

Oxfordshire Bridge Association

Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting

held on Wednesday 24th March 2010 at 7.30 p.m. at the Comrades Club, Wantage

PRESENT:

John Briggs [JB]	Chairman
Sandra Nicholson [SN]	Secretary
Dinah Lintott [DL]	Treasurer
Alan Grunwald [AG]	Tournament Secretary
Brenda Harris [BH]	Publicity Officer/EBU Shareholder
Geoff Nicholas [GN]	League Secretary
Ian Angus [IA]	Match Secretary

Andrew Speyer	Abingdon	Richard Sills	Oxford
John Barlow	Frilford	Krys Kazmierczak	Summertown
Alan Wilson	Menagerie	Neil Whiting	Summertown
Kathy Talbot	Oxford	Colin Jones	Wallingford

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Stephen Brown [SB]	Chief Tournament Director
Maxine Henry [MH]	Membership Secretary
Sue Maxwell [SM]	EBU Shareholder
Marryat Stevens [MS]	Youth Officer
Lynne Hayes [LH]	Cups, Honours Boards and 2010 Congress

Ian van Maanen	Abingdon	Chris Kerr	Oxford
Gordon Carroll	Abingdon	Erica Sheppard	Summertown
Mike Webley	Aylesbury	Bill McCarthy	Thame
Alison Nicolson	Blewbury	Norman	Gascoyne
Kay Chamberlain	Faringdon	Wallingford	
Peggy Manuell	Oxford		

2. Minutes of Management Committee meeting held on 10 December 2009

The minutes were unanimously approved (proposed AG, seconded Krys Kazmierczak).

3. Action points and matters arising from previous meeting

(Numbers refer to the minutes of the previous meeting. Some matters arising were covered in the Officers' reports which were circulated with the agenda for this meeting. Any discussion of items in those reports, or included under other main agenda items, is recorded in the appropriate place.)

3/6(e): Kathy Talbot asked whether any progress had been made on arrangements for uploading results to the County website. AG explained that whilst he was prepared to publish anything sent to him, SB preferred to keep results in a separate area to which only he had access and this meant that when SB was not directing, no one else could upload results. It was felt that it was essential for the Congress results to go up on the same day as the event and other results should also do so whenever possible. The meeting also voted that "as a principle, all relevant information should be available on www.oxfordshirebridge.co.uk" (proposed Richard Sills, seconded Kathy Talbot). Until this could be achieved, AG was asked to make the necessary links clearer and easier to use. **ACTION:** AG was asked to convene and chair a small working group to look both at integrating results and at possibilities for a general redesign of the website. Whilst he was free to invite any OBA member of his choice to join the group, suggested members were SB, GN, and Bill McCarthy. JB would contact SB to discuss this.

6(c): David Bygott [DB] had prepared a draft of his first issue of the Newsletter which was distributed to those present for information, and was agreed to be excellent. BH asked for the date to be changed to April and would liaise with DB over printing and distribution. She felt that we needed a minimum of 3 issues a year (in April, August and December) to accommodate the notices of forthcoming events, but it was agreed that if DB was prepared to do more, and/or to provide interim updates on the County website, this would be welcome, provided it did not increase the overall cost. It might be possible to reduce costs by using email to distribute most copies and reserving paper copies for those without Internet access. **ACTION:** DB to be asked to co-ordinate with BH & AG over printing/distribution/web publication for both the main newsletter and any interim updates.

4. Officers' reports

All officers' reports (except for the Chief TD's) had been circulated with the Agenda for the meeting. The following additional points were made:

2010/2011 Congress - Kathy Talbot offered to help when LH gives up, but not to be the sole organiser. **ACTION:** BH to email all Management Committee members to ask people to take leaflets to other congresses. AG to make sure the EBU knows that the venue next year will be Steventon. JB to speak to LH about future organisation – could it be done by a group rather than one person? (NB as there will now be no committee meeting after the AGM – see (8) below - LH will be asked to convene any necessary

meeting re. the Congress.)

EBU Shareholders: SN noted that the OBA would not be pursuing the issue of club constitutions until the amendments to the County constitution had been finally approved, but in the meanwhile suggested that in order to prevent possible problems, club secretaries might like to check the status of their own club's constitution and if necessary compare it with the model club constitution available on the EBU website. Krys Kazmierczak, as EBU Club Liaison Officer, also volunteered to help any club seeking assistance with updating its constitution.

Youth Officer: In the absence of MS, JB wished to record the OBA's thanks to the North Oxford Community Association club who lent their equipment for use during the recent weekend event for schools.

6. Business to be dealt with

a) Preparation for P2P

SB was asked to review the County's masterpoints and licensing arrangements against the rules recently updated and republished by the EBU, and report on compliance, in time for any necessary adjustments to be approved at the AGM. **ACTION:** SB.

It was noted that as a result of the introduction of P2P/Universal Membership on 1st April, a number of club members would become members of the EBU and OBA for the first time. Delegates were encouraged to mention this within their clubs and welcome such new members of the Association. It was agreed that the OBA should produce a welcome letter which would include an introduction to the services provided by the County such as competitions, newsletter, website, etc. **ACTION:** SN to convene a small (electronic) working group to produce such a letter: this would include the Membership Secretary if willing, JB, Kathy Talbot and Alan Wilson.

b) Wessex League and P2P implications

GN presented his paper, together with a further document [*copy attached*] responding to the proposal put by Menagerie that was circulated in advance of the meeting.

It was agreed that the County's main concern should not primarily be about income (although we should insist on receiving the £4.00 annual subscription from any direct members, and those with secondary affiliation, who continue to play in Division 4 and above), but that we needed to establish a set of consistent rules and a sustainable precedent for the future.

GN explained that a number of other counties are having similar problems with their leagues and it seems that the attitude of the EBU to allowing "groups" to participate has relaxed somewhat, giving us freedom to decide what we think is best for the OBA.

GN argued strongly, and the meeting agreed, that the Wessex League is intended primarily for EBU-affiliated clubs with primary allegiance to Oxfordshire and that if we did agree to allow exceptions (either permanently, or for a limited time), they should only be for existing teams. In addition, Wessex League matches needed to be played within the County, and it was felt that wherever possible they should be played at a club or a hired venue rather than in members' own homes, which were not normally suitable for

teams-of-eight matches.

On behalf of Menagerie, Alan Wilson said that if the County decided against allowing them to continue to participate as a non-affiliated club, they had two main options: either to merge with another club (realistically, one based in another county which might be able to participate in the League), or to consider running a fortnightly duplicate teams event which would make them eligible to become affiliated. The meeting felt that the latter option would be preferable since it would demonstrate that Menagerie was making an effort to be seen as a part of, and a contributor to, the County bridge community.

After considerable discussion, the meeting came down in favour of proposal (b) in GN's paper, i.e. to allow the four non-affiliated teams currently participating in the Wessex League to continue to do so, subject to the stated conditions. In addition, it was agreed that there should be a review of the situation after three years; that Abingdon Alternative would be allowed to continue to play in Division 5 but would not be eligible for promotion whilst they remained unaffiliated; and that non-affiliated groups should be encouraged to find ways to become affiliated.

Following a formal vote, it was agreed nem.con. that a small group would be asked to produce and circulate for comment an amended version of the Wessex League by-laws which would give effect to this proposal, and that the amended by-laws would then be put to the AGM as the recommendation of the Management Committee.

GN and Max Bavin of the EBU were thanked for their work in preparing the proposals and collating all the relevant information.

ACTION: Set up a group to draft the necessary changes to the by-laws. SN to try to find a volunteer with drafting experience to join her and JB.

c) Operation of County Duplimate machine

It was reported that one possible volunteer had withdrawn, and another had yet to be contacted to discuss the matter in detail. Kathy Talbot said that her son might be able to help over the summer, but could not provide a permanent solution.

ACTION: JB/SB to contact the potential volunteer ASAP.

d) Amendments to County Constitution

SN reported that Martin Pool, a member of the EBU Board, had very helpfully reviewed the document that failed to gain Board approval in 2009 and, following various adjustments as indicated in the document that had been circulated, it was hoped that this would not happen again.

A suggestion that it might be more practical to elect officers from amongst the representatives elected by clubs was rejected. Another suggestion, that the formula for the number of delegates per club should be adjusted so as to increase on a sliding scale, was left for future review.

Richard Sills offered to send suggestions for a few "tweaks" in the wording to clarify some areas that he felt could be better expressed. With these possible additional revisions, the meeting agreed to put the constitution as amended to the AGM and to the EBU for formal approval.

ACTION: SN, in time for the AGM.

e) Preparation for AGM

Members were asked to remind their clubs that nominations for officer posts could be submitted via the forms in the County Prospectus. In particular, we still need a new Membership Secretary – SN has details of what this post involves if anyone is interested.

Non-standard items for the agenda so far included the County Constitution, the changes to the Wessex League by-laws, and ways of improving attendance at County competitions. Anyone wishing to put forward any additional items should notify SN as soon as possible. The Agenda will be published on the County website three weeks before the date of the meeting; club secretaries will each be sent a copy (normally by email) and will be asked to display it on their noticeboards, as well as letting members know that it is available on the website.

There will again be free refreshments and bridge available after the meeting for those attending.

7. AOB

Newsletter: Following the discussion on the Wessex League, it was suggested that David Bygott might be asked to do an article about Menagerie in a future Newsletter.

8. Date and venue of next meeting

The AGM will be held at 7.30 pm on Monday 14 June, at the Oxford Bridge Club.

This will NOT be followed by a meeting of the Management Committee, although there may be a short meeting to discuss arrangements for the Congress, if LH feels it is necessary.

Dates and venues for further meetings in 2010/11 will be agreed at a later date, noting that we should continue to alternate days of the week and where possible, sometimes use venues outside central Oxford.

P2P and Wessex League

Document from Geoff Nicholas circulated at the meeting (see item 6(b) above)

The Menagerie Club have put forward a resolution with regard to a change in the Wessex League rules from next season starting in September and this has already been forwarded to everyone by the county secretary. Before commenting on this proposal I think I should clarify a few points.

1) The county will in future derive a substantial part of its income from P2P sessions held in affiliated clubs....**this is to say affiliated to the EBU (not just to the county)**

2) A club affiliated to two counties will see the P2P “county element” from its club sessions remitted to the county of its primary allegiance. The secondary county will receive no income from these sessions. Individuals will need to pay the OBA manually if they wish to play in OBA events (unless they also play sufficiently at another club which has prior allegiance to Oxfordshire).

3) The Wessex League is currently for affiliated clubs ...**affiliated to the EBU and county**

The only current exception we make for this is for unaffiliated clubs which play in division five. (The exception is intended as a stepping-stone to affiliation.)

4) Under the new EBU guidelines, a number of previously recognised “clubs” will no longer be recognised as, from 1st April, they will not meet EBU affiliation criteria.

5) Members of the EBU and OBA who do not play sufficiently enough in P2P club sessions shall need to make payment direct to the OBA.(and also sometimes the EBU depending on whether they play elsewhere) It will no longer be the case that the EBU will collect county subscriptions by direct debit on our behalf..

Let us turn to the Menagerie proposal.

The first thing we notice is that absolutely no reference is made to EBU affiliation (which is a very key part of P2P).If adopted the county could face future problems with its income stream as more clubs disaffiliated, leaving those members interested in competitive bridge to enter as groups. If we are looking to kill-off the Wessex League competition and reduce the county`s income, then this surely has to be the way to start!

The second point is that the proposal effectively opens the door to virtually any group of eight players. Okay, I accept that we, as the Management Committee, would have a veto, but can someone please spell-out on what exact grounds this would be used? Everyone and their dog seem to think they have “rights” these days! Do we really want to get into debates and arguments each time we wish to turn-away an application?

Okay, so what do we do about Menagerie, Highworth and Abingdon Alternative?
(Alternative is currently in division five as an unaffiliated club team)

Well, we do need to ensure that the Wessex League remains primarily for EBU affiliated clubs....doing anything different would be totally unreasonable. We, as clubs, need to decide whether we are happy to see the continuance of EBU unaffiliated teams in our League. I'll put forward two proposals for consideration by club delegates but, in fairness to the three clubs mentioned I think it is my responsibility to put on record the following points:

If we vote the three clubs out then we shall lose four teams from the Wessex League. Furthermore, three of these do participate in the top two divisions; the overall strength of the League will be adversely affected. Additionally, Menagerie Club members have, over many years, given freely of their time in assisting the county. As examples, the Claridges put in considerable time running this very competition; the last three county captains have all been members of the Menagerie Club and the current county captain is also Menagerie. Other posts have been filled by Menagerie members over the years.

If we do lose the four teams (or maybe three) then there shall have to be a major restructuring of the divisions, possibly losing one division with all that this would entail with regard to promotion and relegation.

I am not arguing for or against but we definitely do need to reflect on things properly...it should not be a knee-jerk reaction. Whatever is decided by the county will be permanent unless the EBU decides things are not working-out generally across the counties.

Right, these are the proposals

a) The Wessex League shall only be open to EBU affiliated clubs based in Oxfordshire plus any affiliated clubs, based outside of Oxfordshire, which are participating in the Wessex League as at inception of P2P on 1st April 2010 or have played in the Wessex League during any of the previous three years. In this regard, affiliated clubs are those meeting the EBU's criteria once P2P takes effect. Only EBU affiliated clubs shall be eligible to represent Oxfordshire in the Garden Cities and this representative club shall be the highest placed in Division One provided its primary county allegiance is to Oxfordshire.

No other clubs (affiliated or otherwise) from outside Oxfordshire will be allowed to enter until it is felt that P2P has bedded-in.

or

b) The Wessex League shall only be open to EBU affiliated clubs based in Oxfordshire plus any affiliated clubs, based outside of Oxfordshire, which are participating in the Wessex League as at inception of P2P on 1st April 2010 or have played in the Wessex League during any of the previous three years. In this regard,

affiliated clubs are those meeting the EBU's criteria once P2P takes effect. Only EBU affiliated clubs shall be eligible to represent Oxfordshire in the Garden Cities and this will be the highest placed team in Division One provided its primary county allegiance is to Oxfordshire.

No other clubs (affiliated or otherwise) from outside Oxfordshire will be allowed to enter until it is felt that P2P has bedded-in.

However, additionally the county will allow "groups" currently participating in the Wessex League to continue but subject to these conditions.

- 1) Groups must annually appoint someone in the group to be responsible for ensuring that each group member is a member of the EBU and OBA and has paid his/her dues to both these parties. Frequent failures in this regard will be sufficient cause for the group to lose its right to further participation in the Wessex League.**
- 2) These groups are limited to the number of teams currently participating. Any reduction in their number will become permanent.**
- 3) The groups' "bases" for home matches must remain much in line with as present i.e. reasonable both to venue and whereabouts.**

The following clause may be added to one or both proposals

EBU unaffiliated clubs (those with regular duplicates) will be allowed in division five but subject to regular review by the Management Committee. It will be expected that unaffiliated clubs should affiliate to the EBU at some early stage rather than use this relaxation of rules as a way a cutting costs for members.

Geoff Nicholas (Wessex League Secretary)