

MINUTES OF OBA COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 28th March (3.30pm – 5.30pm)

Present: Kathy Talbot (Chair), Peter Litchfield (Treasurer), Patricia Hones (Chief TD), Stephen Brown (Secretary), Charlie Bucknell as Education Officer, Robert Procter (Promotion, Social & Education Team leader), Adrian Lambe, Peter Finbow, Malcolm Currie, Joan Bennett (Juniors Team), Alan Wilson (selection committee and Shareholder)

1. Apologies for absence: Sandra Nicholson (Wessex, Shareholder), Matthew Covill (Selection Committee), Denis Talbot – arrived later, Sandra Claridge (Presidents and Chester, Shareholder)

2. Matters arising from notes of last meeting - No matters arising.

3. Approval of Appointment of Stephen Brown as Administrator

Kathy proposed Stephen Brown as secretary for around £60 a month. This was formally proposed, seconded and passed unanimously.

4. Officers' reports:

We had read the reports in advance. The following points were added

Chair Charlie has agreed to take on the Education officer role. Thanks to Patricia for stepping into her role and to all officers

Treasurer – OBA has £38278.11 in the bank. About £700 down on the amount at the beginning of the financial year. The larger outgoing amounts are for the EBU, congress fees, entries to competitions. These used to be covered by entries and table money. The EBU is putting them up, so we may need to reflect on this. Stephen has taken over taking entries and this has been a considerable help.

Peter resigned in 2020, so there has not been an official treasurer. So no accounts for three years. Robert has volunteered to do accounts for 2022-2023. Peter says he was persuaded to take on the full role from 1st April. He is happy to pass to someone else if they would like the role.

Robert has offered to do accounts for 2022-2023 year. He may go back and do the previous two years depending how difficult / easy it is to do one year. Or help with accounts moving forward.

Kathy thanked Peter for carrying on.

Secretary – only added that he is keen to put congratulations on OBA Website and welcomes anyone sending information. If anything is out of date, please let him know.

Wessex League - Next year Wessex League results will be submitted to NGS. Peter Randall has a programme using Bridgemates if a Wessex League is played F2F.

Promotions Group

Since Robert's report has not gone to the *obacomp@gmail* email address, Robert read it out. The group is about to write to Oxfordshire members about OOT and OOPs. This initiative is intended to get more people playing at clubs.

In the longer term, more social bridge. Move round clubs and organise an event once a month.

Asking for a budget of £1000 this year.

Tony Hughes has reported on website noting a few things that are out of date. Kathy and others are acting on these.

The group has been talking about teaching and the role Charlie plays

Social – café bridge during the summer. Henley. Joan is happy organising venues. Last time in Oxford was done in aggregate scoring, and we were able to check against other scorecards, avoiding the need for a director. Joan is requesting an aggregate NGS level rather than each individual's level to determine eligibility to play.

Congress- to have a section of players at a lower level. NGS 7 and below. This has gone back to the congress committee.

County Selection Committee - Midland Counties league, note these results. The C team won their league. A & B team in top half. It is good to make more of successes on the website, and Dawes League report since December have been posted.

Kathy wonders whether the meetings discuss more than picking teams. Strategy? Matthew has been doing quite a lot of the work of the County Captain. Kathy wondered whether there would be trials to give an open way of selecting. Kathy would like to come to the next meeting Ex-officio and discuss strategy. Alan said he mentions trials but others say that they do not work. A new selection team is needed.

Are we happy to appoint Matthew as county captain? To get a new team, we ask clubs for nominations. Each club can nominate one person. Not all need to be accepted. It would be good if there was a broader group of selectors, also including 9-High?

ACTION: Kathy to meet with the selection committee. If anyone has suggestions for committee to consider please share. Add to the Agenda:

1. Strategy
2. A discussion of budget for training sessions. Diana has stopped running these. It's important that it is not seen as a clique, openness is important.
3. Charlie: Would it be useful to create friendly matches against other counties. The Midland 9-High Swiss events help with this.
4. New selectors & confirmation of Captain appointment

Peter: It is good that 3 out of 4 Thursdays have competitions on them with OBA events on 3rd and 4th Thursday and Menagerie event on 2nd Thursday. This helps indicate strength and weaknesses of players.

Alan: is pleased to see people in action on Thursday and the county does not find it is short of players (although more for C team than A team).

Juniors - _Joan. Only thing to add ref with teenagers at the Spring Bridge Camp: three new entries this morning, so it may be ok. So watch this space.

Alan noticed that the change in squad leader may have had an effect and many of the squad have exams to work for. So the numbers are down. Also a slow re-start in schools with bridge lessons. The current costs are currently footed by Wallingford BC (having given £2000 to Joan to use for Juniors). There is a few hundred pounds available for pupil premium kids.

A recent event raised money for Juniors If the OBA meets the cost of EBU Fee and RealBridge fee then the gift to Juniors would be £575. Kathy suggested this be ringfenced within the OBA accounts and this was agreed.

Robert feels that

1. at the beginning of the year, Oxfordshire should indicate in a budget at the start of the financial year.
2. Until account have been done for the last three year, we know we have a lot of money, but we do not know how much we are spending on lots of different headings. We do not know yet how much we'll make out of the congress.

So do be aware that we cannot have a too detailed discussion yet

3. When discussing with Barbara for Social events, we have run events previously for charity. Barbara thought that supporting a charity would be more attractive than supporting the Juniors (but other may have been more keen to support the Juniors). The fact is that cafe bridge at Henley has always been oversubscribed and probably still will be despite the after effects of Covid. So who we give any surplus to may not be relevant as a marketing tool.

Joan – in 2019 the money was split between two charities. In 2020 people did not want their money back so Flexicare received a lot of money from charity.

Competitions Group - In absence of report, SB put up minutes of last meeting. Patricia has not written a report since not been in the job long enough. She wants to get a handle on what competitions OBA runs.

For the Mixed Pairs, more advertising is needed. Some people may be away. Perhaps a mixed Swiss for next year. Any idea for good competitions, please let us know.

The congress committee met a hiccup, the school does not wish the Congress back, but are viewing a village hall on Thursday, and Kathy has some other possible venues. It will be run F2F. Last year a fair amount of profit went to EBU and it was shared with B&B.

5. Budgets - It is difficult to talk budgets without accounts.

OBA has been paying the expenses for Junior (£1067 + £200 for Cheltenham Bridge Club) There is also a £500 float. This is sufficient at present. Kathy indicated more would available if needed.

Promotion - £1000 to cover OOPs & OOTs etc, and would cover any losses for clubs working with the county willing to run special events. The rules require professional catering. If clubs make a profit, they keep it, if there is a loss, OBA would underwrite it.

Charlies will produce a proposal for how this will work at the next meeting. Thame is keen to be involved. E.g talking about something, then playing. Jonathan was suggesting playing bridge and then some commentary on the hands. The emphasis is on social.

Competitions make surplus on Thursday nights and other events. Sometimes the cost of paying the Garden Cities, Corwen etc make a profit into a small loss. The EBU has halved the entry fee for Corwen, Tollemache & Pachabo to help counties.

Wallingford is charging the seniors 50% more for the hall. The hall people have increased the price. Dividing the total between the club and the OBA, the share is £950 for 12 events in 2023. In the past about £600 for the year. Increase cost of heating etc. £5 to play per person.

ACTION: Peter to email letter to SB for SB to circulate. Seniors is 30-33 boards. £5 is fairly cheap. Should we increase to £7?

Final of Inter-County league. The County will support this.

In the past the congress made £2000 and supported other events, but being smaller this will not raise anywhere near this amount.

Robert: At some stage in the past, it was felt that competitions should pay for themselves, since only a small proportion of people play in them, The social players should not support competitions.

e.g overall profit on all events would cover all events.

ACTION: For next competition group meeting (16th May 2023) Add to the Agenda:

1. Seniors (viable, increase entry fee?)
2. Are competition entries too cheap? Perhaps charge a little more.
3. Should those who qualify for Corwen or Pachabo pay their entry fee (or 50/50)

Denis: If we have a view of priorities for financial support then Juniors is clearly high on that list. Encouraging social bridge and players new to the game is high. Rather than funding more experienced players playing more bridge. His personal view is to support the juniors, and committee agrees.

Alan: a fair point, If qualify for the Pachabo or Corwen, player could pay. Could be 50/50

Joan: the seniors cost is very cheap. We think the players would be happy to pay more and get free tea/coffee.

All competition costs could be increased by 50%.

Competitions group will discuss. Anyone has any views please share with us

6. Grant applications

ACTION: We would like to support Bucknell Bridge as we feel Charlie is an asset to the County. We are considering a couple of ways in which this can be done. The discussion is to be concluded by email, with KT to lead. Decision required within a week.

7. Role of the County (Kathy had submitted a discussion paper)

Counties are in a difficult situation. Kathy would like us to consider this and come back at the next meeting.

ACTION: A small working group? Joan, Charlie, Robert, Patricia offered. To meet in early May.

Any of the rest of the committee is welcome to contribute.

The midland counties working group is a forum for discussion. In the past this was agreed that all bridge player must be a member of the EBU if they play bridge EBU agreed but it's not happened. Documents from the past should be revisited.

8. Safeguarding

A discussion followed concerning a player who had recently played in the Seniors Pairs. In 2017 this person was banned from playing in OBA Events whilst being on the Sex Offender's Register (the person was on there for 5 years and is now removed).

The EBU safeguarding policy deals with children, not other vulnerable people. The OBA's policy refers to Juniors. We need to consider whether young people have access to the building where the Seniors is played. Is there a risk to children? Some players, particularly women may feel uncomfortable and not play. The meeting considered whether this has anything to do with safeguarding, or about not wishing to play against someone who has been on the Sex Offenders Register. If a person has served their sentence, do we have the right to ban that person? This is a county event and since not for young people are the others safe. A show of hands suggested that 5 were in favour of allowing participation in the seniors event, 1 person against, with others abstaining

The meeting then considered: do we need to make a decision ourselves, should we ask the EBU Safeguarding officer (Abbey Smith) i.e. bring in someone with more training. The issue may resolve itself since Keith Sadler had spoken to the person (who was also mortified of the effect he was having on others) and he may take on board the advice given.

ACTION: KT to speak to the EBU Safeguarding officer

9. Dates of Future Meetings

To be circulated and ask if ok. Suggesting

Committee meetings (Tuesday 3.30pm): 13th June and 14th November 2022

AGM (Thursday 6pm with free entry into teams): 28th September 2022