

Oxfordshire Bridge Association

Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting

held on Wednesday 11th March 2015 at 7.30 p.m. at Horspath Village Hall

PRESENT:

Robert Procter [RP]	Chairman
Sandra Nicholson [SN]	Secretary/EBU Shareholder
Claire MacDonagh	Treasurer
Peter Briggs [PB]	Membership Secretary
Chris Dawe [CD]	County Pairs Organiser
David Bygott [DB]	Publicity Officer/Newsletter Editor
Hugh Thomson	Wessex League Secretary
Sandra Claridge	President's/Chester Cups Secretary/EBU Shareholder
John Slater	Team Leader, Selection and County Team Management

John Fleming	Oxford	Lorraine Jones	Summertown
Kathy Talbot	Oxford	Peter Owen-Smith	Summertown
Matthew Wilkinson	Oxford	Joan Bennett	Wallingford

Joan Bennett was welcomed to her first meeting as a member of the committee.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Stephen Brown [SB]	Chief Tournament Director
Rob Dixon	Asst Chief Tournament Director
Mike Fletcher [MF]	Team Leader, Duplicate Bridge Promotion & Youth Team
Jonathan Price	Education Officer
Alan Wilson	County Captain/EBU Shareholder

Peter Litchfield	Abingdon	Peter Stevenson	Oxford
Chris Kerr	Oxford	Robert Gasser	Summertown
Pat Lewis	Oxford	Erica Sheppard	Summertown
Richard Sills	Oxford	Mike Bennett	Wallingford
Sue Smith	Oxford		

2. Minutes of Management Committee meeting held on 17 November 2014

John Fleming was listed as both present and absent but was actually absent. Under item 3(a), officers/volunteering, it was noted that Chris Wilson had said that he was no longer willing to be Auditor. With these amendments, the minutes were accepted nem.con. as a correct record.

3. Action points and other matters arising from those and previous Management Committee meetings, not otherwise on the agenda

a. Action Points

To allow more time for substantive items, SN was asked to update the list of action points after the meeting and make a note of any that were still outstanding. *[This list is normally circulated only to committee members but, for completeness, a copy of the updated list is appended to these minutes.]*

b. Other matters arising

It was noted that since Chris Wilson was no longer willing to act as Auditor, we would need to find a replacement by mid-April, in time to check this year's accounts. RP said he had someone in mind.

4. / 5. Reports received in advance of meeting; other reports and recommendations

Chairman: RP said he found it frustrating that clubs appeared to agree with the stated objectives of each of the County's teams and yet although many of them could be promoted by activities organised by clubs rather than by the County, most of the clubs seemed to be unwilling to get involved. There was an argument that perhaps, with the limited resources available (in terms of manpower rather than funding), the County should concentrate on making the best possible job of what was known to be achievable. On the other hand, it was important to recognise that more needed to be done for the benefit of the less competitive members (without discouraging players from moving on, if that was what they wanted), and that some clubs also might not have the resources to do everything they would like to.

It would certainly help if more individuals were willing to become involved, even if only to a relatively small extent. RP said he would send his "volunteer-get-a-volunteer" letter out to Management Committee members and see whether this would produce any results.

Treasurer: CM reported that overall the financial situation of the County was about the same as the previous year but that income from Tuesday nights and competitions was likely to be significantly down. The costs of the Congress in 2015 would be higher, but it was hoped to offset this by attracting more entries.

She noted that the Pro-Am competition this year had been particularly disappointing, largely due to lack of "pros". Some discussion took place as to how this situation could be improved and the Competitions team were asked to review the format, taking account of ideas from other clubs such as Wallingford and Menagerie which appeared to be able to run such events more successfully.

There was some uncertainty as to whether the grant recently authorised by MF had been given to one or both of the two newly formed clubs. SN was asked to check this and RP will also find out from MF what criteria were used when reviewing the application(s). CM said that the money had been used to purchase equipment such as tables and bidding boxes. JP had assured RP that no OBA funds had been committed prior to approval of the grant.

Secretary: SN formally welcomed Central Yarnton Bridge Club and North Oxfordshire Bridge Club to the list of clubs affiliated to OBA (meaning we now have 21 affiliated clubs). She would put their details on the County website.

County Night and Competitions: It was noted that John Rowe, from Abingdon, had expressed interest in directing for the County. SB would be following this up.

County Night: RP explained that John Briggs had had to stand down from leading the County Night working group and John Slater had agreed to take over. JS distributed copies of an initial summary of his report, explaining that the recommendations had yet to be considered by the Competitions team but that he hoped that if the team agreed with them, they would be able to take action without further need to refer to the Management Committee. It would, however, be necessary to consult with OBC over any proposed changes (since the current

agreement with them provided for a 6 month notice period) and also to take account of the views and schedules of other major clubs such as Abingdon and Wallingford, as well as the timing of the Claridge Cup.

It was agreed that both the summary presented at the meeting, and the full report, would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting. Any comments should be sent to the Competitions team (via SB) by mid-April. JS and the working party were thanked for their efforts in preparing the report.

Competitions: RP said that there had been several cases recently when the County's competition rules (as stated in the bylaws) had been broken and those affected had then argued that the rules were wrong and should be changed. He felt strongly that rules were there for a reason and that when problems arose they should be applied (and not waived, even by mutual agreement, for example when a match was not started on time).

Wessex League: HT congratulated Menagerie B who would be the winners of Division 2.

He explained that the University team had found it difficult to travel to away matches and had asked if any financial support might be available. It was agreed that this would be preferable to asking other teams to play all their matches against University in central Oxford. HT was given a budget of £200 to be allocated for this purpose, with expenditure to be authorised by him.

HT then stated that he was not willing to continue managing the Wessex League in future due to what he regarded as the unacceptable nature of comments made to him in the course of email correspondence about rule breaking. The committee felt strongly that, as volunteers, officers were entitled to be treated with respect and that there should be a zero tolerance policy for unacceptable behaviour. RP would put something to this effect on the website. HT passed copies of the correspondence to RP for review.

Membership: PB noted that in the 8 months since he had started to monitor the membership, there had been 138 joiners and 120 leavers (including deaths). Most members did not give date of birth so there was no real way of measuring the average age of all members; the average age for those who did give the information was 49, but this was probably influenced by the fact that juniors were required to give their age whereas adult members were not.

Education: RP noted that OBC had produced an education strategy paper and felt that it would be helpful if other clubs could do the same. JF, who had written the paper, would be happy to email it to any other club that wished to see it, on request.

Abbey Smith had agreed to come to the OBA Teachers Conference in the summer to talk about how she runs her club.

Social: The Jordans were running another Café Bridge event in Henley in April. Other possibilities were for one in Summertown in the summer (to be run by OBC) and Abingdon in the autumn.

6. Volunteers, objectives and grants

See Chairman's report, above.

It was agreed that any grants made to clubs for running particular activities or events should be on condition that these should not be just for their own members as well as that they should help OBA achieve its stated objectives. There was a need for more information to be produced about the kinds of events we would be willing to support.

7. Requirement for players in the OBA County Pairs to have Primary Allegiance to Oxfordshire

After a brief discussion it was agreed that the current situation should be maintained, i.e. that the County Pairs and the President's Cup should remain as closed events open only to OBA members whose primary allegiance was to Oxfordshire. Clubs running heats of the County Pairs are asked to make this clear to their members.

8. News page on County website

It was agreed that the information about successes of OBA players in events elsewhere, that Lorraine Jones prepares for the County column in English Bridge, should also be published on the OBA's own website. In due course this might be extended further, in collaboration with DB.

There was a general feeling that the front page of the new website was not well presented. RP explained that SB had offered to take on full responsibility for the website once he retires as Chief TD later this year, and was hoping to make significant changes.

1&1 had still not released the password to allow us to migrate the old site. RP would ask John Deech to prepare a solicitor's letter, which might prompt a response.

9. Preparation for AGM and County Congress

AGM (9 June): Once prepared, the Agenda would be emailed (via PB) to as many members as possible. It could not be finalised until 28 days before the date of the AGM, since this was the last day for notification of motions to the Secretary.

SN asked any officers unwilling to stand again, to let her know. Otherwise they were requested to arrange nominations. SN will send an invitation to the President, Evan Harris. CM agreed to arrange for refreshments to be available as in previous years.

County Congress (13/14 June): CM confirmed that preparations were well under way with no problems envisaged. New caterers had been found and Martin Lee's role in providing equipment etc. would be taken on by his replacement, Gary Conrad. Chairs had been booked and directors and assistants were in place for both days. The cost had been increased to £28 per player per day.

10. Any other business

SC said that she had found that organising the Chester Cup was a surprisingly difficult task and she felt that it was unlikely to survive in its present format. She suggested changing the timing to start in April and run for 6 months from then.

Prompted by JS, the Committee congratulated the County teams on their good performance so far this year in the Midlands League and wished them success in the last match against Warwickshire, which would give all 3 teams the opportunity to win their respective divisions.

On behalf of the Committee, RP made a presentation to SN, thanking her for her efforts as OBA Secretary since September 2009.

11. Date and venue of next meeting

As previously agreed, the next Management Committee meeting would take place on Thursday 16th July 2015. KT was asked to book the hall at Horspath.

OBA Management Committee Meeting held on 11th March 2015: Agreed action points

(Please note, this document is intended primarily as an aide-memoire for committee members and team leaders. Full minutes will be circulated, and published on the County website, at a later date.)

Action to be taken – carried forward from previous meeting(s), with amendment where necessary	By whom/by when
<u>Club affiliation</u> : Agreed in principle that we should include details of non-affiliated Oxfordshire bridge clubs on our website, and advertise their events, if they wish us to do so. MF and team are working on this.	DBP&Y team
<u>County Night and Competitions</u> : Restricted/regionalised events: hold further events along the lines of the recent Blewbury social teams of 4, in other parts of the county.	CN&C Team, via clubs?
<u>Definition of “friendly” bridge events</u> : Needs review – how to describe, who is entitled to play, what events are we going to try out on a restricted basis. Include in next review of bylaws.	CN&C Team Currently in abeyance
<u>Duplicate Bridge Promotion and Youth</u> : More volunteers are still needed to teach in schools in the north of the county, together with a schools bridge co-ordinator for the northern area.	DBP&Y team
<u>Honours boards</u> : To include all the information currently held by Lynne Hayes. Waiting for decisions over type size etc. now that the OBC ones are up and we have costings. LH no longer wants to be involved with this so we need a replacement.	?
<u>Officers</u> : New Auditor needed in time to audit this year’s accounts (mid-April). New Secretary, Chief TD, Trophies and Honours Board co-ordinator will be required in June. <u>Any others not willing to continue, please advise SN ASAP</u> . Also still need Youth Officer, Social Team Leader.	RP/all
<u>Selection and County Team Management</u> : Details of who is eligible to play for the County, how players are selected and new pairs invited to play, to be published on the website.	S&CTM team
<u>Training for scorers</u> : Once we are up to speed with new Jeff Smith software (free!), consider nominating an OBA “scoring guru” who can provide training for club scorers.	Competitions team
<u>Website</u> : Letter has been sent authorising previous hosts to transfer ownership but no response received – next step will be to send solicitor’s letter. John Deech will help with this. AL to produce complete documentation (to be included on the site itself) of how the new site works and how to manage it. SB has offered to take it on, including a review of presentation and content, later this year after his retirement. Information on successes of County players, as sent to English Bridge, also to be published on our own website.	RP AL SB LJ/AL/SB
New items from most recent meeting	
<u>Chairman’s report/infrastructure</u> : RP to send out his “find a volunteer” letter to MC members to test response. Grants should be available to clubs willing to undertake activities that help OBA achieve its objectives, but only if they are open to all not just to their own members. Need to produce more information on kinds of activity we would be willing to support.	RP/all RP
<u>Competitions</u> : Review possible improvements to Pro/Am event, taking account of recent successful events with similar format run by Wallingford and Menagerie. Consider moving date of Chester Cup to start in April and run for 6 months from then. Keep County Pairs and Presidents Cup as closed events ie OBA-affiliated players only.	Competitions team
<u>County Night</u> : Circulate both the summary of WG report discussed at meeting, and full report, together with formal minutes of meeting. Any comments to Comps team (via SB) by mid-April.	SN/all
<u>Education</u> : Encourage as many clubs as possible to produce an education strategy paper along the lines of the one recently done by OBC. JF is happy to let other clubs see this on request.	JP/Club reps
<u>Preparation for AGM</u> : Send Agenda to PB for email circulation to as many members as possible, as soon as finalised (28 days before date of AGM). Officers to let SN know if prepared to stand again, and if so, to arrange nominations. [see also Officers, above, for vacant posts]. SN will invite Evan Harris. CM will organise refreshments.	SN/PB Officers/SN SN/CM
<u>Support for clubs</u> : SN to check with CM and MF whether the funding recently awarded was to CYBC, NOBC, or both [<i>done – NOBC only</i>]. RP to ask MF what criteria were used to award grants, and clarify position vis a vis Kings Sutton/NOBC. Put details of newly affiliated clubs on website.	SN/MF RP/MF SN
<u>Wessex League</u> : Agreed to allow a budget of up to £200 for University to travel to away matches. HT to authorise expenditure. RP to review correspondence which HT has found unacceptable and consider whether any action is required; also to put a note on the website about treating volunteer officers with respect.	HT RP
<u>Next meeting</u> : KT to book Horspath Village Hall for Thurs 16 th July 2015.	KT/SN

SN, 17th March 2015