

**Minutes of Warrington Bridge Club Committee Meeting
Saturday 9th March 2024, 2pm, on Zoom**

Present: Mike Dennis (chair), Jim Steele (secretary), David Burrows, Carolyn Bailey, Malcolm Roberts, Ian Douglas

- 1 **Apologies:** Janet Jagan, Janine Curwell
- 2 **Minutes of previous meeting** held 20th January 2024: accepted as a true record.
There were no matters arising not on today's agenda.
- 3 **Final prep for Spring Social and prizegiving on 11th March**
Janine has ordered the food. Wine and glasses have been ordered from Alford, by Mike. Mike will also get soft drinks: orange juice, diet lemonade. **Action Mike**
Trophies and prize vouchers are all prepared ready. Jim will bring. **Action Jim**
Tablecloths- Hilary will bring the yellow ones to cover the bridge cloths while people are eating, and a large one for setting out the food. **Action Jim (via Hilary)**
Serviettes- Jim will bring. **Action Jim**
- 4 **Review of AGM- what we need to do next**
The Committee discussed this under item 9.
- 5 **Other items of expenditure/ improvements/ publicity**
 - a. **Signage at Alford Hall:** we have agreement from Alford to proceed to erect a sign at the entrance to the Club. Jim and Mike have agreed a specific location. Mike will check ground conditions are suitable for the posts (no obstructions), and then proceed to procure and erect. **Action Mike**
 - b. **Tennis Club (SH) Banner:** Already in place. The cost was £48 for the banner and £120 for 6 months display.
 - c. **Other items on publicity:** We have received an email from Jess (Alford Hall) about using social media to publicize activities at Alford. We will tap in. **Action Ian** We will also composed an advertorial to see of we can get local press interested in publishing. Ian will draft for the Committee to consider. **Action Ian.**
 - d. **Lighting on road to Alford car park:** this is a safety issue, and we have had at least two accidents with members tripping /falling. While we can ask the staff to switch ion the bowling green lights, this doesn't illuminate the whole roadway. There is a post with two floodlights which are both out of action. We will try to get action from Alford to fix them. **Action Mike**
- 6 **BWS: On-line activities**
 - a. **Monday evening sessions:** these have been very poorly attended, and are not viable unless we can boost numbers. Jim will talk to Adam and David Tilley to try to arrive at suggestions, eg a different slot in the week. **Action Jim**
 - b. **Brierfield Members:** we have now shared with Stretford those Brierfield members who want to continue with BWS.
 - c. **RealBridge Session links:** Jim is now setting these up.
- 7 **F2F Activities and Calendar**
 - a. **Thursday afternoon relaxed duplicates** are running well, with usually 4 to 6 tables. Ian and Malcolm are getting used to doing the TD and scoring duties for these. We will continue, and try to build attendance.
 - b. **Opening up on Monday evenings:** we have been unable to establish a rota. The best plan in the meantime is for Jim and Mike to share diaries, so we know in advance when neither will be there, and for someone to be nominated to do it on those occasions.

8 Education/teaching

- a. Thursday morning intermediate lessons are well attended, with 20+ most weeks. The help offered by Carolyn (when Mike is away) and Brigitte is proving invaluable.
- b. Numbers in the beginners class have built up very well with the new intake in January. We now have ~15.

9 Finances (note: Treasurer not present)

- a. The Committee resolved the following:
 - i. TD's on Monday and Thursday duplicates will have a free session. This is backdated to 1st January.
 - ii. The Committee did not feel that scorers should have a free session. This is usually the same person as the TD anyway. The rationale is that as playing TD, his/her session is often disrupted by attending to calls for the Director to come to a table and sort out an irregularity; this doesn't apply to the scorer.
 - iii. The Committee was not minded to give free sessions to those carrying out other Club duties, such as operating the dealing machine, opening up/setting out tables, Treasurer's duties, secretarial duties, etc etc, as it would be difficult to know how far it this should extend. However, we resolved to present a gift at the Spring Social/Prizegiving, to two people who do a great deal to assist in running of the Club, but who have no committee responsibility: Keith Perry and Hilary Wood.
Action Mike
 - iv. Learners joining in September: each year we have a new intake of members from u3a, joining the Intermediate course. We agreed that these people should be offered New Player membership at zero subscription, only paying their session fees, until the 1st January following.

b. Club funds, and how we should use them

I. Club Reserves

In the absence of the Treasurer, we held a general discussion, following up the agenda item at the AGM, without the intent to achieve a specific resolution. There was general agreement from those present that we need a contingency fund, to cater for future replacement of equipment (eg dealing machine, laptop, Bridgemates), and to provide resilience if we need to change premises at some stage, since new premises would be likely to be more expensive. There was no clear consensus on how big that should be, though some views were that approximately 1 year's turnover (ca £12k) was not unreasonable.

The Committee endorsed the view that we should not be seeking to increase our reserves at this time, and that breaking even for 2024 (or even making a small operating loss) is acceptable. With the increase in costs that Janet had displayed at the AGM (particularly premises, and EBU), this was seen as the most likely scenario, where we

- Hold playing fees and subscriptions at present levels.
- Continue to run charity events (at present 6 times per year) where we absorb the costs, and donate all table money to charity.
- Continue to run a Spring and a Christmas social, funded from Club funds.

We will discuss how to engage with members for their input and suggestions on use of Club reserves, at the next meeting and beyond.

- II. Improvements to Festival Suite, and possible funding by WBC
Malcolm summarised a discussion with Jess about the management set-up of Alford Hall. It is a non-profit making organisation run by a board of trustees; there is a committee which makes recommendations on expenditure items etc, which the Trustees consider. WBC is an important contributor to Alford's financial viability (as are u3a room bookings), and they are keen to retain us.

Tables: Alford Hall propose to scrap the existing wooden tables in the Festival suite (both the round and the rectangular ones), and purchase 20 square tables and 4 larger rectangular tables, at a total cost of £976, ie about £40 each. They want fixed leg tables, not folding ones. We have seen and used a sample square table. It is smaller than our existing, at 75cm side versus 85cm, but is just about adequate size for bridge. If necessary, we could make some larger table tops to fit over. U3a propose to fund 6 of the square tables, ie £240, and would retain ownership. The Committee felt that WBC should do the same. This would reduce Alford's outlay from £976 to £496.

When Alford are scrapping the existing tables, we will ask to see if we can retain some, eg to cut down and use as side tables (say ~8 off) **Action Mike**

Floor: Alford do not propose to relay the floor, as this would be too expensive.

Curtains: Alford do intend to improve these – details to be discussed.

10 **Committee membership**

Brenda Newton has approached us, volunteering to join the Committee. We recognised that she had just missed the process of nomination and seconding for the AGM, but nevertheless agreed that she should be invited to join as a co-opted member. Proposed by Malcolm, seconded by Ian, and approved nem con. The secretary will write to her to inform her. **Action Jim**

11 **AOB**

Carolyn tabled an item on what our aims should be for Monday evenings (see Appendix attached).

We had a general discussion on the merits of options 1 and 2, and felt that option 1 was best as a default, and that we already vary this on set occasions – Improvers/Charity nights. We also offer a stepping stone to full-on duplicate bridge with our Thursday afternoon relaxed duplicates. However, we made no decision, and will canvas members' views.

Action Mike

We also identified some actions which could help:

- i. Create a crib sheet of the most common irregularities (revoke, lead out of turn, bid out of turn, insufficient bid, unauthorized information, etc) and how they are dealt with.
- ii. Add a lesson in the Intermediate course on announcing, alerting, what to do if things go wrong. **Action Jim**

12 **Date of Next Meeting**

Provisionally Saturday 20th April, 930am, on Zoom, but need to check with Janet and Janine.

Jim Steele
Club Secretary
13/3/24

Appendix

Club aims for Monday evening sessions

Given that the club is in a healthy, 'thriving' position it might be worth taking a collective view on what we would like to achieve from our Monday evening sessions in the future, particularly as we now have a cohort of 'improvers' potentially looking for progression.

Some options for discussion:

- 1) The current arrangement (or similar). Strict rules of competitive bridge.
 - 24 Boards
 - Rounds: 7 minutes or less, no break
 - Rules: EBU White Book expected to be followed. Calling the director is seen as normal for all major and intermediate infringements. (And possibly minor?)
- 2) Slightly less strict but still competitive
 - 21-22 Boards
 - Rounds: 7 – 8 minutes (or 7 minutes with short break)
 - Rules: Calling the director for major infringements only. Some level of tolerance allowed (to be agreed by TDs)
 - Slightly more 'sociable' (and potentially less daunting to progress to from lessons).
- 3) Other models, suggestions welcome.

Actions required (for either 1 or 2):

- Making the above expectations clear/defined to all members.
- The teaching sessions to include laws/rules/protocols: alerting, stop card, calling the Director etc. in preparation for a transition to Mondays.

An important associated matter:

Competitions

If the club is hopeful of competing in inter-club matches or regional/national competitions then it would make sense for Monday evenings to be a training-ground for this to happen (Option 1).

However, if the club has no ambitions in that direction it might make sense to move towards a slightly more relaxed approach.