

BLUES TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of the Blues Trust Board held at 11.00 on Saturday 17 October 2020 via Zoom video conference.

In attendance: Cliff Horrocks (CH) (Chair), Peter Bull (PB), Neil Cottrell (NC), Margaret Decker (MD), Richard Docker (RD), Bob Pickett (BP) and Richard Stanley (RS), Karim Adab (KA) (until 12 noon) - (Board Members).

Agenda Items

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

- David Roots (DR) (Board Member)

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 August 2020 were noted and approved.

4. Chairs Report

CH explained that he had reached out to Mike Wiseman to seek more information regarding the 25% sale of the club that had been announced recently. Mike was still to respond, although he had acknowledged the contact. CH also confirmed that he had written to Colin Tattum at the club to ask about a guest speaker to support the Trust's forthcoming AGM. To date, no response had been received which all agreed was disappointing. CH commented that it appeared that the club did not want to communicate with the Trust. It was agreed that the situation might improve if there was a change of relationship contact at the Trust. KA indicated that he would be very happy to become the primary contact for the Trust with BCFC if that helped to improve the situation. It was further discussed that it might also be advantageous to identify someone else within the football club that could become the Trust's primary contact. Ian Dutton was mentioned as a possible new link. It was agreed that the matter be revisited after the AGM. NC explained that he was aware that with regard to the idea of a statue for Trevor Francis, which had been discussed previously by the Board, a potential sculptor was aware that the club had been approached about the idea but that the trail had gone cold. It was agreed that this might present a good opportunity to generate fresh contact with the club.

5. Financial Report

PB introduced his financial report which had been circulated prior to the meeting. He explained that copies of the annual accounts are now on the Trust's website in preparation for the AGM. PB confirmed that the finances are in very good order at the moment, with a strong working surplus. The sums include donations held in suspense from Jay Enrille (a member living in the Philippines) as had been discussed at the previous meeting. It was agreed to continue holding the donations in suspense for a further period.

NC asked if it was worth trying virtual banks for improved terms with regard to charges? PB explained that he had not yet had an opportunity to pursue this action, which had been identified at a previous meeting, but he will follow it up as soon as time permits.

PB confirmed that he had taken out a monthly subscription for the acquisition of the Zoom video conference facility, as had been agreed previously. The subscription account was held in the name of the Trust so the facility could be used by any member of the Board. Testing to date had gone very well and it is expected to provide an excellent platform for the AGM and other member meetings thereafter.

RS made reference to the question of recurring memberships and advice received from the FSA which identified that many members of other Trust's pay their renewal subscriptions automatically by PayPal or direct debit. He asked whether this is something the Blues Trust should consider adopting? It was agreed that it is worth exploring although PB noted that it might be problematic given the 2 and 5 year memberships that the Trust offers. PB to investigate.

PB confirmed current membership figures for the end of September 2020, namely 286 voting members and 837 followers. CH confirmed that he had had no further contact from David Roots since the last meeting in August. It was agreed to maintain a holding position for the time being with regard to David's situation, but that the matter should be reviewed at the first board meeting after the AGM when officer positions were to be agreed for the following year.

PB explained that he had not been able to engage much with Harry Docker recently regarding maintenance of the website and membership data base. It was agreed that the matter of IT support needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency, given its risk status for the smooth operation of the Trust. PB agreed to further develop the relationship with Harry, but it was also agreed by the Board that other options must also be explored.

6. AGM 2020

RD introduced this item and briefed Board colleagues on the arrangements and Agenda for the Trust AGM to be held on Wednesday 11 November. He confirmed that the deadline had just past for (i) the submission of nominations to fill the vacancies on the Board that would exist after the AGM and (ii) the submission of resolutions from members for consideration at the meeting. Four valid nominations had been received....from CH, PB, MD and BP....and no member led resolutions had been forthcoming. RD confirmed that planning to use the Zoom facility was going well but that consideration should be given to acquiring the add on Webinar platform because early indications were that the meeting would be well attended; Webinar functionality will make it easier to manage a large meeting. This was agreed and PB was asked to acquire Webinar. In discussion, it was agreed that a number of test meetings should be held ahead of the AGM with the involvement of any available Board members. Dates for three such meetings were agreed.

7. Membership Plan

RS introduced this item and asked if the Board should be doing more to promote membership in the continued absence of DR? CH drew attention to the earlier discussion of his Chairs Report when this issue had been raised, and reaffirmed that the matter should be held in abeyance until after the AGM. PB confirmed that he was happy to continue supporting the membership task until a decision was made. In general discussion, and in response to a specific point made by MD, it was agreed that this was not the right time to consider any increase in the annual fees paid by members.

8. Fan Unity

RS introduced this item and explained that at a recent meeting held with the FSA, fan unity had been identified as a crucial first step in those instances where supporters wished to challenge poor club ownership. A list of specifically defined actions had been identified in the meeting, and it was also recognised that a whole range of softer actions could be undertaken. However, the underlying importance of building a coalition of fans/ fan groups had been firmly identified. RS confirmed that this was a really important step for the Board to take, and that the Trust should not stop trying to reach out to other groups of Blues supporters. In general discussion it was agreed that this was an important action going forward and that a project plan should be drafted for consideration by the Board at some point following the AGM. NC/RS/RD to lead.

9. Website Back-up

Given the discussion about this matter that had occurred earlier during PB's financial report, it was agreed that nothing further was needed to be said at this point.

10. Other Officer Updates

- (i) Research and Technical - RS updated the meeting on a number of recent developments. Firstly, it has been agreed to set up a shell company with all Board members as directors. This was considered a necessary step in the light of Plan B preparations. Next, following the recent disposal of 25% of the BCFC ownership, a forensic accounts analysis has been undertaken for the Trust by the FSA. RS will circulate the report that has been received but, put bluntly, the findings do not raise confidence about the financial health of the club. Finally, RS explained that he had researched more closely the terms of the disposal of St Andrew's by BCFC to a subsidiary company; the lease is now only for a four year period which offers some hope that the club and the ground could be back together again, or at least in the same company, in the not too distant future;
- (ii) Press and PR - in the absence of KA (at this point) no verbal update was given;
- (iii) Electronic Media - BP updated the meeting on progress with the development of a book and, in discussion, it was agreed that it would be helpful to put out a request for additional information from Blues supporters. BP to action. BP also explained that the number of followers on the Trust's Twitter and Facebook accounts were continuing to grow; currently there are c.500 on Facebook and c.5000 on Twitter. It was agreed that this is excellent news and, in discussion, it was further agreed that the Trust should proactively use both channels in the future to increase engagement with members and other interested persons;
- (iv) Membership and Marketing - in the absence of DR no verbal update was given;
- (v) Projects Management - NC explained that there had been good progress over the past couple of months with regard to the development of Plan B; contact with the FSA had been particularly helpful, including attendance at an excellent seminar it had organised on clubs in crisis (NC to circulate slides from the meeting); in addition, productive talks had been held with other Trust's to better understand their circumstances, in particular Portsmouth FC which is now a fan owned club and out of administration; finally, as mentioned earlier by RS, NC confirmed the decision to create a

shell company in preparation for future activity in the event that BCFC went into administration. Separately, NC identified the need to develop a plan for improved relations and engagement with the football club given the recent disposal of 25% ownership.

(vi) Without Portfolio - nothing to report at this point.

11. Any Other Business

None.

12. Date of Next Meeting

- Saturday 5 December 2020 at 11.00 via Zoom.

The meeting finished at 13.05.