

## Oxfordshire Bridge Association

### Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010 at 7.30 p.m. at the Oxford Bridge Club

#### PRESENT:

John Briggs [JB]	Chairman
Dinah Lintott [DL]	Treasurer
Sandra Nicholson [SN]	Secretary/EBU Shareholder
Alan Grunwald [AG]	Tournament Secretary
Vicky Fleming [VF]	Membership Secretary
Brenda Harris [BH]	Publicity Officer/EBU Shareholder
David Bygott [DB]	Newsletter Editor

Peter Finbow	Wallingford	Kathy Talbot	Oxford
Peter Sherry	Oxford	Ian Van Maanen	Abingdon

**In attendance:** Tom Garrett, Member of EBU National Clubs Committee; Krys Kazmierczak, EBU Club Liaison Officer

#### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Stephen Brown [SB]	Chief Tournament Director
Geoff Nicholas [GN]	League Secretary
Lynne Hayes [LH]	Cups and Honours Boards
Ian Angus [IA]	Match Secretary
Clive Keep [CK]	County Pairs Organiser

Esme Alden	Oxford	Chris Kerr	Oxford
Alastair Gidman	Summertown	Erica Sheppard	Summertown
Colin Jones	Wallingford	Richard Sills	Oxford

#### 2. Minutes of Management Committee meeting held on 6 September 2010

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved and signed.

#### 3. Representation of clubs and their interests within the EBU

JB welcomed Tom Garrett and Krys Kazmierczak who had agreed to attend the meeting to advise and inform on these issues.

Tom explained that the EBU was looking for the best way to represent the views of clubs without being totally impractical. Two mechanisms needed to be discussed by the

County: one was the process for electing a representative to the new EBU Regional Club Committee, which would meet for the first time in autumn 2011; the other was a way of increasing the input of clubs to the overall governance of the EBU, for which the EBU had suggested three possible options.

During discussion, it was argued that what we wanted to achieve was to get more people involved with the County as well as with the EBU. There was some feeling that the Regional Club Committee structure would be unwieldy and unnecessarily costly, and might even weaken the influence of clubs, which might be better off bringing up any issues of concern via the County. However, it was pointed out that not all County Associations benefited from the same structure as Oxfordshire, where clubs are already given the right to a say in the County's affairs via their representatives at Management Committee meetings. Tom noted that the representatives would be expected to look after the interests of clubs within their counties, rather than the counties themselves. Krys added that one of the purposes in creating the new committees was to try to improve the lines of communication between the "grass roots" and the EBU. He stressed that the EBU knew that it must do more for clubs and their members in order to shake off the old image of being run primarily for the benefit of tournament players.

It was agreed that the Oxfordshire representative to the Regional Club Committee should be elected at the next AGM in June 2011, with nominations to be invited via clubs. This should be publicised in the County newsletter, including with a short, upbeat note - to be produced by Krys - explaining what the committee would do, what the role of the representative would be, and what sort of background he or she should ideally have (e.g. someone in touch with clubs and ordinary members, who participates in events at different levels?). **ACTION:** KK/DB for the Newsletter article; SN to invite nominations in due course.

Regarding the overall governance issue, the committee agreed to support option (b) – strengthening the current system in some way – with a rider that we would not only prefer to see shareholders elected, rather than appointed, but would support re-elections at regular intervals of no more than 3 years. **ACTION:** SN to reply to EBU stating the County's view.

Tom and Krys were thanked for their participation and left the meeting.

#### 4. **Action points and matters arising from previous Management Committee meetings, not otherwise on the agenda**

JB said he regretted that, owing to increasing pressure on his time, he had been unable to make much progress on those areas for which he had been allocated responsibility. He thanked everyone else who had been more active in pursuing outstanding matters, particularly AG who had made excellent progress with the web site, and SN. His priorities for the start of 2011 would be to organise the meeting of teachers, and to find someone to take over the running of the County Congress, since Lynne Hayes had pointed out that work on this needed to start in January. **ACTION:** JB.

New intermediate event at County level: BH and AG agreed to take this forward, looking at the second Tuesday of the month for a monthly duplicate to be run in parallel with the regular County night. BHAG to identify and contact teachers with a view to attracting "ambitious intermediates" wanting to play against a wider field. **ACTION:** BH/AG.

Website: The new version of the website is now up and running, but may need a little adjustment to work satisfactorily on all users' machines. Automatic upload of County Night results, including travellers and frequencies, is due to start some time in January, following comment from SB. **ACTION: AG/SB.**

Wessex League: It was noted that all competition bylaws need to be overhauled, not just Wessex League. **ACTION: Tournament Committee (GB/SB/AG).**

Prospectus: VF reported that the printer had produced another 500 copies, free of charge, to replace those that had not already been sent out.

Teaching in schools: MS was not present, but would be asked to produce something for the Newsletter. SN reported that a member of Summertown was now in contact with the Dragon School. **ACTION: MS.**

Oxford Times Cup: this could not be pursued as contrary to previous report, there is no new Editor.

## 5. Officers' reports

A set of reports had been circulated in advance and is available for reference on the County website. The following additional reports and comments were noted:

Chairman: The Chairman had again not submitted a formal report due to pressure of time. He had contacted one or two people to try to find a replacement but so far had been unsuccessful.

Chief Tournament Director: Mina McPhee, who had been duplimating boards for the County over the past year, had indicated that she wished to resign so a replacement needed to be found. Kathy Talbot agreed to take on the overall responsibility, with one of her sons doing most of the dealing during his university vacations. It was noted that players would like to see hand analyses included on the hand records. SN said that the new version of DealMaster Pro, recently bought by Summertown at a cost of approximately £40, would import any "dln" file and produce hand records with analysis far more quickly than the previous version. She was asked to purchase a copy for the County and pass it on to KT. **ACTION: KT/SN.**

Tournament Secretary: AG reported that 28 pairs had competed in the Swiss Pairs, compared with 30 last year.

Following the successful introduction of non-expert prizes for the Ladies' and Men's Pairs competitions, it was agreed to extend these in future to the Swiss Pairs, Mixed Pairs and Harwell Cup Teams events. As recommended by AG, a prize of £20 would be awarded to the leading pair/team of which each member has fewer than 10,000 Master Points on their EBU record on the date of the competition, irrespective of the score they achieve, provided that at least two non-expert pairs/teams take part. If 5 or more non-expert teams/pairs take part, it was agreed there should be a second non-expert prize of £10. **ACTION: AG; SB for future prospectus.**

Match Secretary: IA sent through a late report to say that the county team had finished 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 9 in their group in the Tollemache qualifier, and (for the third time in the last four years) had therefore missed qualifying for the final by one place.

## **6. P2P charges – EBU, and County**

JB explained that the County had already decided to increase its own P2P charge in 2011/12 from 3p to 6p (which represented a break-even position compared with the previous income from annual subscriptions). However, in the light of the planned 2p increase in the EBU PaytoPlay charge on 1 April 2011 (from 29p to 31p), and the healthy financial position reported by the Treasurer, he felt it was appropriate to review the situation.

Whilst some members felt that clubs would object to an overall P2P increase of as much as 5p, when the County already had ample funds in reserve, others argued that it would be better to maintain the annual income at a level sufficient to cover normal expenditure and make more effort to spend some of the reserves on appropriate activities. After discussion a formal vote was taken which resulted in a majority in favour of keeping the County P2P figure at 6p in 2011/12 (6 for, 3 against, 1 abstention).

JB then announced that, in line with the recommendation made by the Auditor at the AGM, all clubs affiliated to the County would now be encouraged to put forward bids for ways in which some of the reserve funds could be used, in the form of grants or possibly loans, to the benefit of bridge playing in Oxfordshire. Proposals – which should be sensible, creative, and of course bridge-related – should be addressed to the Treasurer in the first instance, but would be considered by the Committee as a whole. **ACTION:** SN/DL.

## **7. EBU proposals for changes to P2P for County events**

SN drew attention to an announcement circulated at the EBU AGM in October, and since published on the EBU website, regarding a number of proposals for changes to P2P for County events which were intended to be implemented from April 2012. Several of these would affect the way in which we operate, including most notably a proposal to charge P2P for all regular County duplicate events such as our County night, at 50% of the full rate.

The EBU had asked for comments on the proposals but in the absence of the Chief Tournament Director, it was decided to defer detailed discussion to a later meeting. In the meanwhile, we would enquire why the figure of 50% had been suggested. **ACTION:** SN.

## **8. Entry criteria for OBA competitions**

AG explained that following the introduction of P2P, it appeared that the way in which the entry criteria for OBA competitions was stated in the prospectus had unintentionally changed the eligibility in some respects. He was personally in favour of opening up the competitions to any EBU member, but recognised that others might wish them to be restricted to OBA members only. After discussion, it was agreed that in order to enter OBA competitions, a player must be a member of the OBA – whether through primary affiliation, or as a dual or direct member – and that the prospectus for next year should be amended accordingly. **ACTION:** AG/SB.

## **9. Dual membership arrangements**

Following her appointment to the role of Membership Secretary, VF had discovered a number of anomalies arising from the introduction of P2P that needed to be resolved and

clarified. In particular, there were inconsistencies and inequities about who was currently being asked to pay an annual subscription in order to be an OBA member. She had prepared and circulated a detailed paper outlining the issues, including a possible conflict between our constitution and the way in which we were currently operating, and a proposal put forward by the League Secretary which she felt might be fairer but would be very complicated to put into effect.

The meeting felt that it was essential to have a practical and workable arrangement which would be as easy as possible for all concerned to understand and operate. It was therefore agreed to restate and clarify the position outlined in the constitution, which is that: in order to be a member of the OBA, a player must **either** belong to an EBU-affiliated club *and* have Oxfordshire designated as his or her primary county of affiliation (regardless of whether the club that he or she belongs to is affiliated to OBA), **or** must pay an annual subscription (currently £4) to become either a “dual” or “direct” member. Any anomalies would be ignored for the current year but this would be strictly enforced from April 2011, and all clubs would be provided a clear statement about the agreed criteria. **ACTION:** VF/SN.

#### **10. Partnership secretary for County night**

In the absence of SB and Richard Sills, who had raised the issue, this item was deferred.

#### **11. OBA use of OBC premises, including date of AGM**

Richard Sills had provided some information about problems with the structure of the building at 147 Banbury Road and various options for resolving them, which might involve either closing down the building for a period to enable work to be done, or else moving the Oxford Bridge Club to an alternative location. This was noted with concern, and SN was asked to make further enquiries about possible timescales. **ACTION:** SN.

In the meanwhile, it was agreed that if Wessex League matches were held at the premises on a Tuesday evening it would be impractical for them to use the tearoom as suggested by the minutes of the previous meeting, and that they should be in the front room with any overflow from County night using the Mary Good room and, if necessary, the tearoom.

Subject to the continued availability of the premises, it was also agreed that the AGM should be held on a Tuesday evening from 2012 onwards, but it was hoped that OBC would agree that we would not need to alter the published date of Monday June 13<sup>th</sup> in 2011. **ACTION:** SN; **SB to note for prospectus.**

#### **12. League administration software**

The EBU have now publicly stated that they will be producing software for use by County league administrators. AG said that he was keen to have details of this as soon as possible in order to ensure that his work on development of the new website would be compatible.

#### **13. AOB**

(i) Clive Keep had asked the meeting to take a decision regarding the validity of a heat of the County Pairs which had apparently been held at Banbury, even though no such heat was listed in the County Prospectus for this year and he had not been notified of the

results until well after the event had taken place, which meant that all places in the semi-finals had already been allocated. If it were to be considered that the heat was valid, a further issue would arise concerning the eligibility of a particular player who had already competed in another heat, but with a partner who was later found not to have primary allegiance to Oxfordshire.

When asked (by email) why no Banbury heat was listed in the prospectus, SB believed that he had been asked to omit it as Banbury had indicated that they were not intending to hold a heat this year: however, he could not trace any correspondence to confirm this. Banbury had been advised of the problem and had been invited either to attend the meeting or to send in any representations they wished to make but no response had been received.

The meeting agreed that, as the heat had not been included in the prospectus and its results had not been notified to the organiser in due time, it should not be considered to be valid. SB would be asked in future to ensure that clubs specifically checked the details for County Pairs heats. **ACTION: SN to advise CK and Banbury of the outcome; SB for prospectus.**

(ii) There was still an outstanding query about the issuing of Master Points for players participating in County matches. **ACTION: SN to remind Chris Cooper.**

(iii) Peter Finbow said that Wallingford had recently been offered the opportunity to purchase the premises used by the club (Roke Village Hall) and wondered if any support might be available from OBA. He was advised that an application should be submitted under item (6) above.

(iv) DB said that, following preparation of the most recent issue of the County newsletter, he had recently been reminded of an earlier Management Committee decision to devote half the front page of the newsletter to advertisements for forthcoming County competitions. He felt that this was not the way to produce an interesting newsletter that people would want to read, and would not wish to continue as its Editor if this was still thought to be essential.

It was noted that in the past year, the newsletter had changed from being wholly printed in hard copy to being mainly sent out in electronic form. The committee felt that this meant the previous decision was superseded and was therefore happy to agree that DB could continue to work along the current lines. DB was thanked for his efforts, and congratulated on an excellent issue.

#### **14. Date and venue of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011, at the Comrades Club in Wantage.