

Oxfordshire Bridge Association
Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting
held on Thursday 17th July 2014 at 7.30 p.m. at Horspath Village Hall

PRESENT:

Robert Procter [RP]	Chairman		
Sandra Nicholson [SN]	Secretary/EBU Shareholder		
Claire MacDonagh [CM]	Treasurer/Tournament Secretary		
Diana Nettleton [DN]	Team Leader, County Night & Competitions/ County Night Co-ordinator		
Alan Wilson [AW]	Team Leader, County Team /EBU Shareholder		
Peter Briggs [PB]	Membership Secretary (<i>elected during meeting</i>)		
Jonathan Price [JP]	Education Officer		
Chris Dawe [CD]	County Pairs Organiser		
David Bygott [DB]	Newsletter Editor		
Andrew Ashworth	Abingdon	Matthew Wilkinson	Oxford
Peter Litchfield	Abingdon	Robert Gasser	Summertown
John Fleming	Oxford	Lorraine Jones	Summertown
Pat Lewis	Oxford	Peter Owen-Smith	Summertown
Chris Kerr	Oxford	Erica Sheppard	Summertown
Sue Smith	Oxford	Christopher Sheppard	Summertown (observer)
Kathy Talbot	Oxford		

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Stephen Brown [SB]	Chief Tournament Director
Rob Dixon [RD]	Assistant Chief Tournament Director
Hugh Thomson	Wessex League Secretary
Sandra Claridge [SC]	EBU Shareholder & Presidents/Chester Cup Secretary
Peter Finbow [PF]	Congress Organiser
Mike Fletcher [MF]	Team Leader, Duplicate Bridge Promotion & Youth Team
Geoff Nicholas	Aylesbury
Michael Allen	Blewbury
Peter Stevenson	Oxford

RP welcomed those attending a Management Committee meeting for the first time and said a few words to outline the structure of the committee and the various teams, as well as the two-way nature of the roles of club delegates (both to participate in decision taking, representing the views of their club where appropriate, but also to promote the County and its events and initiatives within their club). SN was asked to produce a “welcome pack” that could be sent to new members in future, explaining this in more detail.

2. Minutes of Management Committee meeting held on 19 March 2014, and draft minutes of 2014 AGM

Some members of the committee who had been present at the meeting held on 19 March requested a correction to item 5(ii) of the minutes. Their understanding was that the proposal for the fourth Tuesday had been presented as a County Night to be run by Menagerie. They had no recollection of the points minuted regarding Menagerie taking responsibility for payment of the rent, issuing of Master Points and Pay to Play submissions at club rate, did not believe that the meeting had agreed to these, and wished the relevant sentence to be removed.

SN affirmed that her handwritten notes taken at the time clearly recorded that the points about Master Points and Pay to Play rate were raised and that answers were given, as stated in the minutes, before the proposal was accepted. She was therefore not willing to accept the correction, which she regarded as an accusation of dishonesty. AW and CM also recalled all three points being raised and answered as recorded in the minutes.

After some discussion it was agreed, nem.con, that a note should be inserted into the minutes in italics at the end of the sentence to read “(although subsequent discussion has made it clear that this was not everybody’s understanding of the points)”. The copy published on the County website would be amended to include this.

No comments were made on the draft minutes of the 2014 AGM.

3. Action points and other matters arising from those and previous Management Committee meetings, not otherwise on the agenda

a. Action Points

Website: The new hosting arrangement still had not been implemented as Alan Grunwald, who needed to authorise the previous hosting company to release the password, was not responding to emails. DN agreed to write a letter that could be taken to Wantage for him– JP offered to help with this.

Several members said that Tuesday night results and hands were not always posted to the website as promptly as they might be. The Competitions team would look into this.

Production of documentation on the operation and management of the new site was still outstanding.

Definition of “friendly” bridge events: Still outstanding, but currently in abeyance.

Infrastructure - Honours boards: No progress to date. Richard Sills has offered to help by co-ordinating with Lynne Hayes.

Officers/volunteering: Chris Dawe had taken over from Clive Keep as County Pairs Organiser and Peter Briggs had kindly offered to become Membership Secretary (see below) but replacements were still needed for Publicity Officer, Youth Officer and Social Team Leader. RP asked for suggestions on who might be approached. He regretted that there was a general lack of proactive volunteers at County level (which was becoming a common problem across the EBU). However with the right incentives, including possible financial support, it might be possible to achieve some of the County’s aims through activities organised by clubs; RP would start an email correspondence asking for views and ideas along these lines.

Club affiliation: SN had written to secretaries of affiliated clubs asking them to send through details of non-affiliated clubs in their areas, and will collate and pass on results to DBP&Y team.

b. Other matters arising

None were raised.

4. Appointment of new Membership Secretary

Following the AGM, Peter Briggs had volunteered to take over the vacant post of Membership Secretary. His appointment was proposed by John Fleming, seconded by Alan Wilson and carried nem.con.

PB then asked about distribution of next year's competitions brochure and calendar. This should be finalised and available on the website ASAP (DN and CM have already drafted the calendar). The 2013/14 brochure had not been printed, but this was by default rather than by design. After discussion it was agreed that the aim should be to circulate the new brochure (including the formal notification of the AGM required by our constitution) by email wherever possible. PB explained that in the database supplied by the EBU, about a third of the County members listed had no registered email address, and that not all of them were contactable via local clubs. It was agreed that he would write to these people explaining why we needed up to date email addresses, and would also ask club secretaries to encourage members to supply email addresses both to the club and to the EBU.

5. Reports received since AGM

Congress: CM was thanked for producing the Congress accounts and PF and all involved were congratulated on its success, both operational and financial. PF had asked whether in future there might be ways of spreading the load undertaken by the organiser: this will be considered by the Competitions team.

Wessex League: It was noted that the new scoring scale recommended by HT was as per the EBU White Book. Swindon (ex-Highworth) had not yet decided whether to apply to join the league but if, as seemed likely, the outcome was that they would have to start in Division 5, it was felt to be unlikely that they would go ahead. When formally approved, the various changes to the rules would need to be incorporated into the bylaws and KT offered to do this if given the information. DN would arrange a meeting and resolve the outstanding issues by the end of August.

Membership: PB expressed concern that the data provided by the EBU did not appear to be "clean" in the sense that it did not necessarily match the information held by clubs about their members. However, clubs probably did not have authorisation to pass on data about their members to the County. It was suggested that they might be asked to send out data requests with their annual subscription returns.

Chairman: RP reported that the Eastern region County Chairmen's group had prepared several working papers for other counties to discuss and asked SN to circulate them to members for information. He said that the chairmen's meetings he had attended had come up with some good ideas which we could consider putting into practice in our own county.

6. Verbal reports and recommendations

A. Secretary/EBU Shareholders

No new items to report.

B. Team leaders and officers

i. Competitions and County Nights

Members from the Oxford Bridge Club had requested a further discussion on changes to county nights and in particular the participation of the Menagerie club in those arrangements.

RP offered to stand down as Chairman for this part of the meeting but was advised that this was not constitutionally possible. He therefore declared an interest as a Menagerie member.

DN said that the reorganisation had been more challenging than she had originally anticipated, especially since Stephen Brown was now saying that he wanted to retire completely as Chief TD by Christmas this year. She had been successful in finding different people to manage different Tuesday events and was pleased with the increase in numbers attending since the new schedule had started at the beginning of May. In her view it would have been much more difficult to achieve both of these aims without the co-operation of Menagerie and she had found them to be very helpful. She was aware however, that change was never easy, that these changes had been implemented very quickly and that some issues remained to be resolved.

AW said that we should all thank DN for the enormous amount of work she had done in a very short space of time.

Chris Kerr said that the OBC Trustees simply wanted clarity as to who the hiring principal was for the evenings run by Menagerie. PB argued, however, that it was not possible for an evening to be both a County Night and a club night for an individual club, citing various technical and possibly even legal difficulties that he perceived with this arrangement. He felt that if Menagerie did not run its own events it could not be considered to be a duplicate bridge club. Other OBC representatives took the view that the County should not be seen to be helping an individual club in this way, particularly one that was not necessarily supported by all players in the County.

AW replied that Menagerie had agreed to the changes for the benefit of the County not for the club, and that it would actually have been easier for their members to continue playing once a month on Mondays as they had been doing. He added that whatever happened, they were not prepared to run more than one event a month.

After a somewhat acrimonious discussion, a motion was proposed by PB that “the fourth Tuesday should be unambiguously defined as an OBA event” on the understanding that this would mean that it could no longer be counted as a Menagerie club night. This was seconded by DB and carried by 13 votes to 6.

It was then agreed that if Menagerie were willing to do so, the Claridge Cup event could continue to be held on County night for three more months until the end of the current competition, with the P2P still to be submitted by Menagerie during this time, and a suitable adjustment to be made to the tenancy agreement between OBA and OBC.

ii. Infrastructure

RP asked members to consider who might be approached to fill vacant roles on the committee, particularly Social Team Leader. In the absence of suitable volunteers, he felt that it might be possible to achieve some of the same aims via clubs, possibly with some financial support from the centre. He planned to start an email correspondence asking for ideas along these lines.

iii. Education

JP reported that 15 people, including the EBU General Manager Barry Capal, had attended the Bridge Teachers meeting held on the previous Saturday (see write-up in county Newsletter). In September he was planning to start an Oxford-based Junior Bridge club on Sunday afternoons, where juniors would come with their parents. He was also looking at projects to use NGS grades as a basis for “banding” educational events. The County was anxious to promote high quality classes for beginners and he would be very happy to liaise with any club which felt it needed help in setting up classes or other educational events.

iv. Duplicate Bridge Promotion and Youth

DB reported that the latest issue of the county newsletter had contained enough material for three pages. Only two of these had been printed but the third was available on the website. He would welcome any input on what the newsletter should include.

DB also suggested that the county should try to capitalise on the success of its young players (e.g. Freddie Illingworth, Laura Covill, Alex Roberts) in international events by generating media interest. Those present responded by urging him to take on the role of Publicity Officer, with a formal proposer (Jonathan Price) and seconder (Kathy Talbot). DB indicated that he would like to take more time to think about this [*but subsequently accepted the nomination*].

v. Social

No report and new Team Leader needed, although Barbara Jordan is still willing to help organise events such as café bridge.

vi. Selection and County Team Management

AW said that since he had been asked to become the new County captain, he would have to stand down as team leader for this team if it was felt that the two roles should be separated

It was reported that Rob Dixon (nominated by University) and John Slater (nominated by Thame) had joined the Selection Committee.

7. Report on OBC conversion from Members' Club to a Charity

John Fleming gave a brief report on the conversion of Oxford Bridge Club to a "CIO" (charitable incorporated organisation) which had taken place on 1 July. The new status would have some financial advantages for the club, in return for which its Trustees would have to ensure that the club met charitable objectives of benefiting the community. The Trustees would be happy to answer questions about the process from any other OBA club considering becoming a charity.

8. Any other business

None was raised.

9. Dates and timing of Management Committee meetings/date and venue of next meeting

SN reported that following research and consultation with affiliated clubs to avoid potential clashes with significant events, the following dates would in future be used for OBA meetings:

2nd Wednesday in March – Management Committee

2nd Tuesday in June – AGM

3rd Thursday in July – Management Committee

3rd Monday in November – Management Committee

This meant that the dates in 2015 would be: Wednesday 11th March MC, Tuesday 9th June AGM, Thursday 16th July MC, Monday 16th November MC.

Management Committee meetings would normally be held at Horspath Village Hall, unless unavailable (at present, this would only be for the November meetings); the AGM would normally be held at Oxford Bridge Club, subject to possible building work in 2015.

The next meeting would be held on Monday 17th November 2014, venue TBA. Kathy Talbot volunteered to check availability of an alternative hall in Horspath.