project would cease to be available after the end of May.

Action - GS

4. Any Other Business

4.1 League Promotion/Relegation

4.1.1 JM reminded MC Members of the previous discussion on this issue and the decision taken at the meeting of 10 May 2012 after a formal vote. Following that DW had written by e-mail to Muriel Bailey (MB) as required and this had prompted a complaint to the EBU Chairman. The latter had excluded herself from consideration of the complaint in light of her membership of the SCCBA and had asked Jeremy Dhondy (JD) (EBU Chair Laws & Ethics Committee) to deal with it. MB had also written by e-mail to League Captains questioning the legitimacy of the decision taken by the MC on 10 May.

4.1.2 JM recounted the details of several subsequent exchanges including a meeting with MB. At that meeting MB had picked up on a suggestion made at the AGM 2012 and indicated that perhaps the MC should alter its decision and introduce two up/two down for all divisions alongside an increased number (8) of teams in each division. Given the unanimous opposition at the MC meeting of 10 May, in her mind JM had seen little prospect of that being accepted but had agreed to take it back to the MC nevertheless. She had also offered as an alternative, subject to MC approval, a compromise of retention of the MC decision of one up/one down for just one year followed by a further review in light of the experience gained and a further vote. This had been rejected immediately.

4.1.3 Alongside these exchanges JD had confirmed that the County Constitution did not require the MC to be bound by the outcome of a vote at the AGM. He had also sought to explore the scope for mediation and, had held discussions with Muriel Bailey and, latterly, in a telephone call made to him by Malcolm Pryor (MPr). JD had offered to act as a neutral arbitrator. Subsequently MPr had indicated that he represented a group he called 'Muriel's Group' and he had documented to JD a set of terms and conditions under which he and Muriel Bailey believed a consultation with all league players might be conducted to test the level of support for each of several options for promotion/relegation. A pre-condition of that consultation was the cancellation of the MC decision taken on 10 May.

4.1.4 JM asked for MC Members' views as to the way forward. DA indicated that he was clear that the MC had done nothing wrong. EW agreed and he believed that the MC should stand firm in its commitment to the original decision. DW agreed and observed that to do otherwise could be seen by others as an abdication of the responsibilities given to the MC when it was elected. Several other MC Members indicated their agreement with the view that the original decision should be maintained.

4.1.5 DW advised that the consequence of standing firm could be a call for an Extraordinary General Meeting and that such a call could only be interpreted as an expression of no confidence in the MC. In those circumstances those who supported a decision to stand firm might feel obliged to resign with damaging and disruptive consequences.

4.1.6 EW proposed a formal vote on the proposition that the MC should stand firm which NH seconded. The vote was 14 in favour, 0 against with 1 abstention. JM agreed to write to JD to inform him of this decision and the background to it. Subject to any further comments he might have, JM would then inform MB of the MC's position.

Action – JM

4.2 Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held at 7pm on 19 July at Patcham BC, if available or Old Barn Way if not.

The meeting closed at 9pm

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