

Hertfordshire Badminton Association

Minutes of the committee meeting held, by way of a conference call,
on 29 November 2021

Present:

Paul Kempster	PK
Dave Bartlett	DB
Simon Gouldstone	SG
Bob Green	BG
Brian Jackson	BJ
Eddie Lintott	EL
Mike Newlove	MN
Jim Robson	JR
Colin Walker	CW
Steve Willis	SW
Julie Pike	JP

1. Apologies for absence

Andy Walden	AW
-------------	----

2. Matters arising from the committee meeting on 24 May 2021 and the AGM on 28 June 2021

The post of President remained vacant following the end of Paul Widdecombe's term of office. CW agreed to provide a list of possible candidates.

3. Chairman

PK reported that he had attended BE meeting on 28 October 2021 and that Paul Widdecombe (PW) had circulated some notes. Among the issues on the agenda were the resignation of the Chief Executive and selection problems for the Olympics. PW had also suggested that, in future, an HJBA representative should attend to discuss issues relating to juniors.

MN commented that that could be considered if the agenda indicated there were issues relevant to HJBA. MN was concerned at the cost of entering Gold tournaments whereas two recent HJBA Bronze events had been over-subscribed.

4. Secretary

SG explained that BE had established a County Badminton Associations group to facilitate the exchange of views between, and to provide information to, county representatives. As yet, there was nothing to report.

5. Membership Secretary and Treasurer

CW reported on the following issues:

- a) The overall picture was that funds stood at £16,800, some £1300 down from the start of the year. The net cost of the senior and masters training sessions held to date was some £900 and the restricted tournament made a loss of £200, which was manageable. Also, there had been no income from county fees as BE intended paying the fees as a lump sum next year.
- b) HBA had waived the county fee for 2020-21 and it was agreed at the AGM that the senior fee for 2021-22 should be £1.75, 50% of its previous level. Those clubs that paid a BE affiliation fee in 2020-21 had their membership extended, free of charge, through 2021-22. Clubs that did not affiliate in 2020-21 had to affiliate as normal for 2021-22 and that included paying the county fee. There was no BE mechanism by which clubs that did not need to affiliate for 2021-22 could pay the county fee. It was therefore agreed that those clubs should be contacted and asked to pay the fee directly to HBA. BE had agreed to provide CW with a list of the clubs concerned and CW would draft an email.
- c) He had calculated a budget for the current season assuming that all clubs paid the senior county fee, and this showed a loss in the region of £4,000. We had not paid the BE senior and master entry fees and we were expecting a number of Ray Learney coaching awards. Whilst we could absorb a loss of this size this year, we will need to consider how to raise more income in future years. Perhaps increasing the county affiliation fee and/or senior county and masters training and match fees particularly as the county had no control over the fees charged by BE. He explained that Matthew Widdicombe had run the London marathon and raised funds for the Isabel Hospice. The county had benefited from an arrangement between Matthew Widdicombe and Queenswood School for courts used for training purposes to allow a donation to be made to the Isabel Hospice. The net effect had been that HBA had made a donation of £600, a very favourable figure for court hire, and Matthew had raised over £3,000 for the charity. The committee recorded its appreciation of Matthew's significant achievement. SW mentioned that he had found it more difficult to book courts at Queenswood for Masters matches and had had to use the more expensive option of HSV. He had however maintained the match fee at £10 and intended monitoring more closely the number of shuttles used for training and matches.
- d) The number of affiliated clubs, as at the date of the meeting, was 52, well down on pre-Covid 19 levels.
- e) CW had been looking at the position of the Ray Learney fund, by which the HBA subsidised some of those attending coaching courses. The fund had existed since 2008 and there had been 64 awards totalling £6,965. It currently stood at £560 and HBA intended contributing £1000 in order to top up the fund. HJBA had also been asked to consider making a contribution. CW drew the meeting's attention to the fact that of the 55 recipients of an award, some of the 64 having received more than one award, only 10 were currently on the coaching register and that called into question the impact of the scheme. There also appeared to be no record of whether participants actually carried out the five free coaching sessions to which they agreed when they made an application to the fund. That led to a lengthy discussion the main points of which were:
 - (i) There had always been instances of people leaving the coaching register, for example by moving out of the area.

- (ii) DB and BJ agreed to look at the coaching register and:
 - (a) contact those coaches who have not yet registered
 - (b) see if there was an explanation of the gap between the number of active coaches and the number of funded participants in coaching courses.

DB observed that when that had been carried out in the past there had always been a significant gap.

- (iii) It was suggested that the statistics raised doubts about the reasons for people attending coaching courses and that, if the county were to continue to provide a subsidy, there should be a measurable benefit for Herts clubs.
- (iv) It was also suggested that candidates should not be subsidised to attend a Level 2 course unless they had had a chance to exercise their Level 1 skills for, say, a year. JP added that BE advised that there should be a reasonable gap between Levels 1 and 2 but that it did not impose a strict timescale. Mentors nevertheless had to sign off the application and the Level 1 tutor could be consulted.
- (v) It was agreed that DB, BJ and CW would look at the wording of the application form to see if it was still fit for purpose, particularly given the comments made in (iii) and (iv) above.

6. Senior County

AW submitted a written report that the intention was to enter three teams, down by one on recent seasons. The first round of matches would be in January.

7. County League

There was no report but SG explained that the League was up and running. The comparative participation rates were as follows:

	Clubs	Teams	Divisions
2019-20	20	41	8
2021-22	12	33	5

In terms of the number of teams, the league was operating at 81% of its previous level.

8. Hertford Area League

JR submitted a written report the main points of which were:

- a) The League started later than usual and the timescale for completing matches was five months rather than six. Fixtures may need to be played in May.
- b) The LeagueRepublic system was now in place and appears to be working satisfactorily. Clubs will be asked to enter their own fixture details next season.

- c) Covid might continue to be a problem as one match had already been cancelled due to a player testing positive. It was suggested that the rules may need to be changed to allow more leniency in rearranging matches but it was felt that clubs would handle any problems responsibly.

The participation rates were as follows:

	Clubs	Teams	Divisions
2019-20	24	48	9
2021-22	17	32	6

In terms of the number of teams, the league was operating at 67% of its previous level.

9. North Herts and Letchworth

BG reported that the North Herts League was quieter than before with fewer clubs and teams. The Letchworth League was starting late. Activity for juniors had started with reduced numbers although Ana Collis's sessions were back to their normal levels.

10. South West Herts

No report.

11. Masters

SW submitted a written report which would be placed on the web site. There were 70 players across five squads with four of those intending to play in the Masters Challenge in January. Matches had already been played and there had been significant performances from Herts players in the Masters National Championship.

12. Tournaments

EL submitted a written report which would be placed on the web site. A successful Restricted Tournament had attracted 52 players and 76 matches had been played. The Open Tournament was scheduled for August 2022.

13. Development

DB submitted a written report which is appended to these minutes.

The East Herts CBN, the Herts West Badminton Development Group and the Welwyn Hatfield CBN continued to be active. The EHCBN had run a successful tournament and he hoped the HBA would be prepared to support the HWBDG despite the current lack of a formal constitution. He also noted that the Schools Finals were taking place at HSV on 9 December 2021 and the Primary Schools Conference on 14 January 2022.

14. Coaching

BJ explained that there had been 16 successful candidates from the Foundation Course in July 2021. A Level 2 course was in progress. There was to be a further Foundation Course in February 2022. He continued to update the Coaching page on the web site.

15. Social Media/Publicity

No report although it was noted that the Facebook page continued to attract a significant number of followers.

16. HJBA

MN reported that all the squads were back and playing. There had been three matches to date and the U14s beating Surrey was a notable achievement. He hoped that matches could continue to be played at Queenswood, perhaps combining with masters matches to get the benefit of block booking.

17. FixturesLive replacements

SG reported that:

- a) The HBA web site was operating normally under the new host.
- b) The LeagueRepublic sites for both the County and Area Leagues were in operation and appeared to be functioning without any problems. The method of operation and the services provided were similar to FixturesLive. Both sites were free because they displayed advertisements which were not particularly intrusive or inappropriate. The cost of removing the adverts would be £204 for each site which SG regarded as excessive.

18. BE issues

JP reported that:

- a) There had been 10 bookings for the Foundation Course.
- b) She continued to monitor the availability of facilities in Herts. Mount Grace School in Potters Bar was due to open a three-court facility in May 2022 and there was also availability at Hitchin College.
- c) She would be in the county for events in December and January and could be available for face-to-face contact.
- d) She was undertaking a survey on club segmentation and would welcome any support from HBA to encourage clubs to respond.
- e) BE had recently introduced a portal for coaches and volunteers.

19. Future meetings

It was agreed that the next committee should take place in March 2022 by way of Zoom.

* * *