



Essex Contract Bridge Association

A constituent member of the English Bridge Union

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, 29th January 2014 starting at 19.30 at Audrey Hartley's house – 168 Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 4HF

MINUTES

Present: Ted Cockle, Alaric Cundy, Margaret Curtis, Linda Fleet, Audrey Hartley, Bernie Hunt, Tony Philpott, Keith Thompson, Dennis Valtisaris and John Williams.

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence:** John Williams welcomed all those present and accepted apologies for absence from, Nigel Bardsley, Nicole Cook, Graham Foster and Sandy Riach.
2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday, October 16th 2013:** These had been circulated prior to the meeting and were agreed to be a correct record.
3. **Matters arising from the minutes not already included in the agenda:**
 - a. **Item 5c: Master Points for Eastern Counties Matches:** Audrey said that she had passed this to Ian Moss who said he would liaise with Neil Tracy of Norfolk and take responsibility for the issuing of Master Points for these matches.
 - b. **Item 5c: Ted Cockle's resignation:** Ted clarified his position by saying he was happy to continue taking the entries and the money but wished to be relieved of the other duties of setting up and taking down the tables etc. in the halls. It was agreed that we approach Paul and Val Mollison to see if they would be willing to take over these responsibilities.
 - c. **Item 7: Selectors' Report:** The selectors reported that a team had been accepted in the Super League and played two matches so far. They had won the first, lost the second and were currently lying 4th.
 - d. **Item 10: Shareholders' Report:** Keith said that the EBU Treasurer had sent a letter to Shareholders in which he stated that the EBU was in a strong financial position. Keith wanted to know that if the EBU was in such a strong financial position why was it necessary to increase the EBU portion of P2P every year. He had already questioned the validity of comparing the EBU's position with RPI instead of with the CPI at the last Shareholders' meeting and he thought that unless we joined with other counties to oppose it the EBU would continue to increase the EBU P2P portion every year. We had so far been able to offset the EBU increase by making a corresponding decrease in Essex's P2P portion but we could not do this indefinitely.
 - e. **Item 13: Retirement of Committee Members:** John said that in view of the resignation of Graham Foster and Ted Cockle and the wishes of John Williams and Audrey Hartley to resign in 1 – 3 years' time he thought attention should be given by the Committee to the replacements of these officers. He proposed a Succession Planning Working Group should be formed chaired by Tony Philpott. Margaret Curtis, Keith Thompson and Linda Fleet would join him to investigate the finding of replacements.
4. **Chairman's remarks:** John asked Audrey to leave the room while he reported to the Committee about the contribution he had authorised towards replacing Audrey's computer and printer which had broken down. The committee unanimously approved the 'Chairman's Action' in the payment of £350 to Audrey Hartley representing a 50% contribution to the purchase of her new computer and printer. He reported that he had received a letter from Jeremy Dhondy, the new EBU Chairman, saying that the Board of the EBU had selected Jerry Cope to head the EBU Charity EBED and that they would need 4 other trustees to join him and would welcome recommendations from counties. It was agreed that we could think of no-one suitable.
5. **Reports from Hon. Officers:**
 - a. **Hon General Secretary:** Audrey asked the Committee to review the entry fees for our competitions for the coming season. It was agreed that no change should be made. Some halls had become very expensive and Audrey agreed to try to find more reasonably priced venues.

- b. **Hon Treasurer:** Linda had prepared a table of the income and expenditure from our competitions. She reported that most of our competitions were doing well financially with one or two exceptions. It was from these figures that it became clear that Mountnessing had become very expensive.
 - c. **Hon Tournament Secretary:** Ted produced a list of our competitions and the number of entries to each. These varied a little but on the whole they were bearing up well.
 - d. **Hon League Secretary:** Bernie reported that everything in the league was progressing smoothly. Matches were mostly being played on time but he had relaxed the deadline in some cases where there were particular difficulties in arranging a match.
 - e. **Hon Teachers' Liaison Secretary:** Alaric presented his letter of invitation to our "Play with an Expert" Competition. There was some discussion about who were the players that should receive the invitation. In the end it was agreed that "developing players" should be invited, that no restriction should be made on the number of years' experience a player had; that it should be made clear that a player did not need to be a member of the EBU to take part (invitations would be extended to non-affiliated club members); but that it was at the Tournament Secretary's discretion to exclude a player he thought too experienced. Of the three potential Adult Education Courses at the beginning of the season, one was a non-starter, the one in Chelmsford died through low numbers and only one was still in existence at Bishop's Hill, Shenfield. There had been a problem in finding teachers and contacting them via our website. Alaric had agreed to liaise with Sandy about this but unfortunately Sandy had been ill and this had not yet been done. Sandy was now better and they would deal with this problem shortly. They needed to find appropriate wording for a disclaimer about the quality of any teacher mentioned on our website.
 - f. **Hon Youth & Schools Liaison:** Graham was not present and had nothing to report.
 - g. **Hon Webmaster:** Sandy was not present and did not send a report.
5. **Bridgemates:** John had not written to Martin Lee again. He was undecided about the best approach to the problem. Nicole had sent an email saying that things had moved on since we had bought the bridgemates. Other directors were lending/borrowing bridgemates for competitions and she was in favour of directors using them in clubs in order for them to gain experience. Several Essex clubs had some form of electronic scoring, either bridgemates or bridgepads. Alaric reported that he had been investigating a development by Jannersten which might be much cheaper than any other. Unlike other systems, it does not require special table-top devices, but instead it can use standard basic Android tablets, or even any wifi-enabled Android-based smart-phone."
6. **Herts/Essex joint venture:** Margaret said there was nothing to report at present.
7. **Bernie's seminars:** Bernie submitted a report about how the seminars were developing. There had been 4 held so far covering different topics. They were well received and others indicated a wish to be included. There were several helpers who Bernie wished to reward and it was agreed that the ECBA should pay £10 petrol money to 3 helpers each seminar the money to come from the development fund. He wished to run a further course to start later in the year. It was agreed that this would be reviewed in June.
8. **County Working Groups:** The EBU had decided that as the RCC Committees were not working they would replace them with County Working Groups (CWG). John had spoken strongly about this at the Chairmen's Meeting in July. Darren Evetts was the EBU Board member who had been appointed to set up and co-ordinate these inter-county meetings and John had been invited to attend the first inter-county meeting for the Midland Counties. The Eastern Counties meeting had been held more recently. There had been quite a lot of criticism of the EBU with accusations of arrogance and "not listening". The EBU seemed to be interested in creating a standard across the counties and also keen to encourage clubs to buy their own premises. It was reported that the Cambridge University Bridge Club had seen a steady reduction in their membership and they did not get as many students to their events as previously. The Cambridge Association had tried out a new idea of making a very large cut in the entry fee to one of their major tournaments to try to get more participants. At the end of the meeting John and a Hertfordshire representative had been selected to represent the Eastern Counties on the National Counties Working Group.
9. **Competition Entry Statistics:** Nigel said that the average number of competitions entered by various categories of players were: A squad – 6.3 events per year, B squad – 7.5 events per year, C squad – 5.2 events per year and non-squad player 2.5 events per year. He also said that 46 people played in 2012 but not in 2013 and 50 people played in 2013 but not in 2012. He suggested that it would be useful to find out why these players didn't play in more of our competitions. Were they overawed by the number of squad members

playing in our events? The squad members are 4.1% of the total membership but make up 61.5% of the competition entries. Nigel thought we should do a lot more to encourage middle ranking players to enter our competitions. Bernie said that he asked all his seminar entrants to play in Essex events. It was mentioned that EBU events had become very expensive.

10. AOB

- a. **Portland Pairs:** Bernie expressed an interest in offering his premises as a venue for the Portland Pairs. It would mean much less travelling for Essex members interested in this competition. The Committee agreed to support him in this enterprise.
- b. **Eastern Counties scoring:** Ian Mitchell from the EBU had written to Roger Amey recommending a change in the way we scored our teams of 8 matches. The WBF had introduced a new IMP scale for teams of 8 which we could use or we could use the IMP table as before and use the VP scale appropriate to 64 boards or we could score as two teams of 4 again using the VP scale for 64 boards. Roger had passed this to me to discuss with the Committee and send our thoughts about which of the three we would prefer. The recommendation is that we use the middle of these options. John and I passed this over to the Selection Committee for their views. They would meet on February 4th and let me have their thoughts after their meeting. It was noted that the Fletcher had been scored differently this year (ie as two teams of 4 instead of a team of 8). It was felt that this should be a Committee decision and should be discussed at the next Committee meeting.
- c. **Graham Foster's teams of 8 for developing players:** Two trial matches had been held and as a result a League was being set up between 6 clubs – Barleylands, Chelmsford, Hutton, Mountnessing, Southend & Leigh and Thorpe Bay. The matches would be shared between the clubs and played on the club nights of each club. Middle ranking players would be selected by each club.

11. **Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 23rd April 2014 at John William's home.

The meeting closed at 10.30 pm and Audrey was thanked for her hospitality.