

Minutes of Blues Trust open board meeting

Saturday 23rd January 2016

Venue: lounge of the Old Crown

Recorded by MD

Meeting started at 12.15 pm

Board members present: Peter Bull (PB), Margaret Decker (MD) and Richard Stanley (RS)

Board member apologies: Emma Hodgson and Mark Sutton

Others present: Phil Beardmore (PhB), John Begg (JB), Helen Gilfoyle (HG), John Griffin (JG), Clive Harris (CH), John Haynes (JH), Daniel Ivery (DI) and Ray Tomkinson (RT).

1. Minutes

The minutes of 8/12/2015 meeting were approved.

2. Matters arising

It was agreed to send change-of-signatories form to the bank with the four signatures already obtained and add other signature(s) later.

3. Supporter groups meeting on February 6th

MD explained that the main purpose of the open meeting was to get members views on which issues the trust should raise at the February 6th meeting with David Boston, BCFC's Supporter Liaison Officer. She said that Blues Trust supported the idea of holding regular meetings between the club and supporters and that, as well as enabling communication with the club, such meetings also provided an opportunity to foster good relations with other supporters' groups. She also said that board members were looking for people who could help with trust work and that all who expressed an interest would be invited to board meetings to give them a chance to get to know board members.

RS gave an oral report on the Championship Trusts Network meeting in London on 21/1/2016. He said that the final report of the Government Expert Working Groups had been endorsed by the Premier League, Football League, National League, Football Association, Supporters Direct and Football Supporters Federation. One key provision is the requirement for a regular structured engagement between clubs and supporters. Each club should meet with a representative group of their supporters at least twice a year to discuss strategic/major issues and senior representatives from the clubs (owners, directors and/or senior executives) should represent the club at these meetings. Meetings between clubs and supporters similar to those that David Boston is organising are going to be required at all clubs.

Participants at the open board meeting then discussed various questions and topics that had been suggested. It was agreed that the trust should not ask the club to provide a room where members of supporters groups could meet before games. The club is seeking to maximise its hospitality income and using all available areas for that. Also, the trust should be seen to be independent from the club and not rely on its facilities.

It was agreed to pass on the following questions and issues to the club:

- a. Why has the big screen and PA system been unreliable? Why doesn't the big screen show substitutions? Does a non-functioning PA systems breach health and safety regulations as it would be dangerous in an emergency where it was necessary to evacuate the ground?

- b. What is the current situation regarding Birmingham City Council's proposal to impose parking permits for match days? We should suggest that the February 6th meeting agree to adopt a standard letter of approach for supporters' groups to use to inform the Council that supporters agree with the club's anti-permit stance. This is an opportunity for supporters and club to co-operate.
- c. What are the club doing to attract local youngsters to come and support the club? What discounted tickets are offered?
- d. Ask the club to clarify the ball boy situation and what is being done about their poor performance. (David Boston had been asked about this at the November meeting.)

4. A.O.B.

There was a discussion on the financial and ownership situation of the club.

There is no official contact between BCFC and Carson Yeung however there may be some communication via people that are in contact with both the club and Carson.

JH asked why TTA had been given a two-year exclusivity deal. DI said it was because the financial situation was so complicated it was going to take a long time to sort it out.

DI suggested that the trust could write to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange (HKSE) requesting they investigate the possibility of Carson acting in concert with another shareholder. If the HKSE decided that Carson had acted illegally, it could ban him from holding shares and prevent him from regaining control of the club.

At present, most Birmingham City supporters seemed to be happy with the progress made on the pitch, had grown used to the ownership situation and didn't see a need for a supporters' trust.

This could change if Carson's conviction is overturned and he tries to regain control of BCFC.

PhB asked what Blues Trust needed to do to prepare for a membership campaign. MD replied that one thing that was needed was improved use of social media and HG and PhB agreed to help with this.

Note: In an email vote of board members, it was agreed that MD should be the representative at supporters group meetings with the club and that RS should be the alternate if she was not able to attend any meeting.