

Blues Trust 2017 Annual General Meeting Candidate Statements

Karim Adab's statement

I'm a Manchester based GP and Blues fan of 26 years, my first game being as a guest of my friend's father who was a Gloworm sponsor in the early 90s. I grew up in Northfield and went to both primary and secondary school in Birmingham before leaving at the turn of the Millennium.

As I'm sure is the same for us all, hazy memory has conflated at least three games into one, but I'm pretty sure mine was either a dour 1-1 with Huddersfield or a 3-0 one-man demolition by Portsmouth's Guy Whittingham. Either way I got the bug and it's been with me since.

I count myself blessed for contracting it before one of our most high profile periods. The last quarter of a century has been some time to follow our club - arguably the best. In my time I've been lucky to have seen everything: the Leyland Daf, the Third Division, Auto Windscreens, leaping two leagues at once. Watford under the floodlights, the mud against Ipswich, the Cardiff dance twice, the Playoffs four times; penalties won, penalties lost. A 3-3 draw between Premier League promotion and relegation and the greatest day in our history. Relegation, prison, Bruges, a near-death escape.

You might reasonably surmise that we've survived everything thrown at us thus far without the need for a Trust, and I understand how Blues' fans natural cynicism might fuel a natural distrust of any attempt to organise us fans. However, if anything I'd argue that we've had lucky escape after lucky escape these last few years, and the lesson of this rocky period is that we must be vigilant. We must keep probing and pressing, asking questions of the people behind the Club, ensuring that their plans are sustainable and with the Blues best interests at heart. At very least, there must be some vehicle through which the fans have a voice, no matter how small.

Sure, we can doff the cap, eat the dirt and accept that this is the way it must be or, as one of the most genuine set of fans in the entire English league, we should take the responsibility to set an example to the rest.

I don't at all think it's naive to think that the wheel is starting to inch the other way, as it has in other European Leagues, and we must be ready to embrace that future when it comes. Brummies have always been good at that. We've always been more Anglo-Italian than Auto-Windscreens; defiantly anti-establishment and quirky originals, and there is absolutely no reason why we cannot hope, one day, to be considered alongside other vanguards of supporter representation. For every pointless trinket like PSG there's a Benfica, a Panathinaikos; something to at least aspire to even in the very remotest regions of possibility.

We can either accept that we will never have any say whatsoever into how Blues are run, forever frustrated, or we can at least keep trying to get the message across. This is why I would be grateful for your support in election to the Trust Board.

Keep right on

Karim

Margaret Decker's statement

I want to continue to serve on the Blues Trust Board because I want to help to achieve the greatest possible supporter influence in the running of Birmingham City Football Club. I also believe that Blues Trust can safeguard the future of the club and, together with supporters of other clubs, help bring about positive change in the football business.

Football is a business like no other; the relationship between clubs and supporters is different to that of a business to its customers. All businesses need to understand their customers and football clubs need to understand their fans. Supporter organisations can help the club communicate with the fans and understand when they need to consult them. For example, Blues Trust isn't asking the club to let fans vote on team selection but we do think that it should consult them if it is considering changing the club's name, badge or colours.

Events at other clubs have shown that the way some owners run their clubs can result in clubs plummeting down the leagues and when that happens a supporters' trust can help a club to survive or be reformed as a phoenix club. The Leyton Orient Fans Trust (LOFT) was formed in 2001 because some fans believed that there was a need for an independent supporters' organisation that could articulate the views of Orient supporters. It wasn't set up to deal with a crisis situation but when a crisis came it was able to act. In March 2017, when the club faced an uncertain future because it had not paid its taxes and faced a winding up petition, LOFT set up a Regeneration Fund. Now that the club has a new owner, LOFT will seek to use this to aid in the rebuilding of the club. I hope that Birmingham City will never need Blues Trust to help it survive. But I want to keep the trust going, just in case.

I also believe that Blues Trust can help to bring about change in football by working with a wider network of football supporters. The trust is a member of Supporters Direct and associated with the Football Supporters Federation and both these organisations were part of the Expert Working Group on Football Supporter Ownership and Engagement. The EWG made recommendations on structured dialogue between clubs and fans that resulted in an EFL rule saying that clubs should hold at least two meetings/fans forums per season to which its supporters (or representatives) were to be invited in order to discuss significant issues relating to the club.

I believe that I can help to keep Blues Trust going and am serving as the secretary at present. I'd be delighted to hand over this responsibility to a younger, more energetic person but haven't yet found anyone willing to take it on.

If I am elected and continue to serve on the board, I will try to ensure that Blues Trust is a critical friend to the club and that, whenever possible, we will work with it. However, I believe that we need to remain independent so that we can hold the club accountable and speak out if we ever feel that the owners are not acting in the best interests of the club and its long-term future. I want my club to be run in a sustainable way that will ensure that it is still in existence for future generations.

Margaret

Richard Stanley's Statement

I have been a member of the Blues Trust since the early days of its formation and have been actively involved since October 2014. I was elected to the Board in October 2015 and am now seeking re-election for a further 2 years.

It seems to me that football can mean different things to different people. For some it is TV entertainment. For others it is a place to go on Saturday afternoon (or these days Friday evening, Sunday lunchtime etc.) to cheer on your team and then head home until the next match. Some take a more active role, commenting on blogs, radio phone-ins, producing fanzines, providing information through Twitter and Facebook feeds.

At whatever level people take an interest, there is no doubt that big business and wealthy owners dictate a lot of what happens both at individual clubs and in football in general. This is not always in the best interests of supporters.

I believe that supporters should have the right to influence not only how their club is run but also the game in general.

Football Club Trusts are a critical part of that process, through membership of Supporters Direct.

If I am re-elected I will work to further the influence of Blues supporters in the decisions that affect their club. I will also continue to support the influence of fans in general through the Trust's membership of Supporters Direct and association with Football Supporters Federation.

Richard