

Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held online on Thursday 2nd December 2021

In attendance were Ian Sidgwick (President), Paul Denning (Vice-President), Mike Wignall (Treasurer), Patrick Shields (Secretary), Andrew Bull, Richard Butland, Hylary Kingham, Nigel Mortimer. Apologies were received from Jan Bailey, Roger Williams, Alan Wearmouth, invited as Chair of the Representative Events Committee, and Judy Sanis (CBC Representative).

Finance

1. Mike provided an update on a number of issues related to finance -
 - a. The trophies are now gathered and the catalogue is ready for updating as the year ends.
 - b. Collection of fees has progressed well but better annotation of payments would save work.
 - c. The event on 27th November with 16 attendees looks like it will provide a tiny profit, which means that the target of £20 for such an event is a valid and workable price point.
2. There was a short discussion on the hosting of face-to-face events. Tudor Bridge Club has invested in an air filter as an alternative to having open windows in winter. The appropriate standards to enforce are unclear, but advice is emerging that opening windows occasionally rather than continuously might suffice. RB pointed out that there was doubt as to whether air filters were of value.

Report from Chief Tournament Director

3. Patrick reported on the recent survey (issued as it happens a couple of days after the first UK omicron cases, and to which 50% of addressees responded) –
 - a. Online comfort: 87% very happy or comfortable
 - b. F2F comfort: slightly more negative than positive
 - c. Platforms: equal favouring BBO & RB, biggest number welcome mix
 - d. Pattern of games: majority for staying as we are
 - e. Championships: plurality for online
4. Patrick proposed that the timetable for the next four months should mirror the last four months, and this was agreed. RB suggested that we will know more in coming months, and it was agreed that a review at the start of February was appropriate. The County Championships will now be organised.

Update from the Representative Events Committee

5. NTR

GCBA Communications

6. The suggestion had been made that a re-vamping of County Comms and of Club websites around the county might be suitable project a student to take on. A key intent of the GCBA is for the County to keep close to the clubs – something for which email broadcasts has proven ineffective. [Patrick had recently updated the website entries for all clubs in the county, reflecting the truth of their current status] It was suggested that committee members chose one or more clubs for which they will act as a buddy, and we agreed the following volunteers (with others assigned to clubs not mentioned in due course)
 - a. Hylary: Newent
 - b. Nigel: Tudor
 - c. Richard: Tewkesbury
 - d. Ian: Chipping Campden and Winchcombe
 - e. Patrick: Churchdown
 - f. Roger [later]; South Cotswolds

EBU Offer to Non-Affiliated Clubs

7. Ian noted that there had been zero response from clubs to the offer, following his broadcast of it recently. Patrick suggested we might want to make an offer across the U3A spectrum along the lines of the EBU offering. It was agreed that once buddying to Affiliated Clubs was organised, we would look to buddies for the non-Affiliated Clubs and tackle this issue again then.

Follow-up from the EBU AGM.

8. The AGM had taken place on 30th November. There was plenty of routine business plus two serious discussions about
 - a. The robustness of the Disciplinary Rules and the extent to which the process was being well followed, and
 - b. The setting of Universal Membership fees for the year starting April 2022 (it will rise by 2p, roughly inflation).
9. The minutes and a recording of the meeting, along with two useful presentations, will be available from the EBU website shortly.

Bridge Player Recruitment and Teaching

10. Ian reminded us that the EBU had asked about counties' interest in being a pilot for the use of Smart Bridge – the teaching still under development by EBED. Ian suggested it would be nice to know what teaching capacity was available in the county and if it was fully used; we learned that
 - a. Tudor is running with 11 learners currently, but this could expand towards about 20.
 - b. Cheltenham BC is running at capacity with two classes of 16 learners, and full runs of “Learn in a Weekend”.
 - c. Newent is not running teaching since it stopped it face-to-face games, but usually has a capacity of 20 and there often spare spaces.
11. In terms of gathering candidates to learn the game, the experience of Newent is that advertising can be expensive, while Cheltenham gains students primarily through word of mouth. Social media and searches on Google will be the route many people use these days. IS noted that the small (4 table) Northleach Bridge Club has restarted post-Covid; advertising relaxed session once a month has attracted some new players, and phoning round to confirm attendance in advance has kept the regulars coming.

OTHER BUSINESS

12. The suggestion of a Clubs meeting in 2022 is still live; there has been no luck so far with suitable venues, and it might be worth sounding out some bridge clubs about whether the premises they hire might be available for this sort of venture.
13. Patrick will prepare a proposal that the County Association might make to the Gloucestershire U3A, and bring it to a future meeting.
14. We discussed how the GCBA might help if a club felt it had to dissolve. An important step is to make sure that the player members have alternative games where they can continue to play. It might be worth documenting some thoughts about how clubs might merge if they were struggling individually.
15. For the next County Newsletter, Patrick will prepare some material based on the EBU AGM, the new GCBA Programme, and the collection of GCBA fees.
16. We discussed the extent to which Thursday night meeting were awkward for some, but felt nothing else was better, so we shall stick to the current pattern.

17. The next meeting will be on Thursday 6th January 2022 at 1900 hrs.

THE END

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