



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED
AT YOUNG CHELSEA BRIDGE CLUB, GOLDHAWK ROAD, LONDON, W12 8HA
ON WEDNESDAY 24th JANUARY 2018**

Present: Jeremy Dhondy (Chairman) (JD)
Ian Payn (Vice Chairman) (IP)
Jerry Cope (Treasurer) (JC)
Heather Dhondy (HD)
Anthony Golding (AG)
Robert Lawy (RL)
Gordon Rainsford (General Manager) (GR)
Peter Stockdale (Minuting the meeting) (PS)

1. Apologies for Absence

Ron Millet (RM)
Graham Smith (GS)

2. Minutes of the meeting of 25th October 2017

2.1 Accuracy

RL suggested an amendment to item 8, noting that it was the intention to provide to EBED with information on what the Board considered to be priorities for EBED to complete in 2018/19, rather than a specific list of things which should be achieved. This was agreed.

2.2 Matters arising

2.2/2.2/2.2/2.2/5 – JD reported that a member of the Laws & Ethics Committee had begun to collate the relevant information for consideration by the Committee, but this had not been completed prior to the recent meeting. The member would continue to work on the matter and would provide information to the Chair of the Committee in advance of the next meeting. The Board were notified that HD had been elected as the new Chair of the Committee at the recent meeting.

12. JD reported that the recommendation for the EBL's Hall of Fame, and 'posthumous Hall of Fame', had been submitted. In response to those for the 'posthumous Hall of Fame', the EBL had noted that for most of those nominated their appearances had been for Great Britain, rather than England. They suggested that the EBU instead nominate players who had played primarily (or exclusively) for England. JD had declined to change the nominations, and had suggested the EBL instead found a way to include British representatives on their lists.

3. General Manager's Report

GR had circulated a report to the Board. He noted that the situation relating to staff had evolved since his report was written, and gave an updated to the Board. JC asked that it be checked that the EBU is part of a salary sacrifice scheme in order to provide childcare vouchers to staff. (Following the meeting it this was confirmed that this is in place).

GR advised that the relevant staff were at present testing, and learning about, the new Shopify software for the Bridge Warehouse, and that it was likely that they would switch to this.

In relation to the General Data Protection Regulation, GR advised that he felt progress was being made. He was starting to get an increasing number of enquiries from clubs and counties, and information would soon be sent to those groups. Information would also be circulated to members, primarily by email and through English Bridge, however it would be necessary to contact some by traditional postal methods, and a quote had been received for this. The information being sent by post was being kept as small as possible to keep down costs, however some extra space on the card would likely be used for a brief survey of the membership (which would also be circulated through the magazine and email, with participants encouraged to respond online), so as to establish the members' general feelings about the EBU. This would both give a current picture, and also provide a 'base level' by which to judge in a few years whether improvements had been made.

GR reported on staff changes at EBED. He added that two staff, including CEO Donna Wright, had attended a Fast Track course to learn how to play, and were very positive about it. HD added that her experience of teaching the Fast Track course had also been positive.

The intention to hold regional heats of the midweek competitions during the Summer Festival was raised, and the Board were in favour of the proposal.

GR was pleased to report the success of the online games with Funbridge. The weekend games were averaging well in excess of 100 players, and there had been a good number of participants in the first Thursday game the previous week. It was intended that if the Thursday game continued to be successful then a Tuesday game would be considered. He had received a complaint from one club which was concerned that the online games would "kill the club game", however GR believed that this was ill-founded. As the game could be played any time during the day it was possible to play both online, and in the club, and his experience – particularly from the existing weekend games – was that most players fit in the online games around playing face-to-face bridge, rather than picking one over the other.

As Birmingham had been confirmed as the host of the 2022 Commonwealth Games, GR was asked to give consideration to the possibility of hosting a Commonwealth Nations bridge competition in 2022 – five similar events having been held in the host country of the Commonwealth Games in the corresponding year.

GR advised that progress was being made on the new pack for new members. It was hoped that this may be in circulation by the end of February.

GR reported that some problems with Workbooks continued, however he was hopeful that they would soon be resolved.

4. NGS update

GR reported that, in response to feedback gathered during the consultation on the NGS exemption scheme, some small changes to how the NGS was calculated were being implemented. This includes: the grade for new players changing more quickly in the initial stages so they find their 'correct' level sooner; players with a mature grade will not get their grade updated when they partner a player who has played less than 150 boards. It is hoped that these changes would be introduced before the end of February.

5. Financial matters

5.1 Treasurer's Report & November Management Accounts

JC had provided his report and the accounts. He added that the figures for December had just been produced. In his report he noted that the financial performance had continued to be positive in November, with further improvements against budget, but he advised that this trend had reversed in December, with a worse deficit than budgeted. Some of this was due to lower than expected revenue from Universal Membership, however it was recognised that December was always a volatile month for UM revenue, affected by numerous factors. December was also the first month in the year where the Bridge Warehouse had not exceeded expectations. December is traditionally a month where the shop's revenue is lower, and the Board approved of the consideration being given by shop staff to the stocking of a greater range of 'gifts' and 'seasonal items'.

JC was optimistic that at the end of the year the accounts may be ahead of budget.

JC was pleased to report that through donations and sponsorship over £12k had so far been raised towards the costs of the junior teams' participation in the World Youth Team Championships. This was a positive start, however the gap between the total cost and the amount raised was still large. It was expected that the cost of participation may be a little lower than initially budgeted, due to the opportunity to use cheaper hotels, flight costs being lower than anticipated, and improvements in the exchange rate.

The few remaining costs related to the VAT case were yet to be included in the accounts, but JC confirmed that they had been considered when he estimated that the accounts may be ahead of budget at the end of the year.

The continuing decline in entries for the Sim Pairs competitions was noted. Some factors which would have contributed to this were recognised. GR was asked to consider whether anything could be done to stop the decline, but he would also look at whether other countries were experiencing the same trend, as it was thought unlikely to be something which only affected Sims in Britain.

GR advised the Board that there had been changes in the cost structure for the EBU hosting sims on behalf of clubs or Counties, and it compared favourably with the service offered by Ecats. Information would be circulated to the Counties to reiterate the availability of this 'sims hosting service'.

5.2 2018/19 Budget

JC reported that the preparation of the 2018/19 budget was progressing smoothly. He reminded the Board that any requests for funding for specific initiatives should be submitted promptly. The budget would be approved at the next meeting in March.

6. Disciplinary Panel & Prosecution Panel 2018-19

The composition of the Disciplinary and Prosecution Panels for 2018-19 had been circulated for the Board's information. Alan Oddie had retired from the Disciplinary Panel and JD would write thanking him for his service

7. Strategy Document

A draft of the strategy document had been circulated, and JC was thanked for his work in producing it.

JC advised the Board of the main areas of change from the 2013-18 strategy:

- A greater emphasis on financial resilience and stability
- A greater emphasis on membership development
- A new section on 'volunteers'

This draft of the strategy was approved with minor amendments.

The Board were enthusiastic about receiving feedback from a consultation with the Counties, however it was agreed that this need to be via a structured format, rather than an open-ended discussion. Two specific questions were therefore proposed, and these would be circulated to the Counties along with the most recent draft of the strategy. PS would receive the responses and forward them to JC for him to present to the Board at the meeting in March. The final version of the strategy would be approved at that meeting.

It was agreed that the published strategy would be printed in English Bridge, made available on the website, and a small number of copies would be printed.

8. Education matters

RL confirmed that he would be attending the meeting of EBED's Education Advisory Group on 7th February. As noted earlier in the meeting, it was intended that RL would outline at the meeting the work which the Board considered to be a priority for EBED to undertake. These would include work on its website, and on the database of teachers and teaching activity.

In RM's absence, JD reported that benefits were being seen from the membership project in Yorkshire. Problems which had arisen relating to the registration of student members were discussed. It was agreed that a policy relating to this should be formalised, but it should be done with input from EBED. This would be an agenda item for the next Board Meeting.

9. County Working Groups (CWGs)

In the absence of GS it was briefly reported that there were some Counties trying to generate interest within their regional Working Group. It was agreed that for the CWG's to be successful there needed to be County members, as well as GS, spurring on the activity in the region, so the proactive approach of these Counties was welcomed. The 'adoption' of a CWG by a specific Board member was discussed.

GS had produced a model Terms of Reference (ToR) and Structure for the CWGs based on discussions within the CWG Task Team. The Board made some minor changes to the model, and the updated version would be recommended to the CWGs. It was agreed that any adaptations could be made as each CWG sees fit – and indeed that one group had produced its own ToR – however in instances where there was a matter between two CWGs which could not be resolved, as they had conflicting ToRs, the model ToRs provided by the Board would take priority.

10. BGB Representative 2018-19

JD was appointed as the Board's representative to Bridge Great Britain for 2018-19. HD was thanked for her work in the role.

11. Tournament Panel

It was agreed that the Tournament Panel would continue in its current form, and with its current members.

12. EBL/WBF matters

JD reported that the conviction of Fantoni & Nunes by the EBL had been overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). They were therefore eligible to play in EBL events, however the ban by the ACBL and their 'home federation', the Italian Bridge Federation (FIGB), still stood. As they were still banned by the FIGB they would therefore not be eligible to play in EBU events. The decision would likely mean that the Open team which participated in the 2014 European Championships in Croatia would not be promoted to the gold medal winning position – at the time of the conviction this had seemed possible. It was still possible however, that England would be awarded silver as the disqualification of the Israeli team seemed unlikely to be overturned. GR would ask EBL President, Yves Aubry, at the EBL meeting at the start of February.

It was queried whether within the Bye-Laws there was specific reference to members being permitted, or not permitted, to appeal to CAS. It was noted that the Bye-Laws only permitted appeal through a certain process, and therefore a specific reference to CAS was not necessary, however consideration may be given in future to including something explicit.

The EBL had given a very positive response to work being done by Yorkshire on the Membership Campaign. The campaign, and the possibility of it being implemented in other regions, would be given further consideration at a future meeting when more information was available.

13. Any other business

It was agreed to re-appoint GS to the Board as a Director for this year. Following the resignation of Darren Evetts there were two further vacancies on the Board, and the possible appointment of Directors to fill these positions was discussed. It was agreed that appointments would only be made if the appointee could offer a specific skill or undertake a specific task. Potential candidates had been identified, and they had been spoken with prior to the meeting. The matter would be given further consideration, and JD would speak to those most likely to be offered a position.