

**Minutes of Warrington Bridge Club Committee Meeting
Sat 19th October 2024, 0930hrs, on Zoom**

AGENDA

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Janine Curwell.

2. Minutes of previous Committee meeting, held 17th August 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted. There were no matters arising not on today's agenda.

3. Membership Survey

This has been completed, and the Committee had some further discussion on results. There were some suggestions about more varied formats, such as Swiss Teams, varying from Match Points scoring, and inter-club competitions. The Committee will keep these ideas under review, and seek to implement them when there is a fair prospect of success. We noted that take up of our new Tuesday evening on-line session has not been very good so far.

4. Finances

a. Overview and spending priorities

Janet reported that for the present year to end September, we are still generating a surplus, despite increasing costs (notably room hire). The increased attendance on Thursday afternoons was a significant contributor.

The Committee debated how to address this, and agreed the following:

- i. Subscriptions: we rejected a complete subscription holiday for 2025, noting that we have to pay an Alford subscription out of our membership fees (for all but on-line only members), and this is now £6.50, and is increasing each year. Our subscription should at least cover this. **However we agreed to change our subscription model to one class of membership only, and charge this at £10 per annum from January 2025.** This will significantly simplify our systems, and mean a 50% reduction for all full members (currently about half of our total membership of 132). We will need to modify our Membership Application Form, and our membership records, accordingly [**ACTION Jim**]
- ii. New laptop: our present one is old and obsolescent, and is an essential item for running club sessions. We will purchase a new one, sooner rather than later. Mike will discuss with Malcolm Strange [**ACTION Mike**], and Jim will obtain some specifications and prices for consideration by the committee. [**ACTION Jim**]
- iii. We will add a Club contribution to the charity donations we make to our local charity, matching the amount generated by table fees.
- iv. Side tables: our new bridge tables are smaller than the old ones, with little room for a drink, a personal scorecard, boards, etc, as well as the Bridgemate and bidding boxes. We will obtain 8-10 side tables, which must be stacking (so we can store them conveniently in the store room) and mustn't be too low (say at least 2ft high, as otherwise they'd be a tripping hazard). We will investigate what is available. [**ACTION- all, for suggestions**]

We discussed but rejected (at least for now) the following ideas:

- More or larger prizes for our club competitions
- Reducing playing fees- we felt that £3, including tea/coffee and biscuits, is already very low, and competitive compared to other bridge clubs.
- Make a donation to Alford Hall, for improvements to the Festival Suite.

b. Views from membership on what priorities we should have on spending our money

We will email members with a further request for any suggestions on spending priorities, noting our already agreed actions in 4a above, and for a charity or local group for us to support in 2025. We will request that any suggestions on a charity or local group should be accompanied by detail on why that one, and how the money would be used. The email will emphasise that we are looking for something to benefit the local community, rather than a national organisation. [ACTION Jim]

c. Choice of charity for 2025.

The Committee felt that our choice for 2024, the Walton Lea Partnership, was an excellent one, as our contribution was appreciated and made a real difference locally. We will include a request for 2025 suggestions in our email to members (see 4b above)

d. Billing for playing fees

The next billing round will be for Sep & Oct, to be done in early November. As Jim will be away, Carolyn will prepare the billing information for Janet to send out the bills.

We discussed ways of reducing the administrative workload. We mooted, but rejected, the idea of creating a website page for the bills, anonymised or not, so that members could just read off how much they need to pay each period, rather than receiving a personalised email each time, stating the amount to pay.

We discussed the period of billing, presently 6 times per year. There is a trade-off between too often (more work) and too seldom (some people receiving quite a large bill). **We agreed that from 2025 we will change to billing quarterly:**

- early January 2025, for annual subscriptions and fees for Nov/Dec 24
- early April (fees for Jan, Feb, and March)
- early July (fees for April, May, June)
- early October (fees for July, August, September)
- early January 2026, for annual subscriptions and fees for Oct/Nov/Dec 25
- etc

We will publicise on the website [ACTION Jim]

5. Other items of expenditure/ improvements

- d. Signage at Alford Hall: complete.
- e. Tennis Club banner. In abeyance. Benefits are unclear. We have the banner in our possession (with Mike).
- f. New bridge tables, along with u3a and Alford: Now complete, and an excellent improvement to the bridge room. It was noted that some of the legs are working loose. This has been reported to Alford Hall, and they are aware of it, and they are being tightened up as required.
- g. Request from Ian to acquire 5 of our wooden / green baize topped bridge tables, for Birchwood & Croft Bridge Club: agreed. [ACTION Ian]

6. 2024 Calendar/ Preparation for coming events

d. Children in Need

David reminded us that this is 11th November, not 4th Nov. Jim will amend our calendar [ACTION Jim]
The system for paying to ECATS is changing, and will this time involve us paying to Just Giving, and a separate invoice to ECATS of 90p/pair. This is very inconvenient for our Treasurer, as Just Giving does not accept donations from our "Two to sign" bank account. We questioned the merits of continuing with ECATS, but felt that the benefits of a national SIM pairs were important to some, and we should continue.

We debated whether it should also be an Improvers night, and agreed it should not be; we already have six for 2024, and we need to play the boards at a reasonable pace.

b. TD Cover

David reported that things are working OK, with himself, Keith, and Peter being able to cover. We agreed that we should get more people able to do it on a Monday, by shadowing when an experienced TD was there. We suggested Mike, Hilary, and Jim as people who might do that. Jim already does TD & scoring on Thursday afternoons and some Tuesday evenings on-line.

c. Cover for November when Jim is away

Mondays 4/11 and 11/11- opening up, bringing the milk, setting out the refreshments, and clearing up and putting away afterwards: Mike will cover these two Mondays [**ACTION Mike**]
Thursdays 7/11 and 11/11 (morning and afternoon sessions) - opening up, bringing the milk, setting out the refreshments, delivering the lesson, washing up the mugs (dishwasher) and clearing up and putting away afterwards: Ian will cover these two Thursdays [**ACTION Ian**]

d. Christmas Social Monday 16 December

This will be an Improvers night. Start time 630pm.

To be advertised [**ACTION Jim**]

We will provide wine and soft drinks, a cold buffet, and coffee and mince pies (as last year)

Arrangements to be agreed between Mike and Janine [**ACTION Mike, Janine**]

e. Encouraging attendance on Tuesday evenings on-line, and Thursday afternoons:

We will continue to plug as appropriate – Monday evenings for both, Thursdays for Tuesday on-line.

f. Christmas/New Year sessions

We will have no F2F bridge on Monday 23 Dec, Thurs 26 Dec, Mon 30 Dec, and Thurs 2 January. We will re-open for the normal calendar on Monday 6th January.

Jim will amend the website calendar accordingly. [**ACTION Jim**]

7. 2025 Calendar

(note: Easter is 18-21 April)

a. AGM

As already agreed, for 2025, we will hold the AGM face to face, in response to members' comments. The date will be Monday 10 March, 630pm. We discussed the possibility of streaming to enable a mix of F2F and on-line attendance, but felt it was far too complicated for the potential benefit. We agreed it will not be an Improvers/charity night.

b. 2025 Competitions

We agreed to retain the same format as 2024.

c. 2025 Social evenings

As for 2024, we will have two: a Spring social/prizegiving, and a Christmas social.

d. Number of Improvers nights

We agreed to retain at 6 in the year, as about right.

8. Scoring Software

The problems with using BridgeGem have been resolved, and the system is available to use, but on Ian Douglas' own personal laptop. There were significant teething problems, all about our membership database, what it contains, and accessing the correct field.

There remains an issue to bottom, in how our website database works and how that can be the "master" database on which our other systems rely. For example, Scorebridge uses its own player database, separate from our website membership database, so there is always room for incompatibility and error.

9. Publicity

a. Essential Guide

Ian confirmed that this is now publishing WBC, including our Thursday sessions.

b. Local GP's

As previously discussed, there is an opportunity to encourage them to include bridge as a "social prescription". Mike reported that he is working on this, but it's not straightforward. Ongoing [ACTION Mike]

10. BWS Matters /joint on-line bridge with Antrobus BC

- a. BWS: the one weekly session, on Friday evenings, remains successful, though table numbers have reduced slightly. We still however generate a consistent small revenue, assisted by a number of Brierfield members continuing to play, and having joined Warrington to do so, after Brierfield Bridge Club itself withdrew just over a year ago. No need to change anything.
- b. The joint sessions with Antrobus on Tuesday evenings started on 2nd July as planned. So far it is just viable, but we need to build numbers.

11. Education/ teaching

- a. Intermediate lessons: Ian has delivered several, and is happy doing it. The sharing of responsibility is ongoing.
- b. Help on Thursday mornings: working well. Carolyn and Brigitte are supporting when available, which is a great help.
- c. Having suggested auctions on the travellers for the prepared hands has been very popular. The action from last time to make a more streamlined system for doing this, to make it less laborious work every week, has been implemented, from September.
- d. Training for bridge teaching (Jim/Ian)
 - i. Continue to look for suitable course (venue/timing). We agreed that the Club should fund this. This is a standing item.
 - ii. Jim had mentioned last time another useful exercise, which is to attend a lesson given by another experienced teacher. Jim will provide details to Ian, eg Pauline Smyth at Middlewich. Still to do. [ACTION Jim]
 - iii. Session with Nicky Bainbridge on teaching for teachers: This took place on 20 September, and was a very useful exercise.
- e. Advanced lessons: there is some interest, but no convenient slot to do it. Mike suggested having some lesson on the website, and a table or two on a Thursday morning to play prepared hands, in parallel to the Intermediate course prepared hands. To be discussed again, to see if we could make the idea work, but no action in the meantime. We did not like the alternative idea of making the Intermediate course into a 2-year course, as it would make the continuum from Improvers very messy to organise.

12. AOB

Succession planning: we had no time to discuss, but this will be an item for next time, and a standing agenda item.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Agreed for Saturday 11th January 2025, 930am, on Zoom.

Any pressing business in the meantime will be sorted out by email/text/phone/face to face discussion.