

**Oxfordshire Bridge Association**  
**Minutes of The Management Committee Meeting**  
**Monday 8th March 2018 at Horspath Hub**

**In attendance**

<b>Robert Procter</b>	<b>Chair</b>
Liza Furnival	Oxford
Kathy Talbot	Joint TD/ Oxford
<b>Mike Bennett</b>	<b>Wallingford</b>
Pat Lewis	Oxford
Chris Kerr	Oxford
John Fleming	Oxford CIO
Joan Bennett	Youth/Wallingford
John Rowe	Competitions Team Leader/Joint TD/ Wantage
<b>Matt Wilkinson</b>	<b>Oxford CIO</b>
Paul Miller	Abbey Smith BC
David Bygott	Central Yarnton
Nigel Birks	Vice Chair

<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies for absence:-</b> Sandra Nicholson, Lawrence Haines, Colin Wels, Denis Talbot, Sandra Claridge, Peter Litchfield, Ken Langdon, Richard Sills, Michael Robinson, Alan Wilson, Annabel Wade
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes</b> The minutes of the meeting of 20 <sup>th</sup> November were confirmed.

3	<p><b>Matters Arising from November minutes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Sandra Nicholson reports that the EBED Sims will be used as the basis for awarding the Oxford Times Cup for novice players</li> <li>b) Alison Nicolson had declined the invitation to become the County's Child Protection Officer. (Joan Bennett informed the meeting that Alison was moving away from the county)</li> <li>c) The chairman's e-mail to club chairs following the previous meeting had not elicited any suggestions as to who might take on the county secretary role.</li> <li>d) The meeting discussed the report prepared by Stephen Brown in response to the comments about the website.</li> </ul> <p><i>Resolved to move the website as quickly as possible to a single platform and that that platform should be Bridgewebs. (The decision was based on the assumption that Stephen Brown is willing to continue as webmaster and that he will organise the transfer to the new site at the price he has estimated.)</i></p> <p><i>Resolved that a group should be set up to agree the initial specification for the website. John Rowe, Paul Miller and David Bygott volunteered and Stephen Brown should be invited to join this group. John accepted the role of being the group leader.</i></p> <p><i>Resolved that the group should communicate with the MC for information and input by e-mail but should proceed to the new platform without being required to bring these proposals back to the next committee meeting - the assumption being the transfer should be achieved sooner than that and once done is not immutable.</i></p>
4 and 5	<p><b>Reports</b></p> <p>Chairman's Report: taken as read.  OBA Financial reserves Policy: see item 6 (a) below.  Governance Working Group: see item 11 below.  Oxfordshire Website: see item 3 (d) above.  Social Committee: taken as read.  Proposal from John Rowe (Competitions Team): see item 6 (b) below.  Junior Report: taken as read.</p>
6	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p>(a) Reserves: Following further discussion as to how an optimum level of reserves should be defined it was agreed to minute the following statement: "Reserves are currently considered to be at least £20K more than is reasonably required". The meeting continued to believe that the primary consideration in approving any higher expenditure to reduce this excess should always be the benefit of the members and achievement of agreed objectives. The setting of deficit budgets until reserves have been reduced to a reasonable level is considered by all to be acceptable and by some to be desirable. The suggestion to reduce competition entry fees was rejected as favouring competition players above others. The Congress was seen as a means of raising funds for the county from bridge players outside the county so charges should continue to be held at the market rate. This left the possibility of reducing charges made to all members through Universal Membership.</p> <p><i>Resolved that the MC should propose to the AGM that the county element of the Universal membership charge should be reduced to 1p per play with effect from 1 April 2019.</i></p>

6 (cont)	<p>(b) Budget 2018/19: In the Treasurer's absence the chair reported that it could be expected that the county would achieve a surplus in 2017/18 rather than the budgeted loss of £500. A significant reason for this was the expectation that promotion grants applied for by clubs and approved by the Education and Promotions Team would fall short of the budgeted £3000 by approximately £1400 assuming that a grant to Bicester towards their new teaching programme was approved and paid in the year and by even more if not.</p> <p>The meeting discussed the application by the Competitions Team for funding for new Bridgemates and other scoring equipment.  <b>Resolved to approve the expenditure on this equipment with the proviso that the cost should effectively be recovered over time from charges to competition players and/or renting the equipment to third parties.</b></p> <p>Other points made during the budget discussion were:  Current membership approximately 1800 but there must be many more than this playing bridge in Oxfordshire.  Seminars run by county squad members could bring in finance at least equivalent to the cost of running the county team. The chair was encouraged to try to get an initiative started - but no income was assumed for 2018/19.  A TD course run by the county is desirable and should be funded from the Promotions Budget which should therefore be increased to £4000.  Increasing the budget for expenditure to support Youth initiatives to £2000 could encourage greater participation. (Chair to discuss charging and advertising with Holly Kilpatrick)</p> <p><b>Resolved to approve the following budget for 2018/19:</b>  <b>Membership - £3500</b>  <b>Youth - (£2000)</b>  <b>Congress - £3000</b>  <b>Competitions - (£3200) * subject to plan to recover over time</b>  <b>Festival - NIL</b>  <b>County Team - (£1000)</b>  <b>Infrastructure/General (800)</b>  <b>Promotion Grants - (4000) * including TD training course</b>  <b>Interest received - £200</b>  <b>Overall surplus/(deficit) - (£4300)</b></p> <p><b>2) A deficit budget for 2018/19 was agreed to allow for expenditure of £3200 on scoring equipment (see John Rowe's report) and an increase in expenditure on promotion grants to include a TD training course and the cost of transfer the website to Bridgewebs.</b></p> <p><b>3) It was also agreed that the chair can try to start a teaching programme using county squad members to create funds to fund the county team expenditure, but we left a budget of £1000 net expenditure for the 2018/19 year.</b></p>

7	<p><b>(a) Safeguarding</b>  The chair explained that Alison Nicolson had declined to take on a role as Child Protection Officer and that he had spoken too to Holly Kilpatrick. We need to understand the responsibilities required by the county's safeguarding policy (approved last July) and establish how to meet those responsibilities. These relate to procedures such as obtaining parental consent forms when juniors enter county competitions, handling incidents that occur during county events and passing concerns to an appropriate person or authority when they arise (given that most of us might not know what to do). Clearly county TDs will need to play a part in this process. Failing having an expert within the county, Joan Bennett suggested that we might speak to Donna Wright of EBED. The chair has spoken to Sue Burge, who with Matthew Wilkinson covers this area for Oxford BC. Sue would be willing to meet to talk about the requirements but does not wish to take a county role.  <i>Resolved that the chair should ask Holly Kilpatrick to meet with John Rowe, Kathy Talbot and Sue Burge to discuss how the county's responsibilities can best be met.</i>  <i>Resolved that county TDs should attend safeguarding courses.</i></p> <p><b>(b) Data Protection</b>  Similarly the county needs to ensure that it meets the new regulations regarding data protection when these become law on 25th May this year and in the absence of a county secretary it would help to identify a person who would take responsibility for this area. [The chair has subsequently been advised that this should not take the form of appointing a data protection officer as this creates additional legal responsibilities]</p> <p>OBC had formed a committee that amongst other tasks is responsible for the club's data protection compliance. John Fleming explained that they had started with the ICO's list of 12 steps as a framework. OBC via John Fleming is willing to share the process and outcomes of this work with other clubs on request. Note however that each club would have a different environment, using different software or storing personal data in different ways. Some material had already been shared with Wallingford BC.</p> <p>A particular issue was the use of bridge scoring software to store personal data. OBC had reached the conclusion that neither EBUScore nor Bridgewebs were secure enough for this purpose. They will only store player's name and EBU number, together with any data that is downloaded from the EBU for scoring purposes (currently NGS rating, master point rank and county).</p> <p>The county needs to maintain a list of people who have been given the password to the Oxfordshire section of the EBU website and these people need to be advised what they are permitted to use information about members downloaded from that area for and how to keep it secure and transmit it securely.</p>

8	<p><b>Club Chairs' Conference</b></p> <p>The chair said he was grateful to Tony Hughes of Abingdon BC who has undertaken to organise this year's club chairs' conference. It will take place on April 16. Tony has written to club chairs suggesting an agenda comprising two items and inviting others to be suggested:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How can the County better support bridge teachers and encourage taught to progress to playing duplicate bridge?</li> <li>2) How can we encourage non-affiliated clubs in Oxfordshire, of which there are a large number, to become affiliated to the EBU?</li> </ol>
9	<p><b>The EBU Strategy Document</b></p> <p>This can be found at <a href="http://www.ebu.co.uk/documents/official-documents/EBU-Strategic-Plan-2018-2023.pdf">http://www.ebu.co.uk/documents/official-documents/EBU-Strategic-Plan-2018-2023.pdf</a></p> <p>Counties were invited to contribute by answering two questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you believe achievement of the individual strands of the proposed new Plan, as a whole, will secure a financially sustainable EBU, valued and supported by its Members? Please give reasons for your answer.</li> <li>• Are there any additions or deletions you feel should be included in, or excluded from, the more detailed elements of the Plan? Please give reasons for your answer.</li> </ul> <p>The chair reported that The Midlands Counties Working Group has been working together to prepare the following draft joint response:</p> <p>“The Counties are very interested in the EBU Strategic Plan because they share with the EBU responsibility for the future of the game of bridge in this county; moreover county members are the core of the EBU and we want to represent their interests. We welcome this consultation and ask to be kept involved in the continued development of this plan.</p> <p>The core context of the EBU's proposal is the EBU Player members, but the responsibility of the EBU goes wider than that, as it is the National body for bridge in England. The EBU (our EBU) has a responsibility to all bridge players, whether members or not. This means that it must understand and care about less/non competitive players and about unaffiliated clubs as much as active members and affiliated clubs.</p> <p>ANSWER TO QUESTION 1 : Even within the context the EBU had given itself, the plan is too coupled to the world of competitive bridge in which its creators have grown up; and even without that issue the proposal is not in a state which gives us confidence that its objectives will be achieved. Many useful strands of activity are identified, but much more work is needed to make this into a robust plan, so the answer is NO.</p> <p>REASONS :</p> <p>The vast majority of EBU player members do not avail themselves of the services offered by the EBU, while they make the majority P2P contribution. That which has been presented does not place enough focus on the understanding and support of these people, and so “a valued range of services to Members” is unlikely to be achieved.</p> <p>Much is known and has been written on what makes a good plan; some of the key concepts are the clarity of the objectives, their achievability and testability, and the availability of the necessary resources to carry these out. The line items in the current Strategic Plan lack many of these attributes. Plans are often well served by having a hierarchical structure, which brings out the logical relationship of low level activities to the top level goals. The current layout does not allow any easy tracking from low level items to the top level objectives. There is also concern that - even within the restricted context - the top level objectives are incomplete; they say nothing about the development of the game, which is surely a pre-requisite for its success in the future.</p>

9 (cont)	<p>ANSWER TO QUESTION 2 : In response to question two, there is nothing we would delete, although a number of items concern the Values of EBU as an organisation (reflecting how it runs the business) and would be better managed independently of the Strategic Plan. We see gaps on two fronts.</p> <p>(a) Actions needed of a National Body, reaching out to non-bridge-players and to the Press, and raising the profile of the game of bridge across the country, which includes making everyone more interested than they are today in the performance of our International Teams.</p> <p>(b) There are some, but insufficiently concrete, actions on the development the game of bridge in a way that makes it appeal to new generations of players (where other interests challenge for their limited time) - encompassing Youth Bridge, Teaching and Technology.”</p> <p><b><i>Resolved that Oxfordshire should support this response.</i></b></p>
10	<p><b>Promoting Bridge in Oxfordshire</b></p> <p>The chair listed a number of events partly designed to help promote bridge to all bridge players in Oxfordshire:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The junior fund-raising interactive seminar on March 12 at Abingdon</li> <li>2) A bridge on the river trip being planned for May 16</li> <li>3) A second Oxfordshire Bridge Festival being planned for September 18-21</li> </ol> <p>He hoped that more could be done by MC and clubs to ensure the success of these events by encouraging members to participate and to introduce non-members.</p> <p>[Paul Miller and David Bygott left the meeting]</p>
11	<p><b>Preparation for AGM</b></p> <p><b><i>Resolved that the AGM should be held at Wallingford Bridge Club on Friday June 1.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Resolved that Nigel Birks, with the assistance of Joan Bennett, would take responsibility for organisation.</i></b></p> <p>The chair reported that he expects we will need to appoint new people to take the roles of chair, vice chair, secretary, education officer as well as needing someone to take responsibility for data protection and safeguarding.</p> <p><b><i>Resolved that the whole committee should take responsibility for finding people willing to take on officer roles in 2018/19.</i></b></p> <p>The meeting discussed the proposals for changes to the constitution put forward by the Governance Working Party. Pat Lewis read out a commentary prepared by the Oxford BC representatives concerning the first of these as follows:</p> <p>“I’d like to give my perspective on the proposal to change the constitution as outlined in the papers for this meeting.</p> <p>We welcome the initiative to make some reforms of the constitution. I have met with a small group of my colleagues including Denis Talbot who was a participant in what I believe was the only meeting of the governance group.</p> <p>Our conclusion is that the reform you propose in relation to paragraph 6.2 does not go far enough.</p>

11 (cont)

Let me address our perspective of the proposal:

- It does not adequately address the size of the management committee. Although it does eliminate the possible 80 or so people from the clubs that are entitled to attend, it still leaves 18 officer positions and no positions for specific club representation.
- It is unusual for a Management Committee to have the authority to increase its size with no bounds
- It does not follow the recommendations of the working group in terms of the number of meetings each year
- It fails to address the impossibility of holding a successful extraordinary general meeting.
- The only provision for input from the clubs is via an advisory group meeting once a year which we think is inadequate

In most situations no one needs to look at a constitution. It is only when things are not going well that its protections become important.

In summary, I cannot support this partial reform. However, I can agree that reform is needed, and my colleagues and I have looked more carefully at the EBU Model County Constitution which suggests some paths forward.

We would be able to support a proposal which includes all of the following characteristics:

1. A management committee of a fixed size as in the model constitution where some members are not associated with a particular officer role
2. Arrangements for the quorum of general meetings which follow the EBU recommendations
3. More explicit provisions for the running of sub committees which follow the EBU recommendations. The formulation in the Berks and Bucks constitution on this point seems to be a good basis for wording
4. A much strengthened method by which the clubs influence the direction of the county

So, in summary, we would want to support a further proposal which cover all these points.”

The chair pointed out that the November MC meeting had discussed both the number of meetings and input from clubs. That meeting rejected the suggestion of holding more than three formal MC meetings a year and did not think further channels for club input necessary as the Association’s primary responsibility was to its members. It instructed the Governance Working Party to draft resolutions for constitutional change based on these views. He said that if individuals now did not agree with those views the correct place to express that would be in their vote at the AGM. The meeting considered the OBC reps’ suggestions valuable and thought they should be considered and acted upon although recognising that time would be an issue.

11 (cont)	<p><i>Resolved that the MC should put forward proposals 2, 3 and 4 to the AGM as they stood.</i></p> <p><i>Resolved that the Governance Working Party should consider the other points made by the OBC reps' report. (The meeting's understanding appeared to be that this would enable the working party to produce a new version of proposal 1 incorporating a more precise definition of the make-up of the MC and some other proposals for example regarding meeting quota and the operation of sub-committees.)</i> [Action: Chris Kerr agreed to undertake this task on behalf of the Governance Working Party]</p> <p>There would not be time for these recommendations to be brought back to the MC before the AGM but it was considered that they could still be presented to the AGM as recommendations of the Governance Working Party.</p>
12	<p><b>Next meeting</b> The next MC meeting will be on 19 July 2018 and, subject to availability, will be held at The Horspath Hub</p>
13	<p>There being no other business the meeting was declared closed.</p>

