

## 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 27 November 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) and Mr M Wotton (MW).

## AGENDA

### 1. Apologies

Mr O Powell (OP) and Mr M Wright (MWr)

### 2. Minutes of the meeting of 25 September 2020

#### 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 4.2 and 7.1.1 had been completed.
- Actions from paragraphs 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 12.3 from 24 April meeting would be carried forward for further discussion when the prospects for a resumption of normal playing conditions are clearer.
- Actions from paragraphs 7.1.2, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4 and 14 of the 25 September meeting will be picked up at the appropriate times.

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

**Action: DW**

### 3. Chairman's Report

MP wished to record the MC's congratulations to the Tollemache team which had qualified for the final for the first time in 14 years. He also wished his thanks to PC for his hard work prior to the event, the organisation of which had not been straightforward, and to Andrew Southwell (NPC) for his valuable problem solving during the event.

### 4. Treasurer's Report

JH had circulated a report for the period ending 31 October showing a surplus of just over £1000 (2019 £1599). Income from online sessions was around £300 per month and this was covering ongoing expenses and depreciation costs. Recent online events had produced useful surpluses and the upcoming green pointed event was also expected to be similarly successful. JH wished to record his thanks to PC for his direction at no charge. *BBO* receipts had yet to come through but these were expected in January. Reserves remained healthy at around £40,000. The likely position at the end of the 2020 and the prospects for 2021 remained as reported at the meeting on 25 September.

### 5. Selectors' Report

DW had circulated a copy of the minutes of the Selectors' meeting held on 9 October. A selection process modified to take account of the use of Zoom had been used and MP confirmed that it was fully fit for purpose. A further meeting would be held shortly to select the team for the Tollemache final.

### 6. Tournament Committee Report

PC reported regarding current and planned online sessions:

- County competitions - Two events had been held – the East Grinstead Basic Bridge and a blue pointed pairs event. Numbers participating were considerably up on the levels at face-to-face events in 2019 and approaching 80 pairs were expected for the upcoming green pointed event. Online versions of the Sussex Pairs and the David Pavey were also subject to active consideration and AG was planning to consult all previous participants to establish the level of demand for a series of IP online sessions. DG suggested that, following the cancellation of the EBU Corwen and Pachabo events in 2020, the Sussex qualifiers might be carried forward to the 2021 event. PC noted the suggestion and agreed to further thought to the most appropriate qualification arrangements for 2021 and report back. NW enquired as to whether the county intended to stay with *BBO* for its online events or to move to *Realbridge*. The latter seemed to be increasingly popular and it carried considerably less scope for cheating. PC had played under *Realbridge* recently and had enjoyed it but he was uncertain whether the familiarity of *BBO* would mean that a move away would be unpopular. A mix of events might be the way forward. JM felt that any move should be in response to demand and that should drive the pace of any evolution required. MW requested that wherever possible online competitions be 'attached' to face-to-face equivalents to enable the web site historical links to be maintained.

**Action: PC/AG**

- Inter county events – A recent friendly match against Gloucestershire had seen the ‘A’ team successful, the ‘B’ and ‘C’ teams less so. The match against Manchester is now set for mid December. £2.50 is being collected from each participant to cover costs. All team members were content with this. As reported above, the Tollemache team had qualified for the final and the Metropolitan Cup was due over the coming weekend. The ‘A’ team faced stiff competition but the prospects for ‘B’ and ‘C’ teams were slightly less challenging.
- Club events – PC felt that clubs, particularly those whose finances were stretched, might wish to organise club blue pointed events. If the latter were open to all comers and advertised on the EBU calendar, they could be a useful source of additional revenue. It was noted that the MC had already offered advice and support to any clubs in serious financial difficulties but thus far none had sought such. MC members agreed that a proactive approach to the potential benefits of club BP events would not be appropriate.

## 7. Secretary's Report

**7.1 Coronavirus - Prospects for resumption of 'normal' bridge** – DW suggested that it was reasonable to assume that recent encouraging news regarding vaccine development would lead to a major immunisation programme in 2021 and that the vast majority of SCCBA members will have received their jabs by the summer. In turn this suggested that a return to normal bridge might be allowed by, say June and that we should plan accordingly.

**7.2 Year Book 2021/22** – Working backwards from this projection required the prior publication of the tournament programme for 2021/22 via a Year Book issue. MC members agreed. DW would get the ball rolling with a request to clubs in January to provide their information for the Year Book. He hoped to be able to attach a draft list of county event dates to help clubs avoid clashes with their events as far as possible.

**Action: DW**

**7.3 AGM 2021** – DW reported that he had given further consideration to the planning of this event. Having cancelled AGM 2020 and with little prospect of a rearrangement being possible in the remainder of the year to April 2021, he had looked at the pros and cons of a deferred face-to-face meeting versus a Zoom based meeting. Regarding the latter he had made enquiries of the EBU regarding the arrangements for their AGM. In addition to Zoom, they had used an application called *Eventrunner* and a brief study of that suggested a significant amount of work would be required to set it up. There would also be on-the-day technical risks which he was ill-equipped to resolve in a timely fashion. All in all DW had concluded that an online AGM was not an attractive proposition. Given recent good news regarding vaccines, the alternative – a deferred face-to-face meeting – looked like a much more feasible option. JM observed that she was organising a Zoom based AGM to take place shortly and, given the likely low numbers of SCCBA members wishing to attend our AGM, it should be a practical proposition. DW indicated he would be happy for someone else to organise and run such a meeting for our AGM if the MC wished it. JM agreed to report back on her experience of a Zoom based AGM at the next meeting.

**Action: JM**

## 8. EBU Matters

**8.1 EBU Consultation on structure of UM** – DW had submitted the comments agreed at the last MC meeting to the relevant EBU Board Member and had received positive feedback. The EBU Board now planned to report to their AGM that further consideration of any significant changes should be deferred until planning for 2022/23.

### 8.2 EBU AGM

- Elections – JM had attended the Zoom based meeting holding proxies for PB and DW. She reported that the candidates supported by Sussex for Board membership (Heather Dhondy) and L&E Committee membership (Jeremy Dhondy) had not been elected.
- Law changes
  - In essence, in response to the dramatic increase in accusations of cheating in online bridge, the three resolutions sought to tighten the disciplinary process from the point at which it was decided that there was sufficient evidence for there to be a case to answer by allowing the suspension of the accused whilst further investigations were undertaken. That suspension would preclude selection for representative teams and disallow play in EBU online sessions and virtual club online sessions. MP had expressed strong concerns about these proposals prior to the EBU AGM. He had pointed out that the changes ran counter to common law whereby the accused was deemed to be innocent until proven guilty and they introduced a process which was likely to be seen as a breach of human rights legislation if challenged in court. MP had also registered concern that some expert opinion had not been consulted, particularly the Chair and members of the L&E Committee. JM added that the law changes involved hearings in private which ran counter to the practice in Tribunals and the like. In addition, the changes included the ability to apply the new penalties retrospectively which ran counter to natural justice. The EBU's legal advisor had remained unmoved by MP's arguments. Included in his response was the belief that the HRA did not apply to an organisation like the EBU. Accordingly, Sussex shareholders had agreed to vote against.
  - JM reported that of the many county shareholders who spoke during the AGM debate, all but two spoke against the resolutions. It was therefore somewhat perplexing when the votes were counted to find that the resolutions were carried by 32 votes to 22. PB's and DW's proxy votes were not allowed because the vote was declared as a 'show of hands' and the EBU's legal advisor had indicated that only the votes of those attending the meeting were allowed under the relevant article of association. DW enquired whether a paper vote had been requested. The relevant article of association also provides that a paper vote (in which proxy votes are allowed) must be held if requested by five or more shareholders present and that request may be made after the show of hands vote. DW commented that it was disappointing that the EBU legal advisor had not explained this at the time. Those that spoke against the resolutions appeared to have been poorly served in this respect.

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- PC commented from the perspective of one of those tasked with analysing many hands in pursuit of evidence in these cases. The effort (and therefore the time) involved was substantial, and accordingly he supported the changes in principle if they helped to better manage the prosecution process. MP commented that he did not believe the changes would improve efficiency in real terms and reiterated that he believed they were open to a successful challenge.
  - PC also referenced the recent letter from the Nordic Bridge Federation to the WBF which seemed to indicate a shared belief in the need for action to address online cheating. The EBU proposals could therefore be seen as putting England ahead of the game in this respect.
- EBU AGM 2021 – JM reported that next year's EBU AGM would take place on 30 November.

### 9. Membership Secretary's Report

AB reported that the membership total as of this week was 3043, an increase of 26 since the last report (25 September). The email address list now totalled 2562 but AB continued to receive 'bounce-backs' (174 recently) which were typically the result of data entry errors when club records for new members were set up and transmitted to the EBU. DW observed that he had asked clubs to take care in this respect some time ago; perhaps that request should be repeated in due course.

### 10. Webmaster and Master Point Secretary's Report

MW reiterated his request that wherever possible online competitions be 'attached' to face-to-face equivalents to enable the web site historical links to be maintained. He added that multiple instances of duplicate online entries meant that he had to check every entry to eliminate duplication where necessary.

### 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 considered by the court at Hastings. Matters were being handled by EBU Solicitors and the hearing on 23 October had found in favour of the EBU and other defendants on all counts. However, the complainant had sought to appeal and the court's requirements for the request to be considered had to be provided by 1 December. DG would report further in due course.

**Action: DG**

### 12. Youth Bridge

There was nothing to report on this occasion.

### 13. Education

There was nothing to report on this occasion.

### 14. Charities Co-ordinator's Report

DW reported receipt of a thank you letter from the Oscar's Wish Foundation and enquired whether MC Members wished him to issue the annual trawl for nominations. MC Members confirmed that this should go ahead.

**Action: DW**

### 15. Equipment and Trophy Co-ordinator's Report

MWr had emailed that he had nothing to report on this occasion.

**Action: MWr**

### 16. Next Meeting

Via Zoom at 10.30am on Friday 29 January 2021.

**Action: DW**

### 17. Any Other Business

- PB registered his thanks to JM for representing his interests at the EBU AGM.
- MP congratulated DW on his recent Dimmie Fleming award and DW expressed his thanks for the kind words conveyed.

**The meeting closed at 11.52am.**