

Minutes of WBC Committee meeting
Saturday 13th February 2021, 1030hrs on Zoom

Present: Jim Steele (Chairman) , Mike Dennis (Secretary), Helen Wright (Treasurer), David Burrows, Janet Jagan, Angie Pinnington.

1 Apologies: none; all present. (Janet had to leave at 10:50)

2, 3 Minutes of last meeting held 4th January 2021: accepted ; no comments/ amendments. The minutes of the BWS Organizers' meeting on 20th January 2021 were also noted. Both sets of minutes are posted on the Warrington website.

9 Return to face-to-face bridge: Premises

This item was taken out of turn, to allow discussion while the full Committee was present.

We could probably restart playing Monday evenings at Warrington Golf Club, which would be a very attractive venue. However, it is likely that other times of the week it would not be possible to have a regular booking there. The Committee discussed whether operating at two locations would be acceptable. The view was we should try to avoid that if at all possible, and would follow up various alternatives we had already listed.

We also discussed whether we should stick to Monday and Thursday evenings, or whether Monday evenings plus an afternoon (Wed, Thurs, or Fri) might be preferable. It is hard to take a view until we have information from potential venues about what they can offer. We will pursue this, in order to construct a proposal to offer to members. In the first instance, we will explore with Grappenhall Community Centre, and with Belong.

ACTION Mike D

The Committee agreed that ongoing on-line bridge will be highly desirable as part of our offerings, once face-to-face bridge resumes. This is particularly relevant to retain some of our newer members, who live too far from Warrington to make it likely they would attend our live sessions.

4 Membership Update

Jim reported that we have gained 57 members since last July: 23 Full members, and 34 New Player members. We have also sadly lost a few members through death (most recently Ann Forsyth) and infirmity. The total active membership now stands at 118, of whom 90 play in WBC/BWS on-line bridge. The remaining 28 do not, but presumably will return to playing when face-to-face bridge resumes.

We discussed having emergency contact details available for members, should we need to contact someone (eg next of kin) in an emergency. We agreed to start collecting this data, by encouraging members to provide one, and to include it in our database.

5 Club Finances

Helen reported that she has now managed to get all members and payments up to date, including 2021 annual subscriptions, and where the Club owed members for overpayments, and where some members had outstanding amounts they owed. The Committee thanked Helen for this very significant piece of work and effort. We have paid our self-bill to Stretford for our 2020 on-line activities. We await confirmation from Stretford that they agree with our calculations; however, we have confidence that the discrepancy, if any, is likely to be tiny. Jim continues to operate a running total of income and expenditure per event, for 2021, so we always have a handle on our financial position.

Annual audit of accounts: Helen confirmed that our 2020 year-end accounts are in a state ready to be audited. She has discussed this with Geoff Fisher, who will carry out the audit; they have agreed to meet up to do this as soon as Covid constraints allow. After this the Club financial information will be available to members; the 2020 audited Income & Expenditure Account, and the up-to-date 2021 financial position of the Club, will be included in the next AGM.

Arrangements for charging members: we will continue with the present system of invoicing 2 months in arrears, no cash handling, and payments by bank transfer, which Helen confirmed is working well. This will apply even once we resume face-face bridge.

Review of session charges: due to a healthy increase in table numbers over the winter, we are in a somewhat more favourable position than we anticipated last time. The Committee discussed whether to reduce session charges back to £2.50, but agreed to maintain them at £3.00 (in line with Stretford, though more than Brierfield, whose circumstances are different from ours). The Committee took the view that as the weather improves, and Covid constraints diminish (eg with vaccination roll-out), table numbers for on-line bridge are likely to fall away to some extent, and it would be confusing, and extra admin work, to reduce the fees then have to increase them again.

6 Review of sessions / events

(a) RealBridge v BBO

The Committee felt we have the balance about right; some people dislike RealBridge, others love it. We will not advocate any change at the next BWS meeting.

(b) Start times and breaks in sessions

The experiment with breaks in sessions was very unpopular, and we will not continue with it. Regarding start times, there was more concern about getting started promptly than what the nominal start time is, and about keeping the session moving once started, to avoid a late finish. What we will take forward to the BWS Organizers' meeting next week is a request to be stricter with getting on-line in advance, starting promptly, and not allowing delays if people have problems, eg with being logged off. Where these problems occur, we should be more ruthless, award averages as necessary, and move the session on.

(c) Number of Boards

OK as it is: 18 boards for daytime sessions, and 21+ for evening sessions. We do not support moving to fewer boards.

(d) New events

The first monthly random teams event was held on Tuesday 2nd February. It was not well supported, with only 4 tables. We will persevere. David B suggested we might reconfigure as a cross-IMPs session. We will suggest this at the next BWS meeting.

The first monthly Swiss pairs was held on Friday 29th January on RealBridge. The numbers were just as any Friday evening. David B suggested that it was too much like ordinary duplicate pairs, and to make it more meaningful, we should have 4-board rounds rather than 2-board rounds. We will suggest this at the next BWS meeting.

(e) Teams of Four Lockdown League

This is ongoing, on an all-play-all basis, one league, from December through to Easter. We have 7 teams of four across Warrington, Brierfield, and Stretford, so each team has 6 matches to play. There is a problem about finding a time suitable for the 8 players in a match all to be available. We discussed the possibility of a regular evening, but this is probably impractical, because of the different club session calendar at each of the three clubs. We will review in the next BWS meeting, but on balance we felt it should continue.

(f) PLAY option

Jim confirmed that the problems had been resolved, and that now it worked on any session, using Bridge Solver Online on the Warrington Bridge Club website, whether RealBridge or BBO, once the results were posted. This had simply required updating our Bridgewebs website to the latest version (Release2.19o) and care in editing any .xml file before posting. We should make people aware that this functionality is available.

ACTION Jim S

(g) Festival of Bridge Week (Easter?)

The Committee approved the idea of offering free bridge that week, with a variety of events. We liked the ideas of encouraging new players to take part, and of having an inter-club teams event included. To be discussed at the next BWS meeting.

7 Committee Membership

The Committee recognized we had not replaced Mike Howarth when he resigned; we felt an appropriate size of committee was 7 or 8 members, and it would be a good idea to include one of our New Player members if possible.

We will circulate to members a request for volunteers. If we don't have any forthcoming, we have some ideas of names we might approach.

ACTION Jim S

8 Club Strategy

Present actions to build membership are successful so far. We discussed whether there was a need to advertise (eg Facebook, local community newsletters); the Committee felt this was not necessary at the present time, especially until we resolve the premises issue.

9 Return to face-to-face bridge: Premises

Taken out of turn – see above.

10 Education

The possibility of offering beginners lessons via Mike Hickling had not come to fruition, as Mike had declined to proceed. We have referred beginners to Jack Stocken at Yorkshire Bridge, instead.

Our weekly Thursday supervised gentle duplicate sessions are growing successfully- we are now getting 10 or 11 tables.

Every other week, prior to the gentle duplicate session, Jim is doing a 30-minute Improvers' lesson on Zoom. We are now getting over 50 attendees. On the lesson day, we run the gentle duplicate session with prepared hands linked to the lesson. This is proving popular.

It is highly likely that U3A will begin again with live classes in September. We will continue with the Zoom lessons in the meantime, through until the summer, then review our approach once we know more, in particular what U3A are going to provide, and what involvement we might have with that.

11 AOB

- Emergency contacts for members, raised by Helen : see item 4 above.
- Not charging helpers on Thursday mornings if they have to play, to fill in to make a up a complete table, also raised by Helen: agreed.
- Next AGM: we agreed there is no pressing need to hold an AGM urgently, eg on Zoom, and that we can wait until it is practical to meet as a Club. However, we need to make members aware we are planning an AGM, which would normally be in March, and will do so as soon as it is practical. We will circulate members to ask for any matters they would like to be included. **ACTION Jim S**
- Attendance at next BWS meeting on Zoom, Saturday 20th February, 10am: Helen requested she be invited, so WBC would be represented by Jim, Mike, and Helen. Jim will arrange via David Tilley. **ACTION Jim S**

12 Date of Next Meeting

Saturday 27th March, 1030hrs, on Zoom.