

BWS Committee Minutes – 1st May 2021

Present: Dave Tilley, Richard Aubery, Jim Steele, Linda Banks, Alan Crabtree, Norman Cope

Apologies: Mike Dennis, Helen Wright, Chris Collison, Janet Jagan

1 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on 30/3/21 were read and accepted.

2 Matters arising (that are not on today's agenda);

2.1 Newsletter for members, regarding alerting & announcing procedure etc: the proposal is to write a newsletter for posting on Club websites and for emailing to members. David had not completed this as yet. There was a discussion on claiming, and we agreed that this should be clarified, so that claiming (which is to be encouraged) must be accompanied by a statement about the intended line of play (eg "I'm going to cross ruff the remaining 4 tricks"), if there were any possibility of the remaining tricks not being won by declarer. Linda suggested we should include an item on this in the newsletter. David will send his draft to Linda for her to add in.

Action DT, LB

2.2 Half tables/ use of robots(BBO only)/ standby players

After discussion, we agreed that we would prefer having a half-table in an event, rather than drafting in robots, if the number of boards in a sit-out was no more than two (as would be the case for example in F2F bridge). In events where there are three or more boards per round, we would seek to avoid a sit-out table by drafting in standby players, eg from DT's list, or from inviting anyone kibitzing to join in and play. It was noted that if members are drafted in at the last minute to play, they will get the session free. We recognised that this might easily be missed, as it requires the TD to include the information about late call-up with the results.

We also agreed that where robots were used (BBO only), we will strip out the robots' results. This will have the same effect on the results as the boards not being played at all against the robots – except that people could play the hands rather than sit around waiting.

We noted that we do pay EBU charges for robots, if they are included at the start of an event. We do not pay EBU charges for a robot which is drafted in during an event, for example to replace a player who has been logged out. Also, on RealBridge, if a pair start a session, but then drop out due to tech problems, we can strip out their results completely from the session.

2.3 Players dropping out of sessions: we discussed the general problem of tech problems causing players to drop out of a session, both on BBO and on RealBridge. This could be because of people's broadband limitations, or because of the device/technology/ platform they are using to play. We agreed that we would note the people who were having the most repeated problems and explore with them what is likely to be the cause and what they might do about it. We discussed the idea of having a "surgery" on Zoom, to help people out who were having repeated problems.

Action DT

In terms of devices, using Safari on a Mac/iPad is sometimes problematic, and this can be resolved by using Chrome instead of Safari as the browser. If people are going to buy a new device, a Chromebook laptop seems to be a reasonable option.

We noted that BBO have introduced voice and video, but it is not universally available as yet, only to those who pay direct in BBO\$; if it is rolled out to all users, it might increase problems as it will require more bandwidth.

3 Dave Tilley's Report

All BWS sessions continue to operate well, with good support, though attendances are down by ~10% since last time, probably associated with the better weather, golf etc starting up again, and some reduction in Lockdown constraints. It looks obvious that we should keep things as they are, including the number and timing of sessions, and the split to BBO/RB.

The Easter Festival week of 9 free events appears to have gone down well.

4 Invoicing, for Brierfield/ Warrington to reimburse costs incurred by Stretford for BWS activities

A self-billing process was used for 2020 costs, by both Brierfield and Warrington. We agreed to continue with this self-billing process for 2021. Warrington will do this every two months, and Brierfield every month, using their own detailed records. Those records are available to Stretford, to ensure complete transparency.

The Charity payments for 2020 still have a few loose ends to tidy up. We agreed that each Club would remit its own amounts to the relevant charities, rather than consolidating into a single payment from Stretford.

Action JSS LB

Invoicing of members for their playing fees is up to each Club to do as they see fit. At present Warrington do this every 2 months (Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, etc) , and Brierfield every month.

5 Cover for David Tilley

David said that his availability will depend on his work commitments, which are not fully clear as yet. However, he said that we have enough cover to carry out TD duties.

The idea of being a playing TD on RealBridge did not work out well and won't be continued.

6 Current Sessions

We agreed to continue as we are, until such time as F2F bridge resumes. (See "Membership Survey" in AOB).

We suggested holding a charity event on the last Saturday of the month. The first one could be a Hospice charity event, with each club donating its proceeds to its own local Hospice.

7 Psych Book

There were no new entries.

8 Any Other Business

8.1 Hybrid F2F/online sessions

Some of us had attended a Zoom session with Oliver Cowan last week. We agreed that it didn't offer anything significant to what we could already do, and anyway, our vision was to encourage people to come back to F2F bridge, so that our F2F and on-line sessions would be at different times, rather than running concurrently.

8.2 Uploading deal files to BBO

Norman enquired about the procedure to upload files to BBO for use in teaching sessions. David said it was not straightforward; it would be discussed outside the meeting.

8.3 Membership Survey.

Further to our discussion last time, Jim had shared a draft questionnaire. We agreed the questions were broadly suitable as they stand, but each Club would modify it to match its own needs, keeping as much as possible standard so that our results are directly comparable.

We discussed what platform to use. We agreed that Google Forms looks promising. We noted that this will either require each club to email the survey to its members, eg from their Club email account, or to post the survey on the website and invite members by email to go and find it and complete it online. The former method is preferable, as it is more likely to generate responses, but it requires the Club to have an email list set up on their Club email account; if this doesn't already exist, it is a fairly long winded one-off task to set it up. It isn't possible to email an attached survey direct from a Club's Bridgewebs membership, as it doesn't permit attachments. However that method would work if the email were simply to ask people to go the website and complete the survey.

Timing: we agreed the survey should be issued on 15th May, to be returned by end May.

Jim would look at drafting out a questionnaire on Google Forms, for sharing and finalising. **Action JSS**

9 Date of Next Meeting:

We did not agree a specific date, as DT's work commitments are unclear. We agreed we would hold it once we had the results of our membership Survey, ie sometime early/mid June.

Jim Steele