

Oxfordshire Bridge Association

Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 16th July 2015 at 7.30 pm at Horspath Village Hall

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A Chairman's Report

Appendix B Oxfordshire Congress – 5-year comparative figures

PRESENT:

Robert Procter (RP)	Chairman
Claire McDonagh (CMcD)	Treasurer
John Williams (JW)	Assistant Secretary
Peter Briggs (PB)	Membership Secretary
David Bygott (DB)	Publicity Officer/Newsletter Editor
Nigel Wilkes (NW)	Wessex League Secretary
John Slater (JS)	Team Leader, Selection and County Team Management
Diana Nettleton (DN)	Congress Organiser
Alison Nicolson (AN)	Youth Officer
Jonathan Price (JP)	Education Officer
Joan Bennett (JB)	Youth Officer

Robert Gasser	Summertown	Mike Bennett	Wallingford
Kathy Talbot	Oxford		

Apologies for absence:

Sandra Claridge	Secretary	Stephen Brown	Chief TD
Mike Fletcher	Promotion/Youth	Peter Stevenson	Oxford
Peter Owen-Smith	Summertown	Pat Lewis	Oxford (resigned)
Matt Wilkinson	Oxford	Lorraine Jones	Summertown
Michael Allen	Blewbury	Sandra Nicholson	Summertown
Richard Sills	Oxford	Chris Kerr	Oxford
John Fleming	Oxford	Peter Litchfield	Abingdon

Chairman's Welcome

RP welcomed all new members of the MC. He said that Sandra Claridge had agreed to act as OBA Secretary at the OBA AGM and John Williams had subsequently agreed to assist her. He added that he believed both Sandra and John would be very happy to stand aside if others came forward to take over and JW confirmed this. RP said that he believed that the OBA Management Committee existed primarily to formulate policy and that ways and means should be delegated to Sub-committees, who should refer back to the MC only when budgetary considerations intervened. Bearing this in mind, he envisaged a different order to the agenda for MC meetings, whereby matters of policy and principle were dealt with early in the meeting. This suggestion met with approval.

1. Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting of 11th March 2015

These were adopted and signed.

Matters Arising:

Auditor: RP reported that Nigel Birks had now been appointed as Auditor at the OBA AGM

Volunteers: RP reported that he had received only two replies to his appeal for volunteers.

Pro-ams: it was reported by members present that Menagerie, Central Yarnton, Wallingford and possibly Oxford were to run events during the coming season, and agreed that in such circumstances there was no need for the County to introduce additional events.

Status of new clubs: these were Central Yarnton and North Oxfordshire, as previously reported. One was not yet on the list and Central had been wrongly flagged (now corrected). North Oxfordshire had submitted no P2P returns but the EBU had sanctioned this since teaching sessions were deemed to be exempt. It was noted that the OBA grant to North Oxfordshire would not therefore be recoverable via P2P contributions. PB suggested that such situations should be given due consideration in the future before possible grants were considered. JP stated that "An early dividend from the OBA's Northern Towns development project is the EBU registration of Kings Sutton BC after nearly 20 years as an unaffiliated club."

Tournament Directing: it was noted that John Rowe had agreed to direct at County events.

Wessex League: a report had been received from the previous League Secretary regarding the behaviour of two club captains. RP said that in line with comments in his Chairman's Blog, he had written informally to them.

Teaching Conference: plans to run a conference had been discontinued for the moment: RP undertook to keep this matter under consideration. **(Action Point 1)**

Café Bridge: RP reported that Oxford Bridge Club's event had already taken place and a further event in Abingdon was due in September. He said that it was good that bodies other than OBA undertook such events. DB commented that they afforded opportunities for publicity which were not being best utilised currently: he had attended in the past to take photographs and to arrange opportunities for press coverage, but bridge clubs were not the best setting for these.

I and I website password: RP reported that progress had been achieved and was continuing.

2. Chairman's Report

This had been circulated in advance and is now attached to these minutes. RP stated that he served on the EBU's Chairman's Group and was Chairman of its Midlands section. The Groups' objectives that were most important, and working on first, were those identified in his report. He added that John Williams (Essex) had produced a document recommending Best Practice, which covered best behaviour, youth development and succession planning. He recommended setting up a small working party to consider and develop ideas expressed in the document. Possible members of such a working party were mentioned as being himself, John Briggs, Diana Nettleton and Kathy Talbot. RP undertook to convene a first meeting. **(Action Point 2)**

3. Growing Membership : Proposal for Club Chairman's Conference

A document had been tabled at the EBU Chairman's Conference but was found by those present to be largely unexciting and in need of development. Consideration should also be given as to whom it should be aimed at. It was noted that P2P contributions in the county had declined, despite membership remaining static (Abingdon being the exception). KT commented that growing membership depended on successfully establishing two areas – good behaviour and good teaching. RP suggested that an OBA Conference for Club Chairman should be set up, with such matters as its primary topic. He agreed to progress this. **(Action Point 3)**

4. Proposed alteration to OBA Constitution

Mike Bennett had submitted a written request to consider a minor cosmetic change to the constitution, in terms of excluding details of management of the AGM, such as how minutes were taken. It was agreed that the point was valid. JW said that changes to the Constitution could only be considered at an AGM or EGM of the OBA and it was agreed to introduce this item at the next AGM. **(Secretarial note from JW: in researching this I have found other instances of generally poor drafting and would be happy to prepare a paper for the AGM, if asked – Action Point 4)** 2

5. Matters for discussion and delegation

Honours Boards: RP reported that Sandra Nicholson had agreed to take responsibility for these, in terms of design and production. KT suggested that the OBC Honours Boards might be used as a model and this was agreed, subject to a different background colour. JS agreed to assist SN, working within the cost framework agreed previously.

Competition Teas: it was noted that CM had agreed to take responsibility for these and agreed that the Competitions Sub-committee should decide on the way forward, ensuring that budgets were met.

County Congress: a financial report covering the last five years was tabled and is now attached to these minutes. RP pointed out that this year's profit was severely diminished. It was agreed that the situation needed to be addressed by the Congress Sub-committee comprising Diana Nettleton, Peter Finbow, and Claire MacDonagh, who would decide ways and means of meeting a pre-set budgetary requirement: this was agreed at a figure of £1000 profit. RP reported that Stephen Brown had expressed a wish to act as Chief TD for the Congress next year and hoped that the date would be on the same weekend. This was agreed, as any possible move to May had been found to involve difficulties. It was further agreed to invite the current Congress Sub-committee to act as the organising team for next year. **(Action Point 5)**

Education and Youth Policy: RP said that it was very gratifying to have such a high participation from junior players but there was a lack of targeted events for juniors currently. A general discussion then took place as to how to instigate a co-ordinated approach: DB undertook to investigate bridge at Oxford Brookes University and it was agreed that Abbey Smith should be consulted. KT suggested that the idea of a Junior Congress might be revived. RP concluded by saying that this general topic should be constantly in our minds and that we should seek advice from every possible quarter.

Pro-Ams and Stratification: the matter of Pro-Ams had been considered earlier in the meeting. RP said that the Competitions Sub-committee should be encouraged to consider possible incentives via stratification. He added that the EBU was considering the possibility of a "Regional Improvers Event", i.e. limited to below a defined level. KT suggested that the working group to be set up to consider Best Practice should take responsibility for this area also and this was agreed **(Action Point 6)**.

Recruitment: RP reported that Mike Fletcher was looking for help in the field of promotions. He would welcome ideas.

Training of scorers and TDs: CMcD reported that there had been a limited response to the request for new recruits. RP said that the clubs had a large number of TDs and scorers already and it wasn't training that was needed so much as involving them in the county's events. JS said that the county's problem was finding people prepared to work Sundays and KT said that getting hands on to the website was also a problem. It was agreed to encourage Rob Dixon to establish a team of scorers conversant with the website, via training sessions **(Action Point 7)**.

Wessex League: a suggestion had been made that computer deals should be made compulsory for Wessex League matches. However, it was acknowledged that this was a sensitive area for some clubs and for others there was a problem in terms of access to suitable hardware and software. It was agreed to leave further consideration to the Competitions Sub-committee. **(Action Point 8)**.

Website: RP said that it was important to improve management and content of the website. He and Sandra Claridge had recently had a session with Stephen Brown but much remained to be done. DB said that information on clubs was still inadequate (Central Yarnton was still absent from the maps section and the link to the newsletter was broken). He added that a main tab was needed on the homepage, to include

newsletters. JS said that a definitive version of the honours boards should also be on the website (this was agreed). **(Action Point 9)**.

6. Action points from the previous Minutes

It was noted that some actions had not been followed through as yet. It was agreed that these should be added to the list from the present minutes by the Secretary.

7. Next Meeting

RP apologised for the fact that neither he nor JW had a note of the dates discussed previously. JW agreed to ask Sandra Nicholson for these. This has now been done and the list is as below:

Second Wednesday in March: Management Committee

Second Tuesday in June: OBA AGM

Third Thursday in July: Management Committee

Third Monday in November: Management Committee.

KT to note these dates for the purpose of room bookings **(Action Point 10)**

The next meeting of the Management Committee will therefore be on **Monday 16th November 2015 at 7.30 pm.**

OBA Management Committee Meeting held on 16th July 2015

Agreed action points

Please note, this document is intended primarily as an aide-memoire for committee members and team leaders. Full minutes will be circulated, and published on the County website, at a later date.)

Action to be taken – carried forward from previous meeting(s), with amendment where necessary	By whom, by when
<u>County Night</u> : The expanded County Night structure to be finalised following discussion with the Menagerie and OBC.	CN Team
<u>Club Affiliation</u> : Publication on the website of details of non-affiliated clubs, and publicity of their events to be addressed when further volunteers join the team.	DBP&Y team
<u>Duplicate Bridge Promotion & Youth</u> : Lobbying is required by OBA members at their children's/grandchildren's schools to recruit teachers, and increase the number of volunteers to run the bridge groups.	DBP&Y team
<u>Website</u> : Communications with Alan Grunwald and 1-to-1 to be developed so that user goes direct to the new Home page. AL to transfer site from AG.	AL & AG
<u>Support for Clubs</u> : The website to be checked to ensure that it contains full up-to-date details. Yarnton BC to be included on the map.	SC/JRTW AL
<u>Selection & County Team Management</u> : Details of who is eligible to play for the County, how players are selected and new pairs invited to play, to be published on the website.	S&CTM team
<u>Education</u> : Encourage as many clubs as possible to produce an education strategy paper along the lines of the one recently done by OBC. JF is happy to let other clubs see this on request.	JP/Club reps
New items from most recent meeting	
<u>Teaching Conference</u> : RP to keep the matter under consideration (<i>Minute 1</i>)	RP
<u>Best Practice</u> : RP to convene a first meeting of a small working party possibly comprising himself, John Briggs, Diana Nettleton and Kathy Talbot. (<i>Minute 2</i>)	RP
<u>Proposal for Club Chairman's Conference</u> : RP and SC to organise an initial meeting, the primary topics to be Good Behaviour and Good Teaching. (<i>Minute 3</i>)	RP/SC
<u>OBA Constitution</u> : A change to the Constitution in regard to minute-taking to be included on the agenda for the next AGM. In addition JW to produce suggested changes to improve the drafting. (<i>Minute 4</i>)	RP/SC/JW
<u>County Congress</u> : The Congress Sub-committee to address the financial downturn of the Congress, and decide ways and means of meeting a pre-set budgetary requirement: this was agreed at a figure of £1000 profit. The sub-committee comprising Diana Nettleton, Peter Finbow, Sandra Nicholson and Claire MacDonagh to be invited to act as the organising team for next year. (<i>Minute 5</i>)	Congress Sub-committee
<u>Pro-ams and Stratification</u> : The "Best Practice" sub-committee to consider stratification incentives. (<i>Minute 5</i>)	BP Sub-Committee
<u>Training of Tds and Scorers</u> : Rob Dixon to establish a team of scorers conversant with the website, via training sessions. (<i>Minute 5</i>)	RD
<u>Wessex League</u> : The Competitions Sub-Committee to discuss the question of mandatory computer dealing for Wessex League matches.	Competitions Sub-committee
<u>Website</u> : Effect the necessary changes in terms of maps, link and tab for Newsletters, and honours boards information. (<i>Minute 5</i>)	RP/SB
<u>Meeting Room</u> : KT to be asked to book a meeting room at Horspath Village Hall on Wednesday 9 th March, Thursday 21 st July, and Monday 21 st November. The AGM to be held at OBC on Tuesday 14 th June. (<i>Minute 7</i>)	SC/KT

APPENDIX A

Chairman's Report for the Management Committee Meeting 16 July 2015

The thoughts that follow are prompted both by the EBU's County Chairmen's Conference which I attended yesterday and by the thought that as this is our first meeting of a new year we should take some time out to identify our main purposes for the year.

The Regional and National Chairmen's Working Groups that I have attended over the past couple of years have addressed a range of topics with a view to counties benefitting from each other's experience. I have found these meetings extremely valuable – discovering that others share the same problems can be a comfort and others can suggest new solutions. It is working on these groups that first gave me the thought that an Oxfordshire Club Chairmen's Conference might be a good idea.

Our Working Groups started by identifying areas we felt important to address and found that we had many common concerns:

How do we preserve the future of the game? Grow membership? Persuade unaffiliated clubs to affiliate? Give more value to those who are members but don't play in county or national competitions? Give everyone who wants them opportunities to improve their game? Improve the level of service the counties give their clubs and players? Ensure the standard of service is equally high wherever you are in the country? And maintain an adequate volunteer workforce?

There were many other questions but we cut it down initially to setting up individual working parties on the following specific topics:

1. Improving the relationship between the EBU/Counties and unaffiliated Clubs
2. Developing a Value Proposition and a Progression Strategy for Players at all levels that revitalises our membership
3. Structuring, staffing and motivating the volunteer workforce that we depend on at National and County level

Presentations of the output of these working parties were made to the Chairmen's Conference yesterday. There were many good ideas that I think we can work on in Oxfordshire – but who should do that work and how?

The output from the first two headings incorporates the realisation that it may be more important to make our clubs and events attractive to potential new members than to attempt to convert unaffiliated clubs. A listing of what the EBU provides for Tournament players and another of what counties and the EBU should offer to club players have been produced. An attempt to prepare a similar list to indicate the advantages of affiliation to unaffiliated clubs was shelved. However if we are trying to grow membership we need to be aware that there are many bridge players who have visited a bridge club and have said "never again". Often the reason given is that bridge players seem to forget their social manners when they sit down at a bridge table and it is clear that the "Best Behaviour at Bridge" initiative has not gone far enough. Would I be right to assume that Club Chairmen have a common wish to grow their clubs' membership? If so I think this is a subject that would fit perfectly into a Club Chairmen's Conference.

Chairmen of Clubs would also, I am sure, gain the same benefits of sharing problems and concerns as I have gained from the County Chairmen's Regional Working Groups. Accordingly I am proposing setting up such a meeting in Oxfordshire.

The main output from the third heading comprises a draft document on the subject of "Best Practice for County Associations". It addresses some aspects of volunteering to work for county associations. Then it lists practices that have already proved successful in some counties under the following headings:

- Transparency and Communications with Clubs and Members
- Association Management
- Bridge Development

- Succession planning
- Best Behaviour at Bridge
- How do we get more 40-60 year olds playing bridge
- Youth Development
- Being and Feeling part of the EBU
- A practical guide to clubs working to rent/purchase their own premises

And finally it looks at the idea of counties setting themselves performance measures, explaining why this might be a good idea and suggesting some areas it might be appropriate to measure.

There are a lot of ideas in this, far too many to list here or to cover in a MC meeting. Some of these might be straightforward for us to adopt but others might be more difficult and would clearly require a bigger volunteer workforce. I would suggest that this document will best be considered by a review by a small working party, which would make proposals arising from this review either to this committee or directly to the leaders of our individual management teams.

As a result of these thoughts you will see two items on the agenda for the meeting concerning holding a Club Chairmen's Conference and setting up a working party to look at the Best Practice document. You may like to consider before the meeting whether you agree that these topics should be of significant importance to us in the year ahead.

My final thought to report is to thank those who have volunteered for office this year and to lament the fact that so few clubs continue to be represented amongst our officers. Perhaps a Chairmen's Conference might address this issue as well.

Robert Procter
4 July 2015

APPENDIX B

Oxfordshire Congress comparative figures – 2011-2015

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
	£	£	£	£	£
Income	11,435	10,846	9,750	9,331	8,532
Expenditure					
Catering	(3,876)	(2,420)	(2,264)	(2,144)	(1,800)
Prizes	(1,540)	(1,460)	(1,590)	(1,534)	(1,480)
Licence Fee	(1,523)	(1,519)	(1,200)	(1,197)	(1,195)
Director & Scorer	(1,246)	(658)	(691)	(984)	(943)
Organiser	(890)	(987)	(797)	(475)	(450)
Hall Hire	(750)	(700)	(770)	(701)	(589)
Chair Hire	(844)	(727)			
Advertising	(477)	(283)	(432)	(306)	(276)
Sundry Expenses	(58)	(172)	(4)	(38)	(86)
Profit	231	1,920	2,002	1,952	1,712