



## **Meeting Minutes**

*Open Meeting – 29<sup>th</sup> October 2011*

**Venue:** Royal George Hotel & Bar

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**Venue:** Phoenix Community Centre, Bordesley Village

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### **Speakers:**

Roger Godsiff, MP – Chair  
Robert Hughes  
James Mathie, Supporters Direct  
Ian Bason, Foxes Trust, Leicester City

Introduction was given by Roger Godsiff, who welcomed all to the Open Meeting for the discussion of the formation of Birmingham City Supporters Trust.

Rob Hughes followed by giving background to why should Birmingham City have a supporters trust? So that there would be a voice for the Supporters, united, democratic, open to all, accountable and organised, this would lead to a group of fans with a bigger voice, this is not a protest group.

James Mathie gave the background to Supporters Direct, in that it was established over 11 years ago and there is now over 170 supporters' trusts throughout the UK. No two trusts are the same & each one is very individual.

Ian from the Foxes Trust gave details of how their trust was formed just under 10 years ago. 3 days before the meeting Leicester City went into administration, which meant that the Trust got a lot of publicity. The Club established a consortium of which the Trust became part of it (as they rose over £100,000) & were able to contribute on the way the Club ran, meaning the supporters had a real say. The Key is to get established, be ready, prepared as you don't know what the future holds. The Trust operates alongside the owners, however some see a Trust as a threat & do not really engage – others welcome the Trust and fully engage.

The floor was opened up to questions:

**Q** Nobody is here from the club – what is their response to a Supporters Trust?

**A** The Club have been contacted – guarded reaction from Staff, goodwill factor, PP has been informed & understands why.

**Q** The Club seems to be suffering from a News Blackout – what would the Trust be able to offer?

**A** The only way the Trust will gain information is if there is a sufficient number of fans who require the information after all the fans are a major source of income for the Club, therefore the larger the numbers the more information we should be able to gain. Group can also give pressure to get more information & it is hard to be ignored.

**Q** Concerns with CY – how many are needed to be effective?

**A** Enough people to set up & drive forward with numbers to back up & grow – team building links with the Club.

**Q** If 15000 members are in Man Utd ST, what do we BCFC hope to achieve & get the Club to listen, voice needs to be listened to – How do we make the board listen?

**A** It is obvious that the fans are frustrated but without organisation we do not stand a chance of getting the Club to respond.

**Q** What is expectation of Numbers?

**A** Supporters Trust is an organised voice & as such we would hope to have 10% of the home fans join. The Trust needs to be organised & slick, gaining local credibility.

**Q** If the Trust is setup – what next?

**A** The Trust will be set up as a Co-operative, which means that all members will be able to vote in decisions. Meeting has been arranged for Tues 1 November to discuss the next step in this process, ie being incorporated with a set of Values & Principles that will form the backbone of the Trust. The Trust will also be regulated by the FSA. Supporters Direct will also assist in this process.

**Q** Will this just be open to Birmingham based fans or for all fans, wherever they live & how will you be able to access the wider fan base?

**A** Through Social Media, already have a facebook page, twitter etc. Want all fans to become involved.

**Q** How do you think you will be able to gain information, as it is apparent in Hong Kong that the accounts are 2 months late being filed?

**A** PP has put a column in today's programme – believe that this is in response to today's meeting – it's a start! At least its communication – of a kind!

**Q** Would the Trust be competing with other Supporter Clubs?

**A** The Supporters Trust would only talk on behalf of its members. Trusts usually deal with the “financial” side of talking with the Club, whereas Supporters Clubs usually deal with transport to matches & more local issues for the local fans. It is hoped that Supporter Clubs would become affiliated to the Trust making it an umbrella organisation.

**Q** You say that you have a bank account & treasurer etc already – how can this be if the trust is not yet formed?

**A** The steering group needed to have some posts filled on a pro tem basis so as to ensure that this meeting would happen as this has had some financial implications already.

**Q** Supporters Clubs already have regular meetings with the Club, Supporters Forum – what difference would it be between fan clubs & trust?

**A** Meetings are arranged at the Clubs convenience & not on a regular basis – ie Fulham game was the last meeting & the next has not been arranged – a Trust would hope to ensure that there would be regular communications. Fan Clubs are not incorporated organisations, a Trust would be which means that all the assets would be shared between the members, able to raise funds etc through shares.

**Q** How did the Foxes Trust make a difference?

**A** It really depends on the current owners – when the Trust was first formed there was a major change – fan forum, club meeting with groups of fans & telling them what was happening next, this changed format to a consultative committee with all the Clubs & groups represented & became more consultative – a two way street with ideas being taken back into the Club from the fans.

**Q** Surely Fan Clubs could join this?

**A** Fan Clubs operate in isolation the Trust became an umbrella for the fan clubs who later joined & became a collective of fans. This show unity as all the fans joined together.

**Q** How can the relationship between supporters clubs & the Trust allow them all to exist?

**A** It's not about competing for members, Trust would be dealing with overall ownership & direction of the club ways, scrutinising, being a constructive partner. Fan Clubs & the Trust should talk to each other – co-operate!

**Q** The way in which this is being set up seems wrong, surely the Club should be approached, use channels that exist through supporters clubs then evolve into a trust, not be in isolation

**A** It is up to the members on how the trust develops, but there is a set procedure to be followed if this is to be set up correctly – hence this meeting.

**Q** Is there any evidence that a Trust would encourage/discourage potential new owners?

**A** some chairman are sympathetic to Trusts, others hate them – the trust is set up of fans who are long term fans & who want the best for their club, if a chairman is not happy with this then what is it he wants for the club must be the question?

Following the Q&A Session Roger Godsiff asked the attendees of the meeting the following:

**“Do you wish to set up a Trust?”**

All bar two present were in favour.

Thanks were given to all who attended and to the speakers for the morning, Roger Godsiff, James Mathie & Ian.