

Minutes of Warrington Bridge Club Committee Meeting Saturday 23rd October 2021, 10am

Present: Jim Steele (chair), Mike Dennis (secretary), Janet Jagan (treasurer), Angie Pinnington, David Burrows, Malcolm Roberts.

1. Apologies: Helen Wright
2. Minutes of previous meeting (21/8/21): accepted. There were no matters arising not on today's agenda
3. BWS Matters :
 - a) The BWS Organizing Group has agreed to change the threshold for the different TD rate down to 8 tables, from 1st November. So for sessions with up to 8 tables the charge will be £25, and for 9 or more, £40.
 - b) Brierfield Committee had decided by a majority decision at their meeting on 11th October to withdraw completely from BWS, on the basis of wanting to focus on F2F, and seeing online activities as negative to that end. However, there was a strong adverse reaction from a number of their members, who want to continue playing in BWS online sessions, and they have decided to keep to the status quo until their AGM, which will probably be next January. This will provide some time to resolve issues, mostly the clash between F2F and online sessions, especially Monday evenings.

Both Stretford and Warrington also see F2F bridge as our primary activity, but take the view that online bridge is now a fact of life which many people value, and that it can contribute to the success of our Clubs, and to our income stream; we are trying to find ways of F2F and online working together. If we were to withdraw from online bridge, we would not see much if any increase in F2F attendances, but would drive away quite a few players to other online offerings (of which there are plenty available), and damage our financial viability.
4. Review of our activities since restarting F2F
 - a) Online sessions: the BWS sessions on Monday and Friday evenings are well attended and profitable; the Monday afternoon session will change from BBO to RealBridge from the start of November, and will be marketed as a session most suitable for learners, now that we don't have a regular Gentle Duplicate session. The Sunday morning session is not popular with Warrington players, and is loss making for us. However, over the whole online programme, we are still seeing a positive financial contribution. Jim shared his spreadsheet showing costs v income for our sessions. We will keep the 4 sessions per week going over the next few months, and review again in January, or earlier if we can find a resolution to the Monday evening clash.
 - b) Restart of F2F sessions: Jim showed a table of the attendances since the restart. Monday evenings have been OK, with 5 to 6 tables, but Thursday afternoons have struggled with 2 to 3 tables. We are attracting around 20 people to our teaching class on Thursday mornings. At these levels, our F2F programme is viable, in relation to our costs for hire of Alford Hall. National data shows that almost all clubs are seeing smaller numbers at F2F bridge than before the lockdown, so our situation is typical. We need to accept that it will be a long haul to get back to pre-lockdown numbers. However, all agreed that Alford Hall is a good venue for our Club.
 - c) We still have long-standing issues having enough TD's, and enough people competent to operate the technology for running sessions (laptop/ Bridgemates). We will continue efforts to train more of both. Possibilities for TD include Jim, Barbara French, and Ray/Angie. Possibilities for IT include Janet and Jim.
 - d) We have a particular problem next Monday October 25th when more than usual numbers are away (half-term). We will probably end up using paper travellers for that session.

5. AGM, 11 September 2021: this was held online for the first time. It went well, though more attendees would have been welcome, and there were no outstanding issues .
6. Finance/ Treasurer
- a) Bank authorizations all now in place and working well.
 - b) Gift for GF: secretary will find out what would be suitable, and update before next meeting.
 - c) Meeting with new auditor: Janet has made contact; the auditor prefers to wait until there is a set of figures to audit, which is normal practice.
 - d) Outstanding charity payments for 2020: to be clarified by treasurer and chairman, and any outstanding payments made. **Action Jim/Janet**
 - e) Club policy on Alford Hall membership (a condition for all regular users). We ratified our previous decision that the Club will cover any membership fees for the period September 2021 until first annual subscriptions are due. Annual Alford Hall membership fees are £10 per annum for under 65's, £5 per annum for 65-80, and free for over 80's, so we will assume an average of £5 per member, and add this £5 to our annual subscription from 2022 onwards. The Full Membership subscription will therefore be £20/year from January 2022, and for New Players will be £10/year. The secretary will liaise with Alford Hall to sort out membership details and a block payment from the Club to Alford Hall. We will do our best to minimize any administrative hassle for individual Warrington Bridge Club members.
 - f) We also decided to introduce a new category of WBC online membership, for those who only participate in our club sessions online. The annual fee for this will be £10. Existing full members who only play online will be offered this option from January 2022, ie a reduction in their subscription from £15 to £10. By having the online category in place, we will also be ready to accommodate any Brierfield members who want to continue with our online sessions, if Brierfield do eventually opt out of BWS.

7. Children in need (CiN) 2021:

This will run from Friday 5th November, for a week .

We agreed that our Monday evening session on 8th November will be a CiN SIM Pairs. Additionally, there will be two BWS online CiN SIM Pairs events, the Friday evening BWS online RealBridge session on 5th November, and an extra BWS online session on Tuesday evening 9th November. All these events will have an entry fee of £5 minimum (or more by voluntary donation). They will be advertised on the website and by email and Club noticeboard, and we will encourage New Player members to play in them.

Warrington Bridge Club will cover the costs of the sessions (assuming there will be no TD charge for the online sessions) so that all takings will go to Children in Need.

8. Education update

Beginners and Improvers (Olive Tree, Penketh, Thursday mornings): Malcolm reported that the beginners sessions were being limited to 10 players at present, because of shortage of tutors. There is a waiting list, and the next 10 will start after Christmas. The Improvers class has 22 on roll, with around 16 attending each week. The majority are very keen, which augurs well for feed through the Next level class in September 2022.

Jim reported that the Next Level class at Alford Hall, also on Thursday mornings, has about 20 attending most weeks, out of a roll of more than 30.

Tuesday morning and Friday morning U3A playing sessions at Alford Hall are well attended; some players are turning up to practice the lesson material, and sit at their own tables, which is promoting mixing and learning across the Improvers and Next Level players.

Malcolm will be gradually introducing the Improvers class to the concepts of duplicate bridge, and proposes that one Thursday morning after the New Year (3rd or 4th week in January) he brings the class to Alford to join in a Gentle Duplicate Pairs with the Next Level class. All agreed that this is a good idea.

9. AOB

Angie passed on a message from Chris Raymond from M&CBA, enquiring about using Alford Hall as a county competition venue. Jim had already responded positively to Chris Raymond's enquiry.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Saturday 4th December 2021, 10am, on Zoom.