

# BLUES TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of the Blues Trust Board held at 12 noon on Saturday 18 April 2020 via Skype video conference call.

In attendance: Cliff Horrocks (CH) (Chair), Peter Bull (PB), Neil Cottrell (NC), Margaret Decker (MD), Richard Docker (RD), Bob Pickett (BP), David Roots (DR), and Richard Stanley (RS) (Board Members).

## Agenda Items

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

In the temporary absence of the Chair (due to technical issues) NC welcomed all present to the meeting.

### 2. Apologies for Absence

- Karim Adab (KA) (Board Member)

### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 February 2020 were noted and approved. There were no matters arising.

### 4. Chairs Report

CH joined the meeting at this point and commenced his report. Given the current Coronavirus crisis and, in particular, its impact on professional sport CH asked Board members for their views on the nature of the relationship that the Trust should be seeking with BCFC at the present time? A general discussion followed with contributions from all present. The consensus view was that the Trust should not pursue outstanding matters but, rather, should be supportive of the football club as it addressed the very difficult challenges ....not least financial...it was having to face. This approach was agreed and CH was tasked with writing to BCFC to express the Trust's commitment and support.

### 5. Financial Report

PB introduced his report, which had been circulated previously, and updated the meeting on the current state of the Trust's finances. He confirmed a surplus of £204.00 at the end of March and added that despite membership numbers having fallen during that month, he was expecting the accounts to break even at the end of the year with even the possibility of a small surplus. The report was noted.

## 6. Membership Report

DR introduced his report. He began by updating the Board on a recent contact with Ben Weate, a student at Newcastle University studying Business Administration and Finance. DR explained that Ben is conducting a survey on financial matters relating to professional football clubs and how different Trust's view their club, their relationship with fan groups and how they manage the club. DR had spoken to Ben at length and had responded to the survey on the Trust's behalf.

DR continued by explaining that he had contacted all Trust members whose membership had lapsed in February. He confirmed that there are currently 273 voting members. Encouragingly, most members have subscribed for a five year period. A discussion followed on what action should be taken during the current lockdown to pursue lapsed members. In conclusion it was agreed that no further action should be taken regarding the database, but DR would do more follow up emails for lapsed members. Further, the campaign to increase membership will be on hold until the resumption of professional football, but the Trust should make preparations for that time so that a renewal campaign can be undertaken immediately. DR confirmed that he would be ready to launch further contacts at the appropriate time. He also informed the Board that he was developing ideas to attract younger members through contact with a blogger, Brummie Joe, and that he would update further in due course. The report was noted.

## 7. Other Officer Updates

- (i) Research and Development - RS explained that two registration queries mentioned at the last Board meeting on 1 February 2020 had been satisfactorily resolved. He also confirmed that Birmingham City Stadium Ltd had submitted its accounts on 30 March 2020; not much new information was revealed in the accounts, which appeared to be taking advantage of non disclosure exemptions, but they did confirm that the St Andrew's ground had in fact been sold to this subsidiary company;
- (ii) Press and PR - in the absence of KA no verbal update was given;
- (iii) Electronic Media - BP explained that he was undertaking a lot of research and compiling data for published features on the history of the club and its players. He confirmed that a daily quiz was being undertaken on the website which was generating significant interest. He also explained that a number of people had been banned from the twitter account, largely because of profanity, but that the extent of the problem had reduced in recent weeks;

- (iv) Projects Management - NC confirmed that the membership services project he is undertaking is developing well, and that he expects to circulate to Board members shortly the results of the survey he is conducting of other Trusts and the services they offer. It was noted the Plan B project, concerned with future BCFC contingency plans, had still to commence. CH agreed to energise this project with assistance from other Board members;
- (v) Without Portfolio - MD confirmed that she had received very few responses to the invitation she had sent to other Blues supporters groups to discuss how the different groups might work together to influence BCFC. It was acknowledged that face to face contact was ideally required to move things forward in this regard, and it was agreed that this activity should be recommenced once the current lockdown ended and football resumed.

## 8. Any Other Business.

- (i) Safe Standing - CH introduced this item and asked if the Trust should support the introduction of safe standing areas at St Andrew's in line with a wider campaign being organised by other football supporters? Following discussion the Board adopted a relaxed view and agreed not to object if there was widespread support from amongst club supporters in general. The idea of an unreserved seating area was raised as possibly a better opportunity to generate atmosphere on match days. The matter of match day facilities for disabled supporters was also raised, and there was agreement that BCFC needs to do more to improve the match day experience for those supporters that are disabled. Toilet facilities in the Main Stand were identified as a particular concern. In conclusion it was agreed that each of these issues could be matters for wider consultation with Trust members via the website. Project lead to be established.
- (ii) Season Ticket Holders - NC introduced this item with reference to the fact that all matches were currently suspended due to the Coronavirus crisis with no immediate prospect of a resumption. In the event that no further home games were played, or were played behind closed doors, how should season ticket holders be recompensed given that 5 games (20% of the seasons fixtures) would be lost to supporters? It was noted that BCFC had not yet publicly stated a policy position with regard to the matter. In discussion a number of ideas were identified and considered, and it was agreed that NC would review all options and prepare a position statement for circulation to Board members to adopt and which could then be presented to the football club. NC to circulate a paper for comment;

(iii) Website Content - CH introduced this item and asked what position Board members thought should be adopted with regard to content on the Trust's website (and other platforms) during the current Coronavirus crisis and the absence of any football? In general discussion it was agreed that the extremely serious nature of the crisis required a careful and considered approach, and should certainly influence the tone of any messages or articles posted, but that appropriate material should continue to be shared with members. By way of example, RS agreed to prepare an article on the recently published BCFC accounts and to circulate it to Board members for comment prior to publication. All to note.

9. Date of Next Meeting

- Saturday 20 June 2020 at 12.00 noon via Skype video conference call.
- RD to keep both future meeting dates and arrangements under review pending the resolution of the current Coronavirus crisis and the associated resumption of professional football relating to Birmingham City FC.