

West of England Bridge Club

Minutes of a Committee meeting held at the RAFA Club on Wednesday 24th August 2022

Present: Alan Evans (Chair), Bridget Johnson, Chris Frew, Jan Duncan, Bernice Horseman, Bill Ashford, Alan Peak-Payne, David Jones.

Apologies: Jane Chapman, Jen Challoner.

1 Minutes of previous meeting (22nd June 2022):

The minutes were agreed and signed.

2 Matters to note, arising since last meeting:

2.1 Annaphie Rogers' funeral 30th June; several attended.

2.2 Alan Williams' wake 2nd July; several attended.

2.3 Alan Evans managed a change to Wednesday Director rotas by reintroducing Bill as a regular. Jan (and others) commented that the process should have involved the full Committee more.

2.4 Chris has set up Quarterly Competitions, as requested, for Monday afternoon and Wednesday evening players, starting with the third quarter 2022. Prizes £15 for 1st, £5 for 2nd.

3 Officers' Reports:

3.1 (Membership Secretary) Bridget will email all 'members' with an annual renewal reminder. She circulated a note detailing how she determined who is now a member.

3.2 (Treasurer) Bill will circulate accounts at our next meeting,. He estimates that we are currently running at an annual loss of c. £2,500. Bernice asked whether this took account of Thursday afternoon's income and profits? Bill said that there was an issue of transparency, but Thursday afternoons make a due contribution to Club costs.

4 Substantive matters debated:

4.1 How should we respond to low/falling numbers?

Alan Evans reprised his email to Committee and painted the background: falling numbers at face-to-face sessions nationally, as in our Club; but how should we respond?

It was agreed that this session was for ideas, rather than major decisions, as we want to see whether and where numbers rise as the holiday season ends.

Chris asked whether we should consider merging Wednesday and Friday evening sessions, given the low numbers and post-Covid reluctance of many to venture out in the evening. This was rejected as unlikely to have the desired effect. David added that he had analysed those attendances specifically, and found that, since reopening, we had had enough separate pairs turn up to fill eight and seven tables respectively, were they all to attend. So, the problem is, to get players who occasionally turn up to do so more regularly. Alan Evans supported this analysis; he said that equivalent sessions at Clevedon and Nailsea get much more regular attenders. Jane had written prior to this meeting promoting the idea of a guaranteed 'spare' player for Wednesday evening sessions, so that the unpartnered could turn up with confidence. David volunteered to be such a spare, with immediate effect, and this was welcomed and agreed. **Action: Alan Evans** to publicise in an email to all members. This was hoped more likely to be effective than the WhatsApp partner finder app, or the Pianola facility, have proven so far.

However, Committee noted that the average standard of players on Wednesday and Friday evenings was quite high, and there was a significant gap down to the average standard of Monday afternoon players – let alone to that of the Thursday afternoon ‘Improvers’ class. Given that the potential market for face-to-face bridge among less accomplished players is inevitably larger, adding a session pitched as similar to Monday afternoon is more likely to be successful. David volunteered to resurrect his Friday afternoon session, encouraged by the responses to Paul Brown’s questionnaire to Monday players. Committee agreed, so: **action: David** to nominate which Friday in September he will start from. Bill volunteered to cover the Friday in early October when David is on holiday.

Committee then considered how to encourage players to attend on the resurrected Friday afternoon session. Like Mondays, a spare player will be promised. Chris suggested that, to get it going, the Thursday Improvers be given a ‘free play’ token to play on the next day’s Friday session. This seems the progression step most likely to be achievable for most players. Alan PP added that we should make the relaunched Friday an ‘event’, though champagne is ruled out. **Ideas needed.**

A discussion also considered how to get new players into bridge. Our ‘entry point’ is the Thursday Improvers session; can we run classes for beginners that prepare players for Thursday? Others run commercial classes; could we (e.g.) get Lorna Watson to run a Beginners’ Course at our premises, Chris asked. **Alan PP said he would contact** Ralph Power, to see where/how he gets his feed of new players. **Alan PP will also contact** Marc Lee, to see if a match versus a local university might work. Jan added that League matches will be scheduled for our premises, which will also introduce others to our facility. (**Action: Alan Evans** to check we have enough sets of boards.)

Finally, Committee considered other steps to make our venue look more attractive. Alan PP was keen on the idea of plants, for example, and volunteered to take this further. **Action: Alan PP.**

4.2 Inactive members. Bridget had supplied lists of inactive members to Chris, David and Alan PP, but no systematic contacting had yet taken place. Must try harder.

4.3 Defibrillator training. Jane was unable to attend the RAFA Club training session.

5 Communication to members

Action: Alan Evans to draft an email to all members covering the major points above, and send around Committee for prompt comment prior to general circulation.

6 Any Other Business

None

7 Date of Next Meeting:

19th October, 6 pm.

Agreed
(CHAIRMAN)

Date