

Minutes of WBC Committee Meeting Saturday 31st July 2021, 1030hrs on Zoom

Present: Jim Steele (chair), Janet Jagan (acting Treasurer), Mike Dennis (Secretary), Malcom Roberts, Angie Pinnington, David Burrows, Helen Wright (retiring as Treasurer, remaining on the Committee).

1. **Apologies:** none
2. **Minutes of last meeting**, held 12th June 2021: these were accepted. There were no matters arising not on today's agenda.
3. **BWS committee meeting**, held 17th July 2021. The minutes have yet to be circulated.
Key points arising:
 - Brierfield are planning to reopen for live bridge on 9th August. They have their own premises, and have invested in an expensive ventilation system. Their sessions will be Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons, and Monday and Wednesday evenings. They will not operate a pre-booking system, but allow people to turn up as they choose. We will be very interested to learn how this goes, and also whether it will have an impact on the Brierfield numbers playing on-line, particularly on the three session which clash, namely Monday afternoons, Monday evening, and Wednesday afternoons.
 - Brierfield reported that in Lancashire, three clubs (Bolton, Preston, and Southport) have been operating a similar scheme to BWS, but are concerned about numbers once F2F bridge restarts. They have decided to hand over operations to the Lancashire County Bridge Association (LCBA); sessions will be run by Sarah Amos. They have suggested that they should also take over BWS, an idea not met with any support from Brierfield, Stretford, or our own Committee, since we are very happy with how our arrangements are working. However, the LCBA TD cost will be less, at £25. The BWS Organizing Committee have decided to reduce our TD charges from £40 to £25, starting on 1st August, for sessions of 10 tables or fewer; this will improve our operating finances, especially over the summer months when table numbers have been markedly (and not surprisingly) down.
 - RealBridge are advising iPad users to now use Safari rather than Chrome, following a recent update of the RealBridge software.
 - The monthly Tuesday evening Random Teams of Four event has not been well supported, and will be dropped, at least for the summer months. We will consider what Teams event, if anything, to include in our on-line programme once F2F bridge has restarted.
 - Sit outs and robots: no facility in RealBridge for robots, so we will stick with the option of a sit-out, but this will be limited to a max of 2 boards. In BBO, we will use a pair of robots if required to make up a full table and avoid sit-outs, with the cost shared 3 ways. But in such cases the robots will be taken out of the results completely. This effectively means that boards played against the robot pair will be "practice" which do not count towards the results.
 - RealBridge links: Brierfield have opted to refer members to the Stretford site for the links. Warrington will continue to post the RealBridge links on the Warrington website, but will add a standing link to the Stretford website, in case of glitches or updates which haven't been revised in time.
 - Invoicing: the self-billing procedure by Brierfield and Warrington, in order to reimburse Stretford for BWS costs, is working well. No need to change anything.
4. **AGM for 2021:** We agreed to hold our AGM on-line using Zoom, the results of the members survey having shown a large majority in favour of this approach. The proposed date is Saturday 11 September, 1030am. The relevant notices will be posted in the member area of the website, and members notified by email.

ACTION Jim/Mike

5. Committee/ Officers of the Club

Treasurer: the handover from Helen to Janet is proceeding. Janet is progressing the bank mandate process, to operate the club accounts on-line.

Auditor: Geoff Fisher has decided to stand down after many years carrying out the auditor duties. The Committee expressed thanks to Geoff for his work over the years.

Helen reported that Geoff has audited the Club accounts for 2020, and also for the first half of 2021, but a new auditor will now be required. The chairman has identified a possible replacement, Brian Drinkwater. He will circulate Brian's credentials to the Committee in advance of the next meeting, when we will consider, with a view to recommending his appointment.

ACTION Jim

6. Preparations for resumption of F2F bridge sessions

Mike reported on progress with investigating our list of possible venues, and some additional options added to our list. We already know that one possible venue, Warrington Golf Club, has been ruled out; our request has been rejected by the WGC Committee.

The Committee agreed that our general plan for F2F bridge restart is to aim for early to mid-September if we can, with Monday evenings and Thursday afternoons for regular club sessions, and Thursday mornings for teaching our "Year 3" class (which was going well, but was suspended in March 2020 due to Covid).

For the Thursday morning teaching class, the Olive Tree is at present not willing to offer us any accommodation, due to their processes for cleaning. This is disappointing, since we wanted to be in the same venue as the U3A Beginners and Improvers classes, to aid continuity and mutual support. We are therefore looking for accommodation for all our F2F bridge.

Belong is available for evenings, but as yet they are unable to provide a firm date for restarting, and details of the Covid protocols which will apply.

Warrington Sports Club initially said they could not accommodate us, but now there is a possibility for Thursdays, if we book both morning and afternoon. Mike will follow up to get more detail.

ACTION Mike

Mike will also follow up additional options, over the next week or so, and will report back to the Committee. The Committee noted that we might have to accept some sort of interim solution, pending more clarity from various possible venues.

ACTION Mike

Whichever location(s) are chosen, we will need to prepare a user protocol for members, bearing in mind national Covid guidelines, and any special conditions of use specified by the premises concerned.

Angie said that the Deva are planning to restart with a hybrid system, with sessions running simultaneously F2F and on-line. We had previously discussed such an option and discounted it as not practicable; however, we will find out more about the Deva system and how it works out.

ACTION Angie

7. Review of sessions/ events

We will continue with our present on-line sessions in the meantime, even though some of them (especially Sunday mornings and Wednesday afternoons) are poorly supported by Warrington members and are loss-making. We will be able to take stock again once Brierfield restart their F2F bridge, to gauge the impact on playing numbers. The Thursday morning Gentle Duplicate can continue up until 2nd September, but will then clash with F2F classes. We will need to choose another time if we want to continue running it; however it has proved to be a popular session, and got many of our newer players involved. This will be on the agenda for our next meeting.

We also discussed creating more variety of format in the Friday evening sessions. This will be raised at the next BWS meeting (provisionally w/c 6 September).

ACTION Jim/Mike

8. Club finances

On-line sessions: Jim shared a spreadsheet showing the Club's financial operating position; overall we are running in profit each month, though this has declined over the summer. There is quite a lot of variation between the various sessions, with the less popular being loss making. The Committee felt that the overall position could change significantly once F2F bridge has resumed, and we should review our approach as things developed- certainly once F2F bridge sessions have bedded in (three to six months), but we should monitor the situation in the meantime.

Billing for May /June: Janet has taken over the 2-monthly billing of members; by and large this has gone OK for May/June. We agreed to pay our self-bill amount to Stretford for May & June forthwith. **ACTION Helen**

Charity payments for 2020: there is still some unfinished settling up to do. Jim will formally check the status with Stretford. **ACTION Jim**

9. Education

U3A are restarting Beginners and Improvers sessions on 9/9/21 (with U3A enrolment on 2/9/21.) We agreed we would aim to restart our year 3 (the "Next Level") class on the same date, subject to venue being arranged successfully. It was felt that because of the disruption over the last eighteen months there might be more variation in the standard of improvers coming to year three, but we would continue with the same syllabus as before, and adjust if necessary.

Jim would email all previous attendees to update them about this plan, requesting people to say whether they would be interested in principle in joining. **ACTION Jim**

Malcolm would ask for the details to be placed on the U3A website, once we have a firm proposal in place. **ACTION Malcolm**

10. AOB

10.1 The EBU have issued a routine request for the Club to update its details (sessions, times, venue, etc), for return by 6th September. We felt it was impractical for us to respond at present, as too much remains undecided.

10.2 Policy when a member dies owing playing fees or subscription money to the Club: the Committee agreed that we would absorb any such amounts owing, and write it off. We will not contact relatives, or anyone dealing with a deceased member's estate, to tell them that money is owing to the Club.

11. DONM

We agreed we need another meeting very soon, as we are at a critical stage in determining arrangements to restart F2F bridge. The next meeting will be on Saturday 21st August 2021, 1030hrs, on Zoom.