

FINAL DRAFT

SUSSEX COUNTY CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

A virtual meeting of the Management Committee of the SCCBA took place via Zoom at 10.30am on Friday 25 September 2020

Present:

Mr M Pool (MP)	Chairman
Mr P Clinch (PC)	Vice-Chairman
Mr J Hardy (JH)	Hon Treasurer
Mr D Wheeler (DW)	Hon Secretary

and other elected members: Mr P Bates (PB), Mrs A Baxter (AB), Mrs A Galpin (AG), Mr D Galpin (DG), Mrs J Mayall (JM), Mr N Watts (NW), Mr M Wotton (MW) and Mr M Wright (MWR).

Owing to technical difficulties NW and MW were present for only part of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. Apologies

Mr O Powell (OP)

2. Minutes of the meeting of 24 July 2020

2.1 Accuracy

MC Members were content with the minutes as shown in the final draft. In response to a request from DW, MC Members indicated that they were content for him to sign the hard copy final minutes of each meeting agreed since the lockdown.

2.2 Matters Arising

DW reported that:

- Actions from paragraphs 5.2, 5.3 and 8.2 had been completed.
- Actions from paragraphs 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 12.3 from 24 April meeting are carried forward for further discussion when the prospects for a resumption of normal playing conditions are clearer.
- Actions from paragraph 7.1 of the 16 August 2019 meeting, from paragraph 7.2 of the 29 May meeting and from paragraph 2.2.2 of the 24 April meeting have been carried forward to this meeting..

Other actions will be picked up under the relevant items below.

Action: DW

3. Chairman's Report

MP wished to record his thanks to those affiliated clubs which had set up virtual clubs and delivered online sessions. These were providing alternative playing opportunities to a significant proportion of the membership. MP also noted that the MC's nomination of DW to receive an EBU Dimmie Fleming award had been successful and he invited other MC Members to join him in conveying congratulations. Other MC Members concurred.

4. Treasurer's Report

4.1 Financial Report - JH had circulated reports for the period ending 30 September showing a surplus of £1000 (2019 £1599).

Income from online sessions was around £250 per month and this was covering ongoing expenses and depreciation costs. The county's reserves remained healthy but given continuing covid uncertainties, the need to draw on them to help 'kick-start' face-to-face bridge could not be ruled out. 2021 is likely to be a challenging year for the County regardless of the state of covid restrictions. As a fully functioning county, overheads will be around £9,200, including yearbook costs, national events and regular overheads. Online and UMS income may be down to c£4,000 and tournament income is unlikely to be anywhere near the resultant gap.

4.2 Financial Support – JH and DW had circulated a paper which anticipated a possible need to provide financial support to recovery from the effects of covid restrictions, particularly to any smaller affiliated club which faced an existential threat to what would otherwise be a viable operation. JH and DW had recommended a reactive approach. The health of the county reserves was well known and regularly reported such that it could be assumed that a club in difficulty would surely approach the county for help in the absence of local alternative options. Other MC Members expressed concern that a reactive approach might lead to an irrecoverable position which earlier intervention might have avoided. Conversely, an open-ended and unqualified offer might have financial consequences which would be difficult to control. DW agreed to draft an email offer which addressed these concerns for MC approval.

Action: DW

5. Selectors' Report

PC rehearsed the ad hoc arrangements being used to select representative teams for online events. MC Members were content. PC added that Chris Jepson had recently emailed all members inviting interest in representing the county online. It was hoped that this would make the pool of suitable candidates as wide as possible. A selection meeting for the Metropolitan and Tollemache Cups and an inter-county match with Gloucestershire would be held on 9 October.

6. Tournament Committee Report

Online bridge - PC had circulated a draft listing of events covering 'home', adjacent county and inter-county opportunities. PC and others commented further as follows:

- The EBU had reservations about online swiss pairs. They were not VP'd and there was a distinct possibility that the same pairs would meet more than once. Surrey CBA is holding an SP event next weekend and he would monitor its success before finalising the planned Sussex event.

FINAL DRAFT

- There is a growing range of choice of county level events almost all of which were open to all comers. Kent are holding GP and BP events in October and PC planned similar for Sussex in November and December, seeking to avoid clashes with similar events.
- Stephen Kennedy had offered to help with the direction of online events on normal EBU terms but PC's approach to Eddie Williams had yet to generate a reply.
- Discussions with Helen Kent and Joy Mayall were in train hopefully to deliver online versions of the East Grinstead BB and the Ladies Pairs respectively.
- PC is planning to invite virtual clubs to hold online heats of the Sussex Pairs and the David Pavey with a view to finals online in 2021.
- AG added that she was about to consult past participants in the Invitation Pairs to gauge interest in a series of replacement online events.
- DG reported that he had agreed to remaining 2019/20 Sussex League and Championship Teams matches being played online provided both captains agreed. PC added there would need to be an online event to decide the county's entry to the Pachabo and he would discuss this with DG in due course.
- The Tollemache qualifying event would be held on 21/22 November and is likely to be based on the *Realbridge* platform which allowed some sight of opponents. The entry fee is higher than expected. MP explained that the EBU was seeking to recover some of its losses through an increased fee on the basis that county finances were in general much healthier than those of the EBU. NW commented that county funds should be used helping face to face bridge resume and continue in Sussex clubs rather than subsidising the EBU. Gordon Rainsford has made the EBU online pricing policy clear, so all members playing in their events will effectively be making a charitable donation.
- The Metropolitan Cup is planned for 29 November but the platform to be used had yet to be decided.

In response to an observation from JM about "off the wall" leads in online play, PC commented that the EBU is currently very active in responding to concerns about possible cheating and a number of prosecutions were being pursued. MP added that the L&E Committee examined all of the evidence in its investigations and convictions were likely to lead to heavy penalties. PC added that he was a member of the EBU Ethics Panel responsible for considering complaints and, where appropriate, referring them to the Prosecution Panel.

Action: PC

7. Secretary's Report

7.1 Coronavirus

- Prospects for resumption of 'normal' bridge – The recent tightening of Covid restrictions (Rule of six, etc) and the declared expectation that these would have to remain in place for six months made clear that prospects for resumption would remain poor for at least that period. DW would continue to monitor developments.
- Preparations required to manage resumption risks – DW had circulated drafts of three documents – risk assessment templates for clubs which hired their premises and for tournament organisers who hired event venues together with a completed example of the more comprehensive assessment required by clubs which owned their own premises based on the EBU template and assessment work done at Worthing BC. MC Members were content with the drafts and agreed that DW should hold them until the prospects for resumption became clearer.

Action: DW

7.2 Developing closer relationships with unaffiliated clubs – DW reported that his work on this had been suspended since March for obvious reasons. He would continue the study as and when normal bridge resumed and report back six months later.

Action: DW

7.3 Year Book 2021/22 – DW proposed that affiliated clubs are trawled early in 2021 for updates to be reflected in a year book to be issued in time for the start of the tournament programme. MC Members agreed.

Action: DW

7.4 Timing of next AGM – Various options for the next AGM were discussed including limiting attendance at a Zoom meeting or at a socially distanced meeting (if allowed). MC Members expressed concerns at any limitations being placed on attendance and agreed that a Zoom based meeting was most likely to be required if it was to be held at the usual time (April 2021). DW indicated that management of an open-ended attendance was beyond his limited technical experience and he undertook to explore with those concerned the arrangements to be used for the EBU AGM in November and report back.

Action: DW

8. EBU Matters

8.1 EBU Strategy Update – DW had submitted the comments agreed at the last MC meeting to the relevant EBU Board Member but had received no feedback or even an acknowledgement. The draft minutes of the recent Chairmen's meeting had yet to be published on the web site. PC (who had represented MP at the Zoom meeting) reported that there had been a general discussion about the suitability of the vision statement. Some Chairmen felt that the overall target should be to make bridge attractive and enjoyable to all. The EBU agreed to reflect further and bring forward revised proposals to the AGM.

8.2 County Chairmen's Meeting – PC reported that the deteriorating health of EBU finances had dominated the agenda. The Treasurer's previous forecast of possible losses during the first four months of lockdown had proved pessimistic. A loss of £40K had been suffered compared with the forecast of £100K. Economies had been made which together with revenue from the activities of 120 virtual clubs, donations and, curiously, equipment sales, had combined to soften the blow of the cessation of UMS income. The EBU Board had contrasted this parlous state with that of county finances which appeared to be relatively healthy in most cases. Various further economies were being considered, including reduced investment in youth bridge.

FINAL DRAFT

8.3 EBU Elections – DW sought confirmation that no action was required in relation to this year's elections. MP confirmed this.

9. Membership Secretary's Report

AB reported that the membership total as of this week was 3017, an increase of 199 since the last report (29 May). The email address list now totalled 2538.

10. Webmaster and Master Point Secretary's Report

MW enquired of PC whether actions required for online bridge events were up-to-date. PC confirmed that they were but he expected that more would be needed shortly.

11. Conduct and Discipline

JM reported that there were no current issues for the county committees. DG took the opportunity to update MC Members regarding the case currently being considered by the court at Hastings. Matters were being handled by EBU Solicitors in preparation for a hearing on 30 September. [*Post meeting note – Hearing now postponed – new date 23 October*]

12. Youth Bridge

WB had circulated a short report and sought confirmation of MC support in principle to rearrangement of the cancelled JBC 2020. MC Members confirmed their support.

13. Education

All activity was on hold because of Covid restrictions.

14. Charities Co-ordinator's Report

DW rehearsed the previous discussion of the method of selecting charities to benefit from the proceeds of the annual Charity Sim Pairs. MC Members indicated a wish to return to the matter when the prospects for a future event were clearer.

Action: DW

15. Equipment and Trophy Co-ordinator's Report

MWr had nothing to report. MP enquired as to the collection of some boxes he was holding. MWr agreed to resolve the matter as soon as possible.

Action: MWr

16. Next Meeting

Via Zoom at 10.30am on Friday 27 November 2020.

Action: DW

17. Any Other Business

17.1 DG observed that the Adur Valley BC had been forced to close as a result of Covid restrictions. MP had written to convey thanks for the major contribution which the owners had made to Sussex bridge over many years. DW added that the Harlequin BC had reaffiliated to enable it to run virtual club sessions

17.2 PB commented that he had found it difficult to hear all of the exchanges because of sound interference. DW said that the cause of the interference was not clear but he hoped that the interference-free sound of previous meetings would return for the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 12.09pm.