

FINAL DRAFT

SUSSEX COUNTY CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SUSSEX COUNTY CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION HELD VIA ZOOM ON SUNDAY 13 APRIL 2025 AT 11 AM

Present:

Martin Pool

Joy Mayall, Mervyn Wotton

John Hardy

Dick Wheeler

President

Vice Presidents

Honorary Treasurer

Honorary Secretary

and the following members:

Alexa Baxter, Chris Jago, Richard Jameson, Jane May, Debbie Hildick-Smith, Gerry Stanford and Malcolm Wright.

Apologies had been received from Peter Clinch, Andrea Galpin, David Galpin, Ros Wolfarth, Ernie Rivett, Eileen Perrigo, Lynda Smith and Colin Smith.

0. Opening Remarks

The President opened the meeting by welcoming those present to the Association's AGM 2025. Referring to the Chair's absence, the President explained that the Chair was playing in the National Pairs Final. The constitution did not preclude another chair for the AGM and, subject to the meeting's approval, it was proposed that the President chair this AGM. The meeting agreed unanimously.

1. Approval of minutes of the AGM held on 14 April 2024

The final draft minutes had been circulated and were approved unanimously as a correct record.

2. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

3. Chair's Report

3.1 The President referred to Peter Clinch's report which had been circulated to AGM attendees. The following paragraphs reproduce that report for the benefit of members who were unable to attend.

3.2 This is my fourth and penultimate report from the Chair. Sadly, it is the second successive year when I have not been able to attend the meeting in person, owing to a clash with the National Pairs final. Many thanks to those of you who are attending, and to others who will read the report later. Please feel free to reach out to me personally if you have any comments or questions.

3.3 Our Community

1. I have been heartened by the progress that has been made in all Sussex clubs in adapting to the post-Covid world, and in integrating the various forms of bridge now available to continue to thrive. Our membership in March 2025 totalled 2640 compared with 2645 a year ago, a very slight drop. The EBU has set a target for 2025 to increase overall membership by 5%. In partnership with affiliated clubs, we aim to play our part in achieving a similar increase in Sussex.
2. Extrapolating from the totals reported by those who responded to a recent survey, those teaching at affiliated clubs are likely to have more than 450 students participating at different stages of their bridge education, a significant increase on last year's estimate (400) with the potential to add club members over time.
3. The County has continued to put significant resource into promoting the teaching of bridge to schoolchildren, and there has been excellent progress made in pockets of the County in bringing the game to youngsters in both primary and secondary schools. This is an initiative that the County will continue to support insofar as our resources can do so. We have close links with key contacts in EBED to ensure that our activities are complementary to their wider programme of youth bridge events and related activities. My sincere thanks go to all of those who have given up so much of their time for this.

3.4 Our Finances

1. As will be evinced in our Treasurer's report, tight financial management has been maintained and the Universal Membership Scheme (UMS) has generated sufficient income in 2024 to cover overheads as recovery post pandemic continues. This has allowed us to keep the UMS county rate at 7p for 2025/26, a rate that has not been increased since 2012.

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3.5 Our Philanthropy

1. Eleven clubs participated in the EBU festival 'Bridge – It's a Big Deal', holding twenty-three events and other activities across the county. Over 900 members and others were involved, generating total donations to Cancer Research UK of just under £11500. Included in the overall total were donations created by table money surcharges during festival week totalling £993. That was matched by SCCBA from reserves. Where activities such as open days and taster sessions were held, a total of 56 potential new club members were identified. Congratulations go to all involved, particularly our top three clubs by donations – Horsham (£3235), West Sussex (£2861) and Seaford (£1400).
2. Eight clubs held heats during our charity sims week generating donations of £1584, a record total. Congratulations are due to all who supported this event. Leading the way were Patcham (£370), Chichester (£340) and Seaford (£240). The Management Committee decided to augment the total from reserves to enable a donation of £1000 to each of the beneficiaries selected – Samaritans Eastbourne and Sage House Dementia Support Centre, Tangmere.

3.6 Our Competitions

1. Our tournament programme continues to be a combination of online and face-to-face events reflecting the mixed environment demanded post pandemic. Events for the less experienced remain an important part of the programme, and we have introduced new Welcome Pairs opportunities and a separate competition for "Nine-high" players.
2. 2024 saw a continuation of discounted entry fees aimed at encouraging members to return to face-to-face competition bridge post pandemic. Whilst many of our tournaments have continued to thrive, others have proved to be less popular, and the Tournament committee will be reviewing this as a priority. Pairs competitions are still well-attended, but teams events have been slower to recover numbers, a trend that is mirrored across the country. .
3. For more experienced players we have again partnered with Kent CBA to hold a joint green-pointed weekend in Tunbridge Wells, which has proved to be very successful. We have also once again assisted the EBU by staging a semi-final of the National Pairs using Sussex resources.

3.7 Our Team

1. As ever, Sussex has been supported this year by a tremendous and dedicated group of people who give freely of their time, and I thank all the competition organisers, the tournament directors, the webmaster and those who sit on the various committees be they the Management Committee, Tournament Committee, Selection Committee or Conduct Committee. Once again, they have all pulled out all the stops to bring an excellent bridge programme to county players of all levels. We have lost one extremely valuable contributor, Neil Watts, from the Management Committee, hopefully only for a short time. Many thanks to Neil for all of his contributions – common sense like his can't be bought in bottles.
2. Having said that, there is a real need for new ideas to be added, as many of the current individuals have been in post for many years. As I mentioned earlier, I am now into my final year as Chair, and this seems a great time to hand over the reins to a new person or people who can bring fresh and diverse thought to our county activities. We are working with clubs to look at people who may be positioned to help us increase and diversify our team, and if you know of anyone who might be able to assist, please do let me know. Don't be shy!
3. Finally thank you to all of the Officers of the county including our President, Martin Pool, Joy Mayall, John Hardy and the indefatigable Dick Wheeler. With people like these around you, AI can be deferred with confidence.

3.8 The President invited questions. None were forthcoming.

4. Honorary Treasurer's Report

4.1 Adoption of the Examined Annual Accounts.

The Honorary Treasurer had circulated his annual report highlighting:

1. In another year of gradual recovery, the County has had a satisfactory year financially, despite its main source of income, UMS payments, remaining below pre-pandemic levels.
2. The income and expenditure account for the year ended 31st December 2024 reveals a small deficit of £383 compared with a surplus of £1,824 in the previous year. Our main source of income, UMS

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payments, totalled £6,610, slightly up on last year's total of £6,580. Overall, expenses were significantly up on last year – see item 4 below

3. The surplus on congresses and events at £1,426 was significantly up on the 2023 total of £283. A substantial part of this improvement resulted because the Junior Bridge Camp, which reported a deficit in 2023 of £920, was organised by EBED in 2024 with no direct involvement required from Sussex. The County retained a policy for certain events of having reduced or no entry fees, resulting in a deficit on County events of £189, similar to the deficit in 2023 of £195. One day events were similarly affected, with a deficit of £503, compared to a deficit in 2023 of £448. Income from the Spring and Autumn Congresses, green pointed events and online events contributed a surplus of nearly £1,000 similar to the surplus in 2023. Income from the charity SIMS event was £1,127, compared to £869 in 2023.
4. The County maintained its commitment to youth bridge by sponsoring three seminars at a cost of £1,818 to supply the bridge teaching resources necessary to establish several Minibrige clubs in schools.
5. Overheads, before donations of £2,085 (2023: £925) and item 4 above, totalled £4,289 compared with £4,643 in 2023. Overall, overheads remain fairly consistent year on year.
6. Donations totalled £2,085 (£925 in 2023), with £700 being donated to each of the three chosen charities, partly offset by other donations of £15. The Management Committee agreed to increase the level of donations in 2024 to compensate for the absence of donations during the pandemic years.
7. As part of the EBU "Bridge-It's A Big Deal" festival in September 2024, the Management Committee authorised the County to match the amounts generated by table money surcharges applied by affiliated clubs during festival week. This resulted in a County donation of £993. In addition certain clubs agreed that their UMS charges for sessions during that week would be diverted to Cancer Research UK rather than the County and the EBU. An estimate of £127 was made to calculate the additional donation made by the County by foregoing the UMS charges for its events, giving a total donation of £1,120. Lastly, during the Autumn Congress certain costs were born by an affiliated club and an individual, totalling £395, with an additional £50 donated by entrants to the event
8. Total cash/bank balances at 31st December 2024 were £50,638 compared to £50,484 at 31st December 2023. The balance on the general fund decreased slightly from £45,849 at the end of 2023 to £45,466 at 31st December 2024.
9. These accounts, which were presented to and approved by the Management Committee on 21st March 2025, have been examined by the SCCBA independent examiner, Lynda Smith, who has indicated her approval by signing the balance sheet on 22nd February 2025.
10. Going forward, the SCCBA will continue to face challenges, the main one being to ensure that a broad balance is achieved between our main sources of income and our overheads. The SCCBA remains financially sound and has the resources to assist affiliated clubs if required. As approval was given at the EGM in 2018 for an increase in the UMS county charge, from 7p to 8p for 2019/20 or in a subsequent year, the County can quickly arrange for an increase in income to cover potential increases in expenditure. There is currently no plan to apply this increase.

The Honorary Treasurer invited questions. None were forthcoming and the President proposed adoption of the accounts, seconded by the Honorary Secretary. By show of hands the accounts were adopted unanimously.

4.2 Appointment of Independent Examiner.

The appointment of Lynda Smith as Independent Examiner for 2025 was proposed by the Honorary Secretary and seconded by the Honorary Treasurer. By show of hands Members present approved the appointment unanimously.

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4.3 Approval of membership terms and conditions

The draft membership terms and conditions for 2025/26, proposed by the Honorary Secretary and seconded by the Honorary Treasurer, had been circulated to Members present. The President indicated that there was no change from those in the previous year. By show of hands Members present approved these terms and conditions unanimously.

5. Election of Officers

The President referred to the summary of nominations circulated to attendees. There was only one nomination for each of three posts and no nomination for the fourth. He invited the meeting to approve each post in turn. The nomination for Chair had been proposed by the Honorary Secretary and seconded by the Honorary Treasurer. The nomination for the Honorary Secretary had been proposed by the Chair and seconded by the Honorary Treasurer. Joy Mayall had proposed and Alexa Baxter seconded the nomination for the Honorary Treasurer. By show of hands Members present approved each of the following appointments unanimously:

Chair	Peter Clinch
Honorary Treasurer	John Hardy
Honorary Secretary	Dick Wheeler

6. Election of a Maximum of Ten Committee Members

The President reported that there were only six nominations for the maximum number of posts (10) allowed by the constitution and he invited Members present to agree to the election of those nominated. Each had been proposed and seconded as required. By show of hands Members present approved the following appointments unanimously.

Alexa Baxter, Andrea Galpin, David Galpin, Joy Mayall, Mervyn Wotton and Malcolm Wright.

Following these re-elections, the President took the opportunity to express thanks on behalf of the wider membership to all who contributed to the smooth running of the county's operations, particularly the three Officers, whose unflinching commitment to the success of Sussex bridge merited much praise. The meeting concurred.

7. Members' resolutions

The Honorary Secretary reported that no Members' resolutions had been submitted.

8. Award of Gladys Hakki Trophy.

The President reported that the Gladys Hakki Trophy for 2024/25 had been awarded to Irene Gannon of Lewes BC for many years of service in multiple roles. A summary of her outstanding contribution to Sussex bridge had been published on the county website. The Chair would make the presentation at Lewes BC in due course.

Action: Chair

9. Any Other Business.

Chris Jago (Honorary Secretary West Sussex BC) noted the relatively low level of interest in county activities generally and in AGMs in particular and asked the new SCCBA Management Committee to consider the need to update the Association constitution to reflect this. He suggested change was needed to address the following concerns:

1. The concerted efforts required to achieve it for this year's AGM suggested the need to reduce the quorum required from its current level of ten Members.
2. Currently, for members' resolutions to a General Meeting to be valid, each had to be supported by at least twenty members. This seemed to be an excessively high bar to reach and may be acting as a disincentive to interest in AGMs.

The Honorary Secretary undertook to include this request in the agenda for the next Management Committee meeting.

Action: Honorary Secretary

The meeting closed at 11.12am.