

Oxfordshire Bridge Association
Management Committee Meeting
Monday 21st November 2016 at 7.30 pm
Horspath Hub, The Green, Oxford Road, Horspath OX33 1RP

Minutes

Present:

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| Robert Procter (RP) | Chair |
| Peter Litchfield (PL) | Abingdon |
| John Edwards (JE) | Abingdon |
| Michael Robinson (MR) | Menagerie |
| Peter Briggs (PB) | Membership |
| Sandra Nicholson (SN) | Honours Boards and Trophies |
| John Rowe (JR) | Joint Chief TD |
| David Bygott (DB) | Publicity |
| Kathy Talbot (KT) | Joint Chief TD |
| Richard Sills (RS) | OBC |
| Alison Nicolson (AN) | Education |
| Ken Langdon (KL) | Secretary |

Before the start of the meeting David Bygott invited those present to congratulate the County Team on reaching the finals of the Tollemache, the first time since the eighties. The meeting responded with a warm round of applause.

1. Apologies for absence

Alexander Bain, Neil Higginbottom, John Fleming, Marian Day, Peter Jordan, Faye Slade, Michael Allen, Claire MacDonagh, Ian Angus, Gaye Kyle, Robert Gasser, Pat Lewis, Denis Talbot, Sandra Claridge, Alan Wilson, Mike and Joan Bennett, and John Slater.

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Management Committee meeting on 21st July

The Chair raised the issue of the new, more prominent "clubs" page on the County web site and asked for a volunteer to look after it. SN agreed to take this on.

3. There being no further matters arising the meeting approved the minutes and the Chair signed a copy.

4. Matters arising from Chairman's Report

The Chair raised the issue of the location of the Midlands Counties Working Group Improvers' Simultaneous Pairs event. He had suggested that a heat of this should be held in Oxfordshire but wanted the location to be a place to which people from the South of the county, such as Abingdon and Wallingford, would be willing to travel. Oxford Bridge Club was out because of the rebuilding work. It was suggested that Abbey Smith should be consulted since her club had so many players who would be eligible for this event and they might prefer a venue to the north of the County, such as Banbury. *[Subsequent realisation that this will be just one month after the proposed Oxfordshire Bridge Festival the Chair proposes that we withdraw the offer to host an Improvers Simultaneous Pairs in 2017]*

5. Education and Promotion – progress on “Promoting Bridge in Oxfordshire” budget

The Education and Development committee, comprising team Leader RP, KL, Judy Wesselbaum, and Ian Mitchell with apologies from David Watkins, Alison Nicolson, Gaye Kyle met to discuss the disbursement of the £3,000 promotion budget. They agreed to send out the letter attached to their report. To date they have approved a grant to OBC but have had no further requests. KL suggested that this letter was unlikely to bring results and mentioned that his follow-up telephone calls to secretaries had yielded nothing apart from a suggestion from Kings Sutton that they would apply. Both MR and SN said that their clubs had considered the letter but had concluded that they did not need to take any action on it at present.

David Bygott talked about the difficulty of running training events for a variety of levels of skill with a large gap between best and worst. It can be very resource-heavy requiring at worst a teacher for every table. PL said that Abingdon were now running morning sessions for a more or less separate group. MR also suggested that daytime sessions were becoming the way to go. RP to bring the topic up at the next Club Chairs' meeting.

6. Best practice review

KT said that she had been too busy to complete this and send it to John Slater. KL offered to help fashion her notes into a report.

7. Matters arising from Midlands Counties Working Group

RP gave a potted history of a significant problem at this Group and explained that he had briefed our shareholders in detail prior to their attendance at the EBU AGM on Wednesday 23rd 2016, as it was relevant to the contested election for members of the EBU Board. RP asked the meeting to give him discretion to withdraw from the Group depending on the outcome of the AGM and after consultation with the shareholders. The meeting agreed nem. con. RP to send relevant Mr Bridge article, written by one of the candidates, to KL for him to distribute to MC officers.

8. County night and competitions: matters arising from Competitions report

RS pointed out that there had been a clash between the dates of the Gendered Pairs and some pre-arranged Wessex League matches. One solution is to get the county's calendar out more quickly.

PL was disappointed with the demise of the club heats for the County Pairs competition. SN explained that it had been just too difficult to organise because of the number of pairs that

dropped out after the heats. DB said that some people were happy to play in the heats in their home club but unwilling to travel to the next stage, whereas JE said that he and others would play in the next stage if they happened to qualify in their home club but would not put themselves forward for the competition as it currently stood. DB thought that the clubs from the south were willing to come to the fringe of Oxford to play in a Pairs competition. The action was given to the Competitions Committee to find out which clubs wanted to take part in County Pairs.

DB raised the issue of the seniors' ladder and said he would like to see something similar to the existing event held at Roke (a once a month daytime competition where participants brought their own lunch) held at a suitable location for those located in the northern half of the county, perhaps with a challenge event between the two at the end of the season. AN thought we should make it open to non-seniors. DB agreed to go ahead and organise something at Central Yarnton, probably on a Tuesday morning to avoid a direct clash with OBC's "relaxed" Tuesday morning duplicate.

9. Youth: matters arising from County Juniors report

The meeting welcomed the news of the major success covered in this report. JE spoke of the prevalence of children enjoying bridge at primary school, dropping out at secondary school but coming back to it later in life. AN explained how the team was assisting school teachers and others to become able to take over the teaching role, generally promoting a terrific enthusiasm for the game. AN said that the weekend event had been very successful and that having learnt bidding at it two or three children had attended clubs. In another case a maths teacher had produced two or three good players and AN had taken them on. It was important to be able to offer playing opportunities to juniors wherever possible. JR suggested that we put some of the development budget into publicity for the work Holly Kilpatrick was doing.

10. Matters arising from Welcome Pack

Only one matter arose from this and that was the misspelling of principal. KL to correct.

11. Festival update

RP suggested that the success of the proposed Festival depended on clubs, particularly the big ones, providing volunteers to help with administration and organisation of the event. He said he would discuss this at the forthcoming Club Chairs' meeting (see below) as he needed to know whether there was enough enthusiasm for doing it to make it work.

PL asked about the market we were aiming at and RP said the 'Holiday bridge' market, covering the many people who play duplicate bridge for fun rather than to win either local points or cash prizes. The aim would be for it to be less formal than EBU "really easy" events. JR suggested that unaffiliated clubs could be a good market. SN pointed out that the Oxford University Alumni Bridge Association had been thinking of doing a café event but had scrapped the plan for financial reasons. She thought that they might be able to pass on valuable information and/or collaborate in some way with the Festival, and gave RP the name of Phil Meats as the person to get in touch with.

RS suggested that Oxford is a great place for people to visit and that we should exploit that for the holiday part of the event. He also suggested that we circulate all county members for people who do Airbnb to offer guests accommodation. RS emphasised the need for electronic booking.

There followed a discussion on costs with some people saying that £150 was too much. RP

suggested that whilst the initial intention would be to seek participants for the whole week, individual elements could be sold separately if there was insufficient demand for the whole event. KL thought that £150 was a competitive price and could even be higher. DB felt it was a lot of work for a small profit but RP countered saying that there were other benefits to the county that are mentioned in the report.

SN said that we should not worry about making a profit in the first year – it's a marketing exercise and the County could put some funds into it.

RP will put some advertising material together before asking for the committee's approval to go ahead.

12. Review of job descriptions

The meeting liked this idea and each took an action to produce their own job description asking Ken for help if appropriate. RS emphasised the need for a house style and said that some descriptions may need a separate heading for relevant deadlines. KT said that OBC had some existing role descriptions that could be used as templates.

13. Date and venue of next meeting

Wednesday March 8th 2017 at Horspath Hub. Parking to be arranged at the rear of the building.

14. Any other business

Congress - MR asked for clubs to give him feedback on the last congress, particularly any information as to why players did NOT take part. The meeting agreed that he should speak to Claire about opening a separate bank account for the Congress where only she can withdraw funds. He appealed for volunteers to help with next year's Congress, especially more helpers on the day. It should be possible this year to take bookings electronically but someone will need to take over Claire's role in dealing with pre-entry queries, etc. RP to ask Nigel Wilkes to help with the pre-organisation in his role as Tournament Secretary.

The next Club Chairs' meeting will be on Friday 6th January. Venue to be decided.

OBC has asked us to remove our trophies from the club to make way for the building work. SN agreed to take the trophies but was unwilling to add them to her house insurance. RP will review the need for separate insurance but in the meanwhile agreed that the County would indemnify SN against loss or damage should the need arise.