



**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 20th MARCH 2019**

Present:

Jeremy Dhondy (Chairman) (JD)
Ian Payn (Vice Chairman) (IP)
Jerry Cope (Treasurer) (JC)
Gillian Fawcett (GF)
Anthony Golding (AG)
Heather Dhondy (HD)

Rob Lawy (RL)
Ron Millet (RM)
Graham Smith (GS)
Gordon Rainsford (Chief Executive) (GR)
Sam Kelly (Minutes) (SK)

1. Apologies for Absence

None

2. Minutes of the Meeting 23rd January 2019

2.1 Accuracy

A minor typographical error was noted and corrected. Otherwise the minutes were approved as accurate.

2.2 Matters arising

No matters arising

2.3 Review of Action List

Previous actions – no updates from previous actions.

3. Financial Matters

3.1 January Management Accounts & Treasurers Report

JC had circulated a report prior to the meeting, he highlighted some aspects of his report.

January numbers are unexceptional. Shop sales are 1/3 up from previous year, although margins are down meaning there has been no net gain.

There is a small increase in half price sessions and full price sessions are broadly flat recovering slightly after a relatively poor start to the year.

The board have asked the CE to check that half price sessions are being used appropriately.

3.2 Budget 2019/20

The first forecast for the 19/20 budget showed an unacceptable deficit so work has been done including some reductions in cost centres to rescue the budget deficit.

A discussion was had around different options for the future budget.

A suggestion was made that the diary might become opt in rather than opt out for next year onwards.

If financial projections become poorer other possible cost savings might need to be found around internationals and English Bridge two of our largest cost centres.

Internationals need to seek from this year to get some sponsorship help if budgets are to be maintained

JD confirmed there will be a need to look at international spending in the next budget. He will also circulate the decisions of the board as required.

The budget for the next financial year was agreed. We will discuss any necessary financial changes at a board meeting later this year when the outlook is clearer. Jeremy will ensure it is on the October agenda.

JC finished by reminding the board that the year-end was approaching and the expense forms are required after the March meeting.

4. Chief Executive's Report (GR)

GR had circulated a report prior to the meeting.

Staffing

GR started by commenting that there has been a huge number of changes to staff during the past few months. There has been a new receptionist appointed who is due to start soon. Dawn Mertens (DM) has decided to retire and a replacement has been found, due to start mid-April. Bev Purvis (BP) has also handed in her notice, with her position being advertised currently.

The board expressed their thanks to the members of staff that are due to leave, and thanked both Dawn and Bev for their significant contributions to the EBU.

Clubs

It was noted that half price NGS sessions had increased, but this may be due to confusion from clubs about which codes to use. There has been a recent issue about a minority of clubs submitting sessions using incorrect codes, GR has written to these clubs and received positive responses.

GR also mentioned a point made to him by BP – that clubs want more opportunities for mentors to opt out of NGS grading in order to promote sessions with a mix of experiences. The Board were unconvinced that there was sufficient evidence that a member's NGS ranking is affected adversely by playing with lower ranked players. They were not moved to change the system further (recalling that some changes had already been made) unless or until the evidence base is firmer. The CE has on a number of occasions asked players who allege they are affected to produce some evidence of this but so far to no avail.

After a discussion the board decided that there would be no changes to rules regarding mentor sessions.

EBU Grants

It is the time of year for EBU Grants once again. GR confirmed that this year there would be more information for clubs around how much the average grant is expected to be with ideas on what clubs can apply to spend the money on.

EBU Assured – Working Title

GR talked about TA's proposal for the Membership Campaign – "EBU Assured", which is aiming to promote EBU clubs to new bridge players and non-affiliated clubs alike. GR & Tim Anderson (TA) (Membership Development Officer) will also seek to develop contacts with U3A. The board were supportive of the idea in principal and asked for TA and GR to continue with the idea.

Bridge Warehouse

Peter Stockdale (PS) has done some work on the Bridge Warehouse presence online, particularly in regards to Amazon. He found that the reason for the lack of sales through Amazon over the Christmas period was due to Amazon's policy of switching off any unverified sellers accounts as a way to combat fraudulent selling. This meant that the EBU Bridge Warehouse listings were not showing to the general public during this time. Following PS' investigation, the listings have now been switched on again but this will be monitored. The board asked GR to check as to whether we could avoid this being switched off by Amazon over the Christmas period any way other than becoming an authorised seller.

The question of becoming a verified seller was raised, with the intention of avoiding this issue in future, however, it was found that in order to become a verified seller through Amazon the retailer needs to be willing to allow Amazon to sell the product. This would mean Amazon would take a higher percentage of any profits.

This year, the EBU has increased the number of items sold via Amazon and EBay in order to increase the figures from last year's sales.

RM questioned whether we could sell via Gumtree. GR said he would look into the possibility.

A new deal with regard to tables has been agreed now that the previous manager at AL Flemings has retired.

Competitions

The new Masters Pairs format worked very well with a four-fold increase on the number of entries from last year. With this in mind the new format will be extended to other competitions next year, specifically the National Pairs in 2020.

The Eastbourne Summer meeting is on track. GR and Nick Doe (ND) have a site visit planned for 26th April.

Easter Festival London is due to take place at the Ibis hotel, if successful it is hoped that future Year-End and Easter Festivals can be held there.

5. EBED Update, Trustee appointments (JD)

JD reported a lot of change within EBED within the last month. Andrew Petrie has now stepped down. JD is due to step down as trustees later this year, and a number of other trustees will be stepping down later this year. Three new appointments have been made; Terry Hewitt (EBU); Mary Sharp (EBED) and Douglas Wright (EBED). The new appointees are due to start over the next six months.

6. Membership

6.1 Update (RM)

There has been a need for a slight strategy adjustment. Face to face meetings have been found to be most effective in building up morale and support for the membership campaign.

There has been a positive response from the English Bridge Article and TA's blog posts. However, there is a lack of enthusiasm and action from clubs overcoming fears of running a campaign.

The board endorsed TA's work and the membership campaign but are keen to see the next stages of the process. The board asked for the next meeting to include an update on the effect of the membership campaign and metrics.

6.2 Refusal (GR)

GR provided a paper prior to the meeting and answered questions.

The proposed change is generally welcomed by clubs, although an appeal process is needed. The word "only" was asked to be removed from the proposal in the line "The EBU may refuse membership, or remove it, only for good cause".

Currently notification is given in the magazine and in addition the EBL are informed as are all clubs of which the person is a member and in addition his county and any associate counties he belongs to. This was thought satisfactory at the moment.

There was general agreement for the proposed change to the bye-laws. AG will bring a detailed proposal to the next meeting.

7. TDDG Matters (HD)

HD confirmed that there are currently four people assessing the work of TD's. They had a meeting recently, and they will make some recommendations for potential promotions at the Eastbourne Summer Meeting. This year they have seen too many applicants wishing to go on the panel, so for the first time there is a waiting list. However, there are four people retiring later this year. There are also falling numbers of entries which has a knock on effect of the number of TD's required.

The high numbers of applicants are a credit to the TD training work at county and club level.

8. County Chairman's Meeting May 2019

The 2nd Shareholder's meeting was abolished at the last AGM and replaced with the County Chairman's meeting, due in May.

After a short discussion the board decided that the agenda for the meeting should be as follows:

Membership – inviting TA and David Guild (DG) to give a talk on the matter

Financial Strategy

JD to generate a letter to be sent out.

9. Shareholders Newsletter Topics/Ideas

JD had said at the AGM that he would prepare a newsletter to go to County Chairmen and Shareholders in April.

JD will write the newsletter but he requested any ideas on topics to be sent to him in the next week.

Ideas for topics suggested at the meeting included: Finance strategy/progress report; GDPR; NGS exemptions; EBED update; Membership Campaign update.

10. EBL/WBF Matters

JD had recommended two people for the EBL Hall of Fame and the Stars of the Past.

JC confirmed he had received their invoices.

11. Any Other Business: Sponsorship update, KBA, Awards

11.1 Sponsorship update

No update. GF confirmed that she is still in communication with John Dakin (JD), but that the process is slow. There is no agreement yet in place, and there is a need to approve the process. GF advised that one major sponsor would be more effective than a number of smaller sponsors, and that this should be the main focus.

11.2 Keep Bridge Alive (KBA)

EBU has not offered any financial help for this project.

11.3 Awards

JD had presented Steve Barnfield with a Silver Award

There is a need to think of potential recipients of awards to be presented at the next AGM, JD requested suggestions be brought to the next meeting in June.

RM questioned the rule that for the Dimmie Fleming Award, TD's and paid volunteers are not eligible, and requested that this be changed. The Board agreed that this should be changed to allow eligibility for these members, providing the award is not for work for which they have been paid. JD will amend the criteria and a communication will be circulated.

11.4 Institute of Advanced Motorists (GS)

GS stated that he is a member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists and that they have similar issues with membership as the EBU. Through his contacts there he has secured a new benefit for EBU members to receive 10% off the membership fee for the Institute of Advanced Motorists. JD will add it to his editorial for the English Bridge next issue.

11.5 Strategy (JC)

Strategy progress will be discussed in the June meeting.

Next Meeting: 12th June in Aylesbury.