

BLUES TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of the Blues Trust Board held at 11.00 on Saturday 5 December 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).

Agenda Items

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

- David Roots (DR)
- Karim Adab (KA)

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 October 2020 were noted and approved. There were no matters arising.

4. Appointment of Officers 2020/21

RD introduced this item and explained that because this was the first meeting to be held after the recent AGM it was necessary to confirm officer appointments and post holders for the new administrative year. All present confirmed their willingness to continue in their current roles. Accordingly, the following appointments were noted and confirmed:

- Chair - Cliff Horrocks;
- Finance and Resources - Pete Bull
- Secretary - Richard Docker
- Research and Technical - Richard Stanley
- Electronic Media - Bob Pickett
- Projects Management - Neil Cottrell
- Without Portfolio - Margaret Decker

Given their absence from the meeting, RD agreed to contact KA and DR to establish their intentions going forward. [*Additional note - it was subsequently confirmed that KA wishes to continue as lead for Press and Public Relations. However, DR confirmed that because of ongoing personal circumstances he wishes to resign with immediate effect from the post of Membership and Marketing. This decision has been actioned].

In discussion it was agreed that efforts should be made to identify any further Trust members that might wish to support the work of the Board through co-option, particularly with regard to developing Fan Unity and organising Trust Events. RD to follow up.

5. Chairs Report

CH explained that the planned Fans Forum being organised by the club had been cancelled at very short notice, and without a full and proper explanation. This was extremely disappointing, not least because the EFL require clubs to discuss arrangements with supporters and particularly so with regard to match attendance in the light of the current pandemic. In discussion, it was agreed that the Trust should seek to arrange a virtual meeting with other Blues supporter groups given that the club did not wish to do so. CH agreed to organise as a matter of urgency.

6. Financial Report

PB introduced his report and referred to the latest financial summary that had been circulated prior to the meeting. He confirmed that the Trust's overall financial position was currently very healthy. He explained that he had been looking at alternative banking arrangements with reduced charges, as previously discussed, but without success to date. He will continue to do so. He confirmed that the webinar subscription that had been taken on to facilitate the virtual AGM had now been cancelled, although the Zoom (business) subscription would continue. He also confirmed that the annual accounts had now been formally submitted to the FCA following their approval by the membership in General Meeting on 11 November. PB confirmed that the Trust currently had 286 full members, and 839 followers.

In discussion it was agreed that the healthy nature of the accounts, and the anticipated surplus for the year ahead because of reduced expenditure associated with meeting costs, gave the Trust some headroom which should enable membership fees to be held at current levels and also provide new development opportunities if so decided.

PB explained that with regard to membership payments, he was continuing to review alternative methods to PayPal as discussed previously by the Board (to facilitate a more efficient approach for dealing with recurring payments). He reminded the meeting that because the Trust offers both two year and five year memberships, in addition to an annual period, this made it difficult to facilitate recurring payments which enable members to renew their memberships automatically on an annual basis. It was agreed by the Board that this was an important principle which should be pursued, so PB was asked to continue reviewing options. RS agreed to support this task.

7. Other Officer Updates

(i) Research and Technical - RS explained that he had been continuing to develop a road map for the creation of a community interest company, and that work was ongoing. He also confirmed that the publication of BCFC accounts was expected by the end of December, at which point he will be conducting an analysis of the figures for discussion with Board members;

(ii) Press and Public Relations - in the absence of KA no verbal update was given;

(iii) Electronic Media - BP confirmed that Twitter and Facebook memberships are continuing to grow, up approximately 7% since the last Board meeting in October. In discussion it was agreed that both represent excellent vehicles for raising the Trust's profile. BP also explained that he continued to remain hopeful that Colin Tattum may be able to assist with the production of the book as previously discussed;

(iv) Membership and Marketing - in the absence of DR no verbal update was given;

(v) Projects Management - NC explained that Plan B is developing well; a productive session had recently been held with the supporters trust at Crewe (which now owns 10% of the football club) and a session is planned for w/c 7 December with Hearts supporters trust. NC will distribute a summary of progress to Board members in due course. NC also confirmed he is working with KA to produce a projects action plan. Finally, NC reminded the meeting that the FSA had recently emphasised the need for strong fan unity when supporters were seeking to challenge club owners, and he proposed the idea of having fans forums going forward to agree common purpose. In discussion, and in the light of views expressed at the last Board meeting in October, it was further agreed that fan unity should be a key task for the Board during the next 12 months;

(v) Without Portfolio - MD explained that there was nothing to report at this point.

8. Any Other Business

(i) RD confirmed that he would follow up all expressions of interest with Trust members who had indicated a willingness to become involved with the Board;

(ii) RS identified the potential benefits of holding Zoom meetings with Trust members going forward, to build on the success of the recent virtual AGM. This was agreed by all present and RD offered to lead with the organisation of an open session (topic to be determined) in the new year;

(iii) PB suggested the need to send a seasonal message to all members ahead of the Christmas break. This was agreed and RD was tasked with approaching KA to write the message.

9. Date of Next Meeting

- Saturday 23 January 2021 at 11.00 via Zoom.

The meeting finished at 12.43.