

Suffolk Contract Bridge Association

Minutes of meeting held on 18th May 2008

The purpose of the meeting is to receive the views of Suffolk's affiliated clubs on the EBU Strategy Proposal ('Pay-to-Play') to inform the voting decision of SCBA committee at the special meeting of the EBU on 4-June-2008.

All clubs were invited and as many people as interested were encouraged to attend but it was asked that clubs limit themselves to two speakers. Some clubs were unable to send a representative and their responses were relayed. For those clubs who had yet to form their intentions, the process would be informative.

In attendance:

Club	Representative
TALLY HO	Judy Hamilton
	Jocelyn Leyland
IPSWICH HOSPITALS	Albert Newsome
	Joan Mayhew
FELIXSTOWE	Barbara Carey
IPSWICH & KESGRAVE	Malcolm Carey
SUDBURY	Sue Flin
COLCHESTER	Graham Beeton
COLCHESTER CASTLE	Paul Rickard
	Chris Rickard
STOWMARKET	Maurice Last
	Arthur Winchester
ALDEBURGH	Kate McGhee
	Biddy Bainbridge
CLARE	Jane Moore
FRINTON	Claude Stokes
FRAMLINGHAM	Charles Parker

SCBA P2P Working Party: Christopher Chambers, Pauline Hanson, Eric Newman, Jeff Orton, Rick Waters.

Also present: Peter Gemmell, John Standley (both SCBA committee), Andrew Moore, Fleur Waters and a number of interested observers.

The Meeting

Called to order at 1:30pm, to follow the agenda sent out to clubs with the notice. Christopher Chambers took minutes and conducted the meeting.

1. Brief description of P2P in Suffolk (Christopher Chambers)

The Suffolk association had set up a sub-committee (working party) on P2P with the five personnel above. They had formulated a policy statement identifying the SCBA as broadly in favour but had not yet decided its voting intention without listening to members and clubs. The statement was sent to all clubs and is posted along with much other material on the Suffolk website.

The SCBA asserts there are three stakeholders in the voting decision

- a. Existing SCBA members
- b. Club members, not currently in the SCBA who would be adopted under P2P
- c. The committee in their evaluation of the viability of county bridge

This meeting was to give voice to the second group and the full SCBA committee would weigh the opinions received.

2. **A statement from each club as to its position and views on P2P**

This was a 'round room' opportunity for each club to express its views.

Judy Hamilton (Tally Ho) objected to an early comment from the floor making light of the concerns of clubs opposing the proposal. It was therefore established that only factual matters were to be challenged and a discussion would ensue at the end if there were unmentioned or uncontested viewpoints.

To avoid a lengthy section where the responses of those not present were read out, these were interspersed – those comments appear, separately in appendix 1.

Each club was asked to clarify its position with regard to P2P: did it support the proposal and if it did not, would it disaffiliate from the EBU (and therefore Suffolk as well) if implemented?

- **TALLY HO** (Judy Hamilton)

A committee meeting had been unanimous in their objection to the proposal. Specifically they felt

- a. It was an invasion of privacy to collect private information from members
- b. Moreover the EBU could not be trusted with that information
- c. P2P involved considerable extra work for secretaries and scorers
- d. The contract was over litigious and coercive
- e. The EBU spent money in manners inappropriate to the average club member, for example, expensive administration (which would increase under P2P), on international teams and events and even the education budget had little relevance locally.

Tally Ho opposes the EBU proposal and would disaffiliate

- **IPSWICH HOSPITALS** (Arthur Newsome and Joan Mayhew)

The club had accepted the proposal with some reservations. The speaker went on to express his personal views as chairman of the club, which, on his own admittance, were not all endorsed by the committee and members.

- a. It was a moot point that all bridge players *should* be national members
- b. He had misgivings about the EBU's ability to implement the system
- c. The EBU should first put "its house in order" and repair the divisions in the bridge playing population
- d. He urged the EBU to go "back to the drawing board"
- e. We should have first seen what we are to be members of – and will be paying for – before we are asked to (or forced) to join.
- f. He likened the "20p to the 10p [income tax band]"

JM as secretary reinforced the qualifier that the above was a personal expression and that the club was, in the main, quite positive about the proposal.

Ipswich Hospitals supports the EBU proposal

- **FELIXSTOWE** (Barbara Carey)

Felixstowe had been most impressed by the visit of EBU official Krys Kazmierczak in autumn 2007. Even members not playing that evening had been

sufficiently interested to attend the presentation. Almost forty were present and only two or three were against the proposal with the remainder wholeheartedly in support. P2P was generally regarded as fair and affordable and a plan for the future.

BC went on to make points about representation and turning the EBU over to the people the organisation had for a long time purported to represent yet had been long ignored – the player in the club duplicate.

Felixstowe supports the EBU proposal

- **IPSWICH & KESGRAVE** (Malcolm Carey)

Ipswich and Kesgrave had submitted a written response [appendix 1] and MC reiterated their position. He noted that before a recent club duplicate, a show of hands had been taken and the votes from 17 or so tables, just six persons were against with an overwhelming majority in favour with a few abstentions. None of those present thought the club should remove itself from the EBU if P2P were implemented.

Ipswich & Kesgrave supports the EBU proposal

- **ALDEBURGH**

The club has yet to form an opinion on the proposal and is having a meeting in early June (too late to influence the county's vote on 4-June). The club was offered the assistance of the P2PWP which was accepted (**CC to co-ordinate**)

Aldeburgh are undecided

- **SUDBURY** (Sue Flin)

The club has yet to have a meeting and the committee is split into distinct pro and anti camps. The club membership is seriously concerned about the extra money. SF confessed that she found this surprising but opposition on this point was real. There had been a rough vote and a majority were in favour of leaving the EBU.

Sudbury are undecided but probably will oppose the EBU proposal and would disaffiliate

- **COLCHESTER** (Graham Beeton)

Colchester have had no member and no (quorate) committee meeting and so cannot express a view to the SCBA. GB observed:

- a. In the future the club would see a large contribution to the EBU and note that a simple economy could be made by leaving the EBU
- b. The chairman had remarked that he'd rather not be in this position: the club would lose members (which it could ill afford to do) if it stayed in P2P and raised table-money or if it disaffiliated and stopped being competitive.
- c. The majority of members have no aspirations outside the county which they regard as self-sufficient. In this he noted that local director course were run by Malcolm Carey and not by the EBU – MC responded that the course material was produced by the EBU (necessarily under constant review) and the accreditation sought was theirs too.

Colchester are undecided

- **COLCHESTER CASTLE** (Paul Rickard)

Colchester Castle had had an informal committee meeting in which PR found

himself in a minority of one supporting the proposal. He was however bound to report the club's position though no formal vote had been taken:

- a. The EBU was viewed to provide "no benefit" to club members in their pursuit of a typical "quiet game of bridge"
- b. The SCBA was regarded as remote and national team even more so
- c. PR had argued that P2P was a way to expand the attraction of bridge for a few pence but had not met with any success.

Colchester Castle opposes the EBU proposal and would disaffiliate

- **STOWMARKET** (Maurice Last and Arthur Winchester)

ML acknowledged that the actual system of P2P caused clubs additional difficulty, in effect obliging them to use a computer. They had envisaged a situation of being in the SCBA but out of the EBU until disembarassed of this idea by an earlier remark [Pauline Hanson remarked that Woodbridge may be under this mistaken assumption].

Stowmarket run two duplicates and a snapshot of how the proposal is received revealed that one sitting were 40/60 for/against and the other 50/50. The club committee were going to advise that they remained within the EBU but were bound to oppose the proposal in principle.

ML and AW noted steps to ameliorate the introduction of P2P:

- a. They would make preparatory minor increments to table money to avoid a step up with P2P
- b. They would separate their Wednesday and Friday games, one in, one out of the EBU – possibly creating a 'social club' to run the un-affiliated game

Stowmarket opposes the EBU proposal but would remain affiliated

- **CLARE** (Jane Moore)

The club would have its AGM the following day (19-May). JM expected the club to vote for the proposal, although possibly narrowly and made two observations:

- a. Clare was "too big" a club to leave – it had between 20%-30% EBU members who broadly supported the proposal.
- b. She expected a change in representation, echoing points made earlier (Felixstowe and from the P2PWP)

Clare are undecided [as at 18-May]

- **FRINTON** (Claude Stokes)

Discussion with club members evinced concern about the EBU but not about the cost (they compared golf club subscriptions). However, the question must be asked "is the EBU doing a good job?" and while it was recognised that a strong National Contract Bridge Organisation is essential for the game locally as well as nationally, a change of this magnitude must be handled properly to avoid bringing the game into disrepute. Mismanaging P2P would condemn the EBU as "victim of its own demise".

CS said that the EBU as yet hadn't done sufficient to convince the wider membership that it had planned well enough for the future outside restructuring funding. The alternative however, was anarchy – the current management of the EBU had left themselves without any other course. The changes in representation (as mentioned earlier) would throw back the responsibility for ensuring the proper working of the EBU – in effect, "it's up to us".

Frinton supports the EBU proposal

- **FRAMLINGHAM** (Charles Parker)

Last of the speakers from the floor, it was not surprising that CP would be anticipated in his comments and he echoed the words of Clare and Frinton.

CP went on to say that P2P had been discussed at the club AGM and essentially, it was felt that "the EBU was the only game in town". Framlingham would certainly stay affiliated and despite noting some shortcomings with the mechanism, would look "to sort it out after its creation" – another reference to the change in representation either made formal by reorganisation or the simple facility clubs would have of 'voting with their feet' [Lenin's phrase having been used by many speakers during the course of the meeting].

As part of his concern, CP mentioned that he had read that the VAT status of P2P was under a cloud [this was countered at the AGM by Malcolm Carey, who reported that the same proportion of exemption was expected to be retained but a change in revenue acquisition required a renegotiation of the proportion retained by HMRC (EBU has a mixture of rateable activities)]. That such concerns were only now surfacing was a source of worry.

CP rounded off his deposition with a comment about the inevitable change in representation, that come 2010, unless they have it sorted, the EBU will soon discover "that their new shoes start to pinch" as the wider membership made their views felt.

Framlingham supports the EBU proposal

There were a few short comments from the floor, mostly in support of one or more speakers. Chris Rickard rose to say that she directly attributed her enthusiasm for bridge [Paul and Chris have recently progressed from Bridge for All to full members] to the EBU and the BfA programme and she very much regretted the attitude of her fellow club-members [Colchester Castle].

3. Ratification of the SCBA subscription

For those clubs who would remain within Suffolk, it was asked if any thought the proportional county subscription (currently 50p per member and not expected to be raised under P2P in 2010) was unfair. There was a single comment from CLARE (Jane Moore) that the matter had been mentioned some 18 months previously and received a response from the SCBA committee. There were no comments in written responses on this point.

There was one additional comment from Colchester, that if the VAT status of P2P was or became questionable, club subscriptions were a way of side-stepping HMRC and Suffolk might look to increase this revenue component.

Suffolk infers from the lack of opposition that clubs accept the fairness of a per-member subscription.

4. AOB

None

Meeting closed at 2:47pm.

Appendix 1

Summary of written responses

BURY ST. EDMUNDS

We will not send a representative from Bury club but can register our position.

On Thursday 1st May 2008, at our regular session, we asked for a show of hands regarding the Pay-to-pay proposals.

There were 29 in favour, with one against and four abstentions. I am sure that the people who did not vote in favour or abstained will, however remain in the EBU and our club if the proposals go ahead.

As usual with these sort of changes, no-one seems to be coming up with more constructive alternative ideas!

Mike O'Reilly
Club Secretary,
Bury Bridge Club.

Bury St. Edmunds supports the EBU proposal

DEBEN

Your email arrived soon after Deben's AGM. The following observations arise from conversations with other committee members.

The club reluctantly acknowledges that no change is not an option. Therefore we support the proposals but would add that we do not support the weekly collection of Play to Play.

Therefore Deben intends, subject to there being no objection either from the EBU or the SCBA, to aggregate the charges at 38 sessions a year and to multiply that by the 29p EBU levy and the SCBA levy and add that to the club's annual subscriptions, payable by our members in advance. The prospect of every club member paying 29p every time they play, and for that to be banked by a volunteer weekly, is not one which we wish to support.

Graham Dines

Deben supports the EBU proposal

IPSWICH & KESGRAVE

Neither Mike Bone nor I can attend these meetings and so offer our apologies. We had a show of hands to find out the views of I&KDBC members on P2P and the vast majority who voted were in favour of supporting the EBU proposals and staying in the EBU. We have asked Malcom Carey to give I&KDBC's support to the EBU proposals at these meetings.

2008/5/9 john leigh:

I'm disappointed that no-one from the I&KDBC committee will be at the meeting this Sunday, I'll report the views below to those present.

I feel slightly awkwardly placed because as a member of Ipswich, my views have never been canvassed, moreover at the AGM in November, the club committee accepted the sentiment of the floor that a special meeting should be held to discuss Pay-to-Play. As far as I am aware, no meeting has taken place. Therefore, in my capacity on the SCBA working group for P2P I feel it is only proper to draw attention to these details as well.

Chris [Chambers]

Ipswich & Kesgrave supports the EBU proposal [noted in minutes]

STRATFORD ST. MARY

Stratford St Mary Bridge Club held a meeting yesterday to discuss the EBU Pay2Play Proposal. A vote was taken from the 38 members present and 15 voted FOR and 23 voted

AGAINST our club joining. We appreciate this change is a long way off but we are passing this information on for our Suffolk Rep who will be attending the EBU meeting on 4 June 2008.

This will help give you a view of a mix of club members rather than getting a vote from only those keen enough to turn up for the AGM, where I suspect you will be preaching mainly to the converted!

Graham Boutell
TD Stratford St Mary Bridge Club

Stratford St. Mary opposes the EBU proposal – but their status if it were implemented in uncertain

WOODBIDGE

I am afraid that we will not have a member of the committee at the forthcoming AGM, please accept our apologies.

With reference to the P2P. Woodbridge position is that we reject the proposal but will remain within the EBU.

Woodbridge opposes the EBU proposal but would remain affiliated

WOOLPIT FRIENDLY

I am afraid I am unable to attend either of your meetings on the 18th May and I offer my apologies.

As to the P2P proposals we as a club feel that we are likely to be financially very much worse off than before the proposals and have very little to gain.

1. We have never subscribed to Masterpoints and there is little enthusiasm to start them now. The general feeling is that using Master points would make us very much more competitive. Most of our members come out once a week to enjoy a game of Bridge. If one is very competitive then you would have joined a Master point club a long time ago.
2. The EBU magazine seems to be little more than a resume of hands and results that are of little interest to our members whereas Mr Bridge magazine has a better variety of comments and it is free!!.
3. We play roughly 50/50% Rubber and Duplicate a week and would want to continue (In an email from Barry Capal EBU) we would only have to pay for P2P Duplicate evenings. I think that this would add to a confusing charging system and a drop off on our duplicate sessions
4. Many of our members have expressly commented on the Friendliness of our club and as such I feel that P2P and Masterpoints would destroy the ambiance and friendliness of our club

As to your request as to where this club stands my general feeling is that this Club would be likely to disaffiliate should the proposals go through as they stand. We therefore Reject the Proposals and will wait and see if more amendments are made to drastically reduce the cost of the present proposals so that Clubs that do not want to use the Masterpoints are not penalised.

I would very much appreciate a response to my comments and other clubs comments.

Adam Edmondson
Chairman - Woolpit Friendly Bridge Group

Woolpit Friendly opposes the EBU proposal and would disaffiliate

NEWMARKET

Newmarket issued a club wide questionnaire and the results were relayed to the P2PWP as follows (there were 22 returns):

		YES	NO
Question 1	Are you a member of the EBU?	15	7
Question 2	Would you like this club to affiliate to the EBU as set out in the new proposals?	15	6
Question 3	Would you renew your membership of this club if, after a vote, the club took the opposite line to question 2?	14	6

In our opinion the results are in favour of us continuing to belong to the EBU, and progress along with the Boards decisions.

Anne Read
Chair

Malcolm Fletcher
Secretary

Michael Goodchild
Treasurer

Newmarket supports the EBU proposal