

# BLUES TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of the Blues Trust Board held at 11.00 on Saturday 6 March 2021 via Zoom video conference.

In attendance: Cliff Horrocks (CH) (Chair), Peter Bull (PB), Neil Cottrell (NC), Margaret Decker (MD), Richard Docker (RD), Bruce Kyte (BK), Linda Magner (LM) Bob Pickett (BP) and Richard Stanley (RSt). Rob Simpson (RSi) also attended the meeting as an invited guest.

## Agenda Items

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting, and in particular Rob Simpson who was attending the meeting as an invited guest. CH explained that RSi would also be attending future meetings.

### 2. Apologies for Absence

Karim Adab (KA), Mark Holland (MH) and Chris Street (CS).

### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 January 2021 were noted and approved. There were no matters arising.

### 4. Chairs Report

CH introduced his report and began by thanking everyone for their efforts; it is clear that a great deal of Trust activity is happening now because of the contributions being made by Board members. CH confirmed that Dong Ren had been invited to attend today's meeting but had not responded to, nor even acknowledged, the opportunity to do so. All agreed this was very disappointing. CH updated the meeting on recent interesting discussions he had held with [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. CH also confirmed that he is corresponding with the FSA about the ownership at BCFC and that the organisation has agreed to contact the EFL on the Trust's behalf to review the suitability of Vong Pech against the "fit and proper person" criteria. CH explained that other Trust members had also made recent contact with him to support Trust activities, including [REDACTED]

Following discussion, CH agreed to write to Wenqing Zhao at BCFC to express the Trust's discontent with the leadership of Dong Ren and in particular his refusal to have dialogue with supporters. CH also agreed to make contact with [REDACTED]

#### 5. Financial Report

PB introduced his report and made reference to the latest accounts which had been circulated prior to the meeting. He confirmed a current operating surplus of £625 and reserves of £1585. PB updated the meeting on various matters including (i) the Annual Return previously submitted to the FCA (still not acknowledged so agreed that PB should follow up with a letter of enquiry), (ii) latest membership numbers to the end of February (now at 294 members and 870 followers) and (iii) PayPal (still not resolved with regard to varying membership terms adopted by the Trust. In discussion it was agreed that this was still an important objective and should continue to be pursued). PB explained that BK is making excellent progress with website development activity. He confirmed that arrangements were well on track for the planned Zoom meeting with Trust members on Wednesday 10 March and that, currently, 35 participants were expected. PB confirmed that he would offer honorary membership to [REDACTED] on behalf of, and as agreed by, the Board. Finally, following discussion, it was agreed that PB should arrange for a donation of £50 to be made to CiviCRM which is the data base platform used by the Trust as a free service.

#### 6. Publishing Material

CH introduced this item. He explained that whilst it was very pleasing that the number of articles now being published on the website was increasing significantly, there was a concern that we were editing by committee which had the potential to cause delays and uncertainty. CH confirmed that it was not necessary to have every board colleague's input when preparing an article for publication. CH asked if anyone was interested in becoming the overall editor for website publications? In discussion, it was proposed that each individual portfolio holder should have a team of two colleagues to support the publication of material; CH, as chair, should also be consulted at the point of sign-off but the involvement of all others was not necessarily required. This proposal was agreed and all were asked to implement. It was further agreed that a corporate style guide would be helpful to inform the publication of material and RD was tasked with drafting something for consideration at a future meeting. The need for a contents plan was also identified and RSt, NC and RD were tasked with developing one. PB confirmed that Google Drive offered a shared facility which would be useful for this purpose and he agreed to prepare a note (or arrange a tutorial) to explain how it works.

## 7. Direct Action?

CH introduced this item and asked if the Board felt that the Trust should become more active through the organisation of protests? The current climate was noted and there was an acknowledgement of the protests recently organised by other Blues supporter groups, not least the banner that was left at the entrance to the training ground at West Hills. In discussion, it was agreed that the Trust should keep its options open with regard to the organisation of protests but that any activity should be peaceful and consistent with the sentiment expressed in the article being written by MH. There was also agreement that the Trust should seek to develop links with those other groups organising protests.

## 8. Trust Governance

RD introduced this item and explained that the recent and successful influx of new Board members meant that the Board was now running at capacity. If interest was maintained there might be a case for reviewing the existing rules with a view to increasing the maximum and minimum number of Board members. This would need to be addressed soon, if supported, so that measures could be prepared for the AGM in the autumn which is when any rule changes would ordinarily be considered by the membership.

A general discussion followed and whilst the idea of extending the number of board places was not discounted, it was felt that consideration should first be given to the introduction of an extra layer of governance involving operational committees which included non-board Trust members. It was agreed that committees or sub-groups could work well if managed properly. RD was tasked with preparing an ideas paper for consideration at a future meeting of the Board.

Separately, it was agreed that CH, KA, MH and RD should meet to consider the question of how best to engage with ambassadors and influential Trust members in the light of existing portfolio responsibilities. RD to organise.

It was also agreed that a system or process is required to ensure that all enquiries from Trust members are dealt with correctly and always responded too. Are we sure that this is being administered correctly? CH and RD to meet to discuss.

## 9. Other Officer Updates

(i) Research and Technical - RS explained that the full year accounts for BCFC were expected at the end of March which he would analyse closely;

(ii) Press and Public Relations - in KA's absence no update was given;

(iii) Electronic Media - BP explained that Twitter and Facebook memberships have increased by 5% since the last meeting and things were ticking over quite nicely. In discussion about social media presence, BP was asked to think about levels of access for discussion at the next meeting;

(iv) Projects Management - NC updated the Board on continued progress with Plan B since the last meeting in December and also explained the emergence of Plan X, which was looking at the complex web of the current ownership with a view to possible forced disposal in the future. A key proposal with Plan B is to form the shell company previously discussed, and to do so quite quickly. An important consideration is how the company will interface with the Trust going forward. NC also confirmed that he was working on a PR plan, which includes ideas for securing the support of key influencers, but that the priority is to establish the shell company first. It was agreed that NC should share the plan with all Board members.

(v) Membership - LM explained that she had begun communicating with members about the drive to increase membership and that she would shortly be doing the same with followers. She also confirmed that it was planned to start follow up conversations with all non Trust member responders to articles posted on the website and that personal contact would be made with all existing members if their membership lapses. LM explained that she was beginning to explore the idea of sponsorship support and incentives linked to Trust membership as a customer benefit. In discussion it was agreed that a fact sheet summarising the history of the Trust and its objectives could be very helpful to promote membership. CH agreed to produce it;

(vi) Fan Unity - in MH's absence no update was given although it was noted that the article relating to fan protests prepared by MH was due to be published in the coming week;

(vii) IT and Website - PB&BK explained that they are continuing to meet regularly to develop their working relationship and to share knowledge and understanding of the Trust's IT and Website capabilities. Good progress is being made;

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

## 10. Any Other Business

(i) RS asked if we should start a work stream which addressed growing concerns about the BCFC Academy, particularly its future and the potential

loss of further talent from the club? In discussion it was agreed that an in-depth study was required and LM and RSi agreed to undertake the task;

(ii) A brief discussion took place confirming the arrangements for the Zoom meeting with members scheduled for Wednesday 10 March;

(iii) RD updated the meeting on work being undertaken to re-boot the Trust's Instagram account. RD to continue preparations with a view to relaunching the account at a suitable time.

#### 11. Date of Next Meeting

- Saturday 17 April 2021 at 11.00 via Zoom.

The meeting finished at 13.15