

FINAL DRAFT

SUSSEX COUNTY CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

A meeting of the Management Committee of the SCCBA took place via Zoom at 10.30am on Friday 10 December 2021

Present:

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| Mr P Clinch (PC) | Chairman |
| Mr J Hardy (JH) | Hon Treasurer |
| Mr D Wheeler (DW) | Hon Secretary |

and other elected members: Mr P Bates (PB), Mrs A Galpin (AG), Mr D Galpin (DG), Mr N Watts (NW), Mr M Wotton (MW). Also attending were the President Mr M Pool (MP), Mrs H Kent (HK), delegate from Crawley BC and Mr W Bourne (WB), JBC Project Director.

AGENDA

1. Apologies

Mrs A Baxter (AB), Mrs J Mayall (JM), Mr O Powell (OP) and Mr M Wright (MWr)

2. Minutes of the meeting of 1 October 2021

2.1 Accuracy

MC Members were content with the minutes as shown in the final draft.

2.2 Matters Arising

DW reported that:

- Actions from paragraphs 5.7.2, 8.1 and 12.1 had been completed.
- Action for paragraph 7.3 of the meeting held on 4 June is being carried forward to the meeting in February 2022.
- Other actions would be picked up under the relevant items below.

3. Chairman's Report

PC welcomed HK and looked forward to her input to discussion under agenda item 5. He noted the arrival of the new Covid variant and hoped that it would not impede the restoration of f2f bridge. As the Treasurer's report would show, the county had not been disadvantaged financially. The MC had already discounted entry fees for its 2021 events, including free entry for two flagship competitions. PC also noted that some affiliated clubs were still closed and others were some way off pre-pandemic levels of attendance. Accordingly, he was keen to offer assistance if required. Examples might include help with setting up online sessions alongside f2f or financial support if that would 'kick-start recovery. JH agreed the potential for financial help as part of a feasible recovery business plan. DW commented that similar help had been offered earlier in the pandemic but no requests had been made. He undertook to reiterate the offer as soon as possible. Beyond that, most of PC's time had been devoted to the further development of the 2021/22 tournament programme – see section 7 below.

The following agenda item was brought forward to allow WB to meet another commitment.

13. Youth Bridge

13.1 JBC 2021 and 2022 – WB had circulated a report on the success of the JBC 2021 and invited questions and/or comments. Several MC members congratulated WB on the success of the event and thanked him for his continuing commitment and enthusiasm. Turning to 2022, WB sought MC views on three questions:

- Were MC members willing to maintain the current level of subsidy for a further event in 2022? WB pointed out that attendance by Sussex juniors had been comparatively low and he was concerned about value for money from a county perspective. MP commented that the event served the needs of three counties and was now a key part of the emerging national programme of youth bridge events. Accordingly, he felt that the subsidies were important county contributions to the national effort. MC members agreed and were unanimous in their continuing support. DW commented that there might be scope for slightly increased contributions from Kent and Surrey and the restoration of the EBED contribution. WB felt that present financial circumstances might preclude such but intended to explore with the London association whether they would be interested in a fourth county supporting this event. MP added that Kent and Surrey ran their own youth events thereby contributing to the national programme and neither sought subsidy from Sussex.
- Which of three options did the MC prefer for the timing of the 2022 event? 21/22 July, 22/23 October and 29/30 October were all feasible weekends and had been provisionally reserved at Bowles Rocks. WB (and the EBED CEO) preferred 29/30 October. 21/22 July was less convenient for WB and 21/22 October clashed with the EBU Autumn Congress, an event which many of the older juniors would be likely to enter. MC members were content with this preference.
- New arrangements were needed to acquire DBS clearances as necessary. For previous events, the EBU had organised clearances free of charge but, in their present financial circumstances, they were unable to continue this service. The work (and cost) would therefore fall to the SCCBA as the organisers of the event. Arrangements and funding would need to be agreed well in advance because the checks involved extended lead times. PC agreed to find the resource necessary to plan this requirement.

Action: WB/PC

At this point, WB left the meeting.

4. Treasurer's Report

4.1 Accounts to 30 November - JH had circulated a report for the period to 30 November 2021. The accounts showed a surplus of £1911 and bank balances were healthy at £46,772 (£45,472 30 June 2021). UMS income from online events and f2f sessions

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remained sufficient to maintain that position. The SEC JBC outturn had shown a loss which was within the total of subsidies committed despite the loss the of the EBED contribution.

4.2 UMS income – Analysis by clubs – JH had circulated details of UMS receipts in recent years, allowing, for example, comparisons between 2019 and 2021 to illustrate the current state of recovery and identifying those clubs that continued to be closed. The table was based on EBU records and therefore did not differentiate the 'shared' sessions where several clubs had joined together to deliver online bridge. PC observed that activity at some clubs eg Chichester, Patcham, Avenue, Horsham had held up well. Others less so. JH referred to experience at Worthing where f2f attendances were only 50-60% of pre-pandemic levels and interest in online bridge had waned. DW commented that this lower f2f attendance reflected continued nervousness about returning to f2f and the emergence of the Omicron variant would not help that. PC reiterated his wish to offer help to clubs and DW undertook to draft an email accordingly.

Action: DW

At this point, JH left the meeting.

5. Affiliated Club Issues

PC invited HK to raise any issues of concern. HK referred to the recent Basic Bridge event where entries were well down on pre-pandemic levels despite extensive publicity. She thought that this might reflect less teaching activity where teachers had not embraced online methods. MW observed that entry levels had been lower in all of the other recent online events. DW added that f2f teaching had restarted at Worthing two months ago. Hopefully, that would be maintained despite the Omicron variant. PB referred to a teacher local to Henfield (Hugh Doohan) who had been teaching online but may not be in the SCCBA list. DW agreed to email clubs to refresh the list as far as possible.

Action: DW

At this point HK left the meeting

6. Selectors' Report

6.1 Last meeting - DW had circulated the minutes from the Selectors' last meeting. NW reiterated the difficulties arising from the timing of the Metropolitan Cup. Although the Sussex Tolle team had just failed to qualify for the final, it was a mark of the heightened aspiration of the current squad that they saw this as a huge disappointment having come close to winning the 2020/21 final. The Met Cup 'B' team had finished 2nd and the 'A' and 'C' teams in mid table. The SC would shortly be creating a squad for the 2022 Southern Counties League.

6.2 Tollemache Selection Process – DW had circulated a paper clarifying this process. MP suggested a change to paragraph 4 replacing "candidate pairs" with "selection committee". DW suggested adding a further clarification of the role of the independent observer by adding "The role of the IO is simply to enable independent confirmation of the correct application of the selection process and thereby confirm the objectivity of the results. The IO has no role to play in the debate about the relative merits of the candidates. MC members were content with these changes. DW agreed to pass the revised process to the Chairman of the Selectors.

Action: DW

7. Tournament Committee Report

7.1 Sussex League and Championship Teams

DG reported that he expected two more matches to be completed for the 2019/20 season and he would then draw a line under that competition and determine the final league positions. Early in the new year DG would write to past Captains regarding the 2022 League competition aiming to commence it in February. He would synchronise his letter with a chairman's letter published on the web site and sent to members. He planned to start the Champ teams at the same time. PC reminded MC members that the default for all matches would be online. DG added that he still hoped to hold the Champ teams semi-finals and final f2f.

Action: DG

7.2 Sussex Pairs

In light of continuing uncertainty, the TC had decided to hold the semi-finals and final online. PC would work with the organiser to inform those involved.

Action: PC

7.3 Tournament Programme 2021/22

PC reported further progress to fill in gaps in the calendar.

- **Charity Sims** – This would now take place during the week beginning 24 January with heats being held online or f2f according to club preference. MW had researched the process required to merge the results. PC was consulting with the EBU over measures to 'hide' the hand records until the end of the week.
- **Spring Congress** – this is now set for 14/15 May f2f.
- **GP events** – The 'standard' dates would be 21 May (SP) and 30 July (ST). The EBU were allowing only one to be online and PC was considering whether that should be towards the end of the year as in 2021 if other counties' plans meant a lot of competition for entrants at the standard times.
- **Sussex Candles** – This was likely to take place at the usual time (June).
- **Invitation Pairs** AG was in discussions with likely participants over the details for the 2022 competition.
- **Ladies Pairs, Stepping Stone Pairs and David Pavey final** – PC was in discussions with the organisers to finalise plans. MW observed that four DP heats were taking place shortly, three of which would be f2f.
- **Mixed Pairs** – This had taken place recently. A concerted publicity exercise during the week before had raised entry to the all-play-all event from four pairs to sixteen.

Action: PC

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8. Secretary's Report

8.1 Succession planning

DW rehearsed the continuing need (a) to fill key posts, particularly the Vice-chairman and the Tournament Manager, and (b) to develop succession plans for others. No progress had been made since the last MC meeting and DW reiterated his request for all MC members to explore possible candidates amongst those currently filling similar roles at their home clubs.

Action: All MC members

8.2 AGM 2022 - Preparations

DW posed four questions:

- Should the meeting be f2f or online? DW rehearsed the plan to widen publicity of the event and MC members agreed that an online meeting would be likely to attract more attendees than f2f.
- The timing of the meeting? DW proposed 24 April at 11am in line with that chosen for 2021. MC members agreed.
- Voting? DW planned to decide on this at the point at which he knew whether there was competition for MC posts and/or members' resolutions. In preparation for the latter case, he was in discussions with the EBU about a chargeable service based on *Election Runner* as used for the EBU AGM. In the absence of a need for secret ballots, DW planned to use Zoom facilities for a 'show of hands' approach.
- MC applications by email? DW had circulated a paper setting out a process using email for future applications. MC members were content with the proposals.

Action: DW

8.3 Gladys Hakki 2021/22

DW was about to issue to clubs the invitation to nominate. He invited MC members to email him if they wished to nominate.

8.4 Future AGMs – Club representation

DW sought MC members views on an idea to encourage clubs to represent their members at future AGMs. He wondered whether an approach based on the EBU shareholder arrangements might attract interest. PC and NW thought it was worth a try and DW agreed to develop the idea further for the next meeting.

Action: DW

9. EBU Matters

9.1 Communications

DW reported that a refreshed strategy involved increased communications direct to clubs and members. This would need to be monitored to ensure that it was consistent with county objectives. PC observed that there had been instances of the EBU selecting clubs to offer the opportunity to hold a heat of a national competition which seemed to deny other clubs that opportunity.

9.2 AGM

DW and PC reported on:

- Middlesex motion – This concerned a complaint about the implementation of the disciplinary process applied to two cases alleging unfair play online. The motion was in four parts, each subject to a vote after presentations for and against. Votes 1 and 2 concerned the timing of publicity and were accepted. Vote 3 concerned a vote of no confidence in the organisation created to investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute cases of unfair play online and this was defeated by a large majority. Vote 4 concerned a proposal that all future investigation/prosecution be carried out by the L&E committee and this was also defeated by a large majority.
- Competitions Strategy – A presentation described a strategy designed to complement competition opportunities at club and county level. The proposals were also aimed at restoration of pre-pandemic income as rapidly as possible. There was a need to monitor the impact on activity at club and county level where restoration of income was also important.
- Pricing Motions – There were three motions – the EBU proposal to increase the club member UMS rate by 2p to 42p together with a doubling of the licence fee for online GP events, a proposal by Yorkshire CBA based on a more optimistic view of the recovery of f2f bridge which saw no need to increase charges, and a proposal from Hertfordshire CBA to increase the club member UMS rate by 3p to 43p, obviating the need for the online GP licence increase. After votes, both the Yorkshire and Hertfordshire motions failed and the EBU motion succeeded.
- Dates in 2022 – The Chairmen's meeting would be held f2f at Young Chelsea BC on 26 May and the next AGM also f2f on 30 November.

10. Membership Secretary's Report

AB had reported that the current membership total was 2891, 34 fewer than reported at the previous meeting. The email address list now totalled 2479, a decrease of 37. MW commented that his regular trawl of club web sites revealed that Hailsham BC would be closing at the end of the year. DW observed that at least some of the 'losses' might be recovered when those who were still nervous about f2f bridge felt confident enough to return.

11. Webmaster and Master Point Secretary's Report

MW reported that:

- His weekly trawl of club web sites continued to identify session changes on a regular basis.
- Online registrations for upcoming events were beginning to flow.
- The 'Newcomers' section of the web site is now complete.
- Preparations for merging BBO and ScoreBridge files from the Charity Sims week had been completed to inform instructions to host clubs.

12. Conduct and Discipline

JM had indicated that there was nothing to report on this occasion.

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13. Youth Bridge

13.1 JBC 2021 and 2022

See above.

13.2 Minibridge in Schools

DW reported that Ian Wright's consultations with schools and mini-bridge teachers were continuing. IW would report further in due course. Pressures on schools to recover ground post pandemic had precluded a restart until 2022.

Action: IW

13. Education

There was nothing to report on this occasion.

14. Charities Co-ordinator's Report

DW noted the TC's decision to hold the charity Sims event in the week beginning 24 January 2022. He rehearsed that he had a nominated charity carried forward from the event cancelled at the beginning of 2021. MC members agreed that this nomination should be the recipient of the proceeds from the 2022 event.

Post meeting note – the dates for the Sims heats were subsequently revised to the week beginning 14 February.

15. Equipment and Trophy Co-ordinator's Report

MW had indicated that he had nothing to report.

16. Next Meeting

Via Zoom at 10.30am on Friday 11 February 2022.

17. Any Other Business

17.1 DW reported that the EBU had just posted an update to its Covid advice concerning the Omicron variant – basically follow the Government guidance. There was no need for the county to add to that.

17.2 DW reported the introduction of a new EBU calendar designed to make it easier for clubs and counties to advertise their events. PC and MW commented that the initial implementation had not been smooth and discussions with the EBU were ongoing.

17.3 DW reported that the EBU had enquired about counties' activity on social media and JM had undertaken to explore potential benefits to the association. She would report back in due course.

Action: JM

17.4 MW enquired about the next Chairman's letter. PC expected to be able to issue it by the end of the following week.

Action: PC

17.5 MW enquired about the posting of the final draft minutes from the last TC meeting. It was useful to see these before the following MC meeting. DW agreed to forward them after the meeting.

Action: DW

The meeting closed at 12.30pm.