

FINAL DRAFT

SUSSEX COUNTY CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

A meeting of the Management Committee of the SCCBA took place via Zoom at 10.30am on Wednesday 4 Dec 2024

Present:

Mr P Clinch (PC)

Chair

Mr D Wheeler (DW)

Hon Secretary

and other elected members: Mrs A Baxter (AB), Mrs J Mayall (JM) and Mr M Wotton (MW).

Also attending were the President Mr M Pool (MP) and Mrs H Kent (HK) – Crawley BC).

AGENDA

1. Apologies

Mr L Fowle (LF – Seaford BC), Mrs A Galpin AG), Mr D Galpin (DG), Mr J Hardy (JH), Mr N Watts (NW) and Mr M Wright MWr)

2. Minutes of the meeting of 27 Sept 2024

2.1 Accuracy

MC Members were content with the minutes as shown in the final draft.

2.2 Matters Arising

DW reported that:

- Actions from paragraphs 6 and 15 had been completed.
- Other actions from the previous meeting would be picked up under the relevant items below.

3. Chair's Report

PC thanked attendees for agreeing to the changed date/time of the meeting. Looking back on 2024, he observed that progress had been made in the post-pandemic recovery with most clubs showing an increase in activity. The Sussex contribution to the BIABD Festival had been well received and progress was now being made in re-establishing schools bridge across the county. He would provide further input under the relevant items below.

4. Treasurer's Report

4.1 Treasurer's Report and Accounts for p/e 30 Sept 2024

JH had circulated accounts which showed a surplus of £886 (2023; £1,824). However, in anticipation of a significant contribution by the County to *Bridge-it's a big deal*, he had inserted a provision of £1,625 for this item, which resulted in a potential deficit of £739. The actual amount generated by clubs' table money surcharges was £993, and the UMS income due to the County but donated to Cancer Research is estimated to be £127 – making a total donation by the County of £1,120. Separately, participants in the Autumn Congress donated an additional £50 which will also be forwarded to Cancer Research UK. Lastly, certain expenses incurred in staging the Autumn Congress had been borne by Patcham Bridge Club and certain individuals – totalling £295 – which will also be forwarded to CRUK. Other points of interest were:

- In October, the GP weekend, co-hosted with Kent CBA, resulted in a surplus for each county of about £350. In addition, as a result of circumstances which could not have been foreseen regarding catering at the Ladies Pairs, there was a surplus of over £150 from this event
- The county has made certain commitments relating to a schools bridge teaching initiative being organised by Douglas Wright. Currently, we have not been invoiced for any expenditure, but it is likely that this will result in costs of at least £1,500.
- Although Sussex is no longer organising the Autumn Junior Bridge Camp (JBC), the county is committed to supporting the event to the extent of matching the support provided by the other counties involved – up to a maximum of £750. To date, we have not been advised of the level of support required from Sussex.
- UMS income continues to be reasonably healthy – over £550 per month. This is still lower than pre-pandemic, but continues to improve on, or match, the last couple of years.
- Overheads (other than donations) at £3,542 for the period to 30/9/24 are in line with those incurred in the same period last year, and in the absence of any unexpected items, the overheads for the remainder of 2024 will be similar to those of last year.

As a result of the second and third bullet points above, JH anticipated that the County would show an overall deficit on its operations in 2024. Even so the County will continue to have a healthy financial position with reserves of over £40,000 and a current cash balance of over £50,000.

4.2 MW enquired that as EBED now took responsibility for the organisation of all JBCs, should Sussex still be sponsoring it? DW explained that, although responsibility had been transferred, SCCBA's commitment to supporting youth bridge remained in place, hence JH's report above.

5. Affiliated Club Issues

DW reported that Eastbourne BC were applying to become a charity and they had developed a hybrid constitution merging the Charity Commission and EBU models. Their experience might be of interest to other clubs. PC observed that the Avenue BC were considering a similar move.

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6. Selectors' Report

PC reported that the SC had met last month for a debrief on the Tollemache qualification result. After a slow start the county team had worked its way up the leaderboard to be in contention to qualify in the final session. Unfortunately, this excellent recovery resulted in disappointment with the team just losing out in a split tie comparing head-to-head results with two other counties.

7. Tournament Committee Report

7.1 Competitions

DW advised MC members that the minutes of the TC meeting on 22 November (now available on the website) contained updates on all current and near future events in the calendar. PC conveyed his thanks to HK for the very successful East Grinstead Basic Bridge Pairs and to JM for the equally successful Ladies Pairs.

7.2 EBU Nine-High Corwen 2025

PC reported that Lord Newton had agreed that his donated trophy could be awarded to the winner of the Sussex qualifying event for this new competition. PC would be confirming arrangements for the online event to take place in January.

Action: PC

7.3 Welcome Series

DW reiterated that informal responses from Chichester and Eastbourne had suggested that they might be willing to hold Welcome Pairs events in their parts of the county. He would follow up with both clubs early in the new year and would report further at the next meeting..

Action: DW

7.4 New Year Swiss Teams

JM confirmed that the NYST would take place at Patcham BC on 19 Jan 2025. She would provide AB with the text for a mailshot at the beginning of that month.

Action: JM/AB

7.5 County TDs

DW reported that owing to health issues Eddie and Kathy Williams had retired from the county's panel of TDs. DW had conveyed the MC's thanks for their long and distinguished service to the county. PC indicated he would be discussing with the CTD the need to add to the TD panel in due course.

Action: PC

7.6 Competition Rules (CR)

DW referred to the recently changed EBU Articles of Association within which the responsibilities of the previous L&E Committee had been divided between new Conduct and Regulation Committees. The Regulation Committee now deals with, inter alia, appeals against rulings. DW enquired whether we should follow suit by creating a county regulation committee. If so, the CR clause concerning appeals against rulings in matches held in private (appeals should be referred to the Chair of the county Conduct Committee) needed to be changed. JM confirmed that no such appeals had been referred to her during her many years as CC Chair but had she received such she would have assembled a panel with appropriate expertise and experience, carefully avoiding any potential conflicts of interest. MP opined that, in these circumstances, there was no need to create a new committee and, therefore, no need to amend the CR. MC Members agreed.

7.7 Pachabo qualification

DW had circulated a paper reporting the further relaxation of the EBU's rules for Pachabo qualification. This created the level of flexibility required to deal with the availability problems experienced this year. Subject to MC agreement, it remained only to alert the Chair of the Selection Committee to this potential additional responsibility. MC Members agreed and DW undertook to advise the SC Chair accordingly.

Action: DW

8. Secretary's Report

8.1 Meetings in 2025

DW had circulated a listing of planned MC, TC and Officers' meetings in 2025 for MC Members' information. DW asked MC Members to alert him if any were problematic.

8.2 Gladys Hakki award 2024/25

DW had circulated the draft invitation to clubs for nominations for this award. MC Members were content for this to issue later this month.

Action: DW

8.3 AGM 13 April 2025

DW had circulated drafts of the agenda and its annexes and the proposed Membership T&C for 2025/26. MC Members were content for these to be used in due course.

Action: DW

8.4 Update of County Services Listing

DW had circulated this updated description of the county services available to individual members and clubs. MC Members were content for this to be used to inform those concerned.

Action: DW

8.5 Constitution

DW reported that he had produced a gender-neutral version of the constitution. Because this did not involve any substantive changes, he did not believe they required approval beyond that of the MC and he proposed simply to use this version to replace that currently published on the website. MC Members agreed.

Action: DW/MW

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8.6 County organisation resources

DW reported that efforts over recent years to create succession plans for the MC via occasional informal approaches to individuals had not borne fruit and the Officers now believed that a request should be issued to clubs to help with the need for additional MC resources and, over time, the creation of succession plans for key posts. DW had circulated a draft email for this purpose. MC Members asked for more time to consider the approach most likely to succeed and DW asked for comments/suggestions by 1 January.

Action: MC Members

9. EBU Matters

9.1 Festival of Bridge – It's a Big Deal

DW had circulated his summary report to the EBU, MC Members and Club Contacts. The overall Sussex contribution had been well received by the EBU. The latter had since reported that the overall total of donations to CRUK had exceeded £130,000, more than double the original target. The latter (£60,000) had been regarded by some as ambitious so the actual achievement represented an excellent outcome. PC commented that discussion at the recent EBU AGM seemed to suggest that the other primary objective, raising the profile of the game and attracting new members, had been less successful. Evidence of media coverage seemed to be thin on the ground and the EBU report did not contain any reference to the attraction of new members. HK observed that Crawley BC's open day at a local garden centre had generated much interest although, thus far only one new member – the manager of the garden centre. The latter is enthusiastic and sympathetic to more open days in the future.

9.2 AGM 2024

PC reported that much of this meeting had been taken up with discussions and votes on the EBU Board's proposals to modernise its Articles of Association and Byelaws and related amendments. Two sets of the latter had been proposed, one by MP and one by another shareholder. MP explained that his amendments sought to address what he believed to be potentially illegal aspects of the new Articles and Byelaws. He had discussed these at length with the EBU Board members concerned before the meeting but had not been persuaded by their attempted reassurances. MP added that the EBU had declared that if any of these amendments were passed, all of the new proposals would fail. In the event, both sets of amendments were rejected by the majority of shareholders and subsequently the new Articles and Byelaws were approved by the required majority of at least 75%. MP added that since the AGM, an EBU Board member had approached him with a view to further discussions which might help resolve MP's concerns. MP was still considering whether to accept this offer. MC Members noted that the EBU's AGM 2025 would take place on 26 November.

9.3 EBU Strategy 2025

DW had circulated a copy of the EBU's one page summary of its strategic priorities for 2025. This had been discussed at a meeting of county chairs and shareholders and again at the AGM. The EBU had acknowledged that the summary reflected the aspirations for next year and that plans for the various projects implied with measurable targets to be achieved would need to be developed and shared with shareholders in the near future. PC observed that the newer board members came with a business background which gave cause for cautious optimism that real progress might be made over the coming months.

9.4 Best Practice for County Associations

DW had circulated this EBU advice together with a paper which summarised his review of SCCBA practice against this model of county activities. The latter are divided into essential and additional, recommended activities, with our practices meeting over 90% of the essential (21 of 23) and 50% of the additional requirements (13 of 26). The shortfalls reflected the pressure on county resources and underlined the importance of the initiative now being pursued (see paragraph 8.6 above).

At this point, agenda item 12 was brought forward to allow JM to report and leave to meet another commitment. MP asked whether the meeting was still quorate. DW advised that the quorum for an MC meeting is 50% of elected members and JM's departure had reduced the meeting to 40%. This meant that the remaining business could only be dealt with where information was simply being reported and discussed and approvals or other decisions were not required.

10. Membership Secretary's Report

AB reported that the membership total at 2 December was 2665, 53 more than the total reported to the previous meeting. The email address list now totalled 2453, 61 more than reported in September. AB commented that whilst these increases were encouraging and more than compensated for the reductions reported at the last meeting, the reason(s) for these fluctuations were not clear. HK observed that the start in September of courses at training clubs (where new students are routinely registered with the EBU) might be a factor in play.

11. Webmaster and Master Point Secretary's Report

MW reported that requirements for website updates had reduced in recent weeks. A recent issue concerned the entry form template being used for the David Pavey which seemed to be an obsolete version. DW agreed to check his file and liaise with the organiser as required. MW advised MC Members that he would not be available to make changes to the website for two weeks from 15 December.

12. Conduct and Discipline

JM had indicated that there was nothing to report on this occasion.

13. Youth Bridge

13.1 Autumn JBC 2024

DW reported that he had found a summary of this event on the *bridge4schools* website having failed to find anything on the EBED site. 41 youngsters had attended, a somewhat lower attendance than the original target (100) but on a par with the 2023 event. JH had yet to receive a request for sponsorship.

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13.2 Bridge in Schools

PC reported that he had just received an 'end of term' report from Douglas Wright. He would circulate a summary as soon as possible. The overall picture was a 'curate's egg'; progress in some schools and setbacks elsewhere. His efforts to find a coordinator were continuing.

Action: PC

14. Education

Nothing to report..

15. Charities Co-ordinator's Report

DW advised that the inqorate situation meant that the selection of charities for 2025 would need to be dealt with outside the meeting and involve at least 50% of the elected members. He would arrange for an email dialogue and ballot for the decisions required.

Action: DW

Post meeting note

Following the action required from this item, two charities, Eastbourne Samaritans and Sage House Dementia Support, were chosen to receive donations from the proceeds of the 2025 Sims week. MC Members agreed that the proceeds should be uprated from reserves to allow a donation of £1000 to each charity.

16. Equipment and Trophy Co-ordinator's Report

Nothing to report.

17. Next Meeting

Via Zoom at 10.30am on Friday 21 March 2025.

18. Any Other Business

None

The meeting closed at 11.20am.