

BLUES TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of the Blues Trust Board held at 11.00 on Saturday 17 April 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) and Richard Stanley (RSt).

Agenda Items

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

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

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 6 March and 20 March 2021 were noted and approved. In discussion it was agreed that, going forward, the version of minutes published on the Trust website should be redacted given the sensitive nature of some work streams and, where appropriate, to maintain confidentiality regarding the involvement of non-Board members.

4. Chairs Report

CH introduced his report. He began by acknowledging the efforts of all concerned who have generated material for the website. He confirmed that RD would lead general marketing and PR going forward, with KA focussing solely on press activity. Officer portfolios would be amended accordingly for approval at the next Board meeting.

CH confirmed that, unusually, he had received a response from Dale Moon at BCFC to an email he had sent on behalf of the Trust. This was acknowledged as good news and welcomed.

CH explained that the Trust had been approached by Tilton Talk to participate in a joint project regarding the production of an open letter to the BCFC Board, together with an accompanying petition signed by Trust members and Blues supporters, expressing concern at the leadership of the football club. In discussion it was agreed that the project presents a great opportunity to highlight general concerns and should be supported in full.

CH confirmed that Ashley Brown at the FSA had been contacted and had raised a number of ownership questions on behalf of the Trust regarding the involvement of Vong Pech. To date, however, no responses had been received. CH acknowledged that he still had a number of outstanding tasks agreed at previous board meetings, but that he would endeavour to action those as quickly as possible. In discussion, it was agreed that a more structured approach was required to ensure that all people who contacted the Trust received an appropriate acknowledgment/response. RD to action.

Finally, CH explained that [REDACTED] had contacted him with an offer to assist the Trust and particularly so with regard to any investigative work. It was agreed to invite him to the next Plan B group meeting. NC to action.

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 £802 and reserves of £1761. In discussion, it was agreed to leave donations as payments held in trust until the year end.

PB confirmed that the FSA return has now been formally accepted and can be viewed on that organisation's website. With regard to membership, numbers of both full members and followers are continuing to increase. Current figures are 322 members and 899 followers, up from 308 and 879 respectively at the end of March.

PB explained that he was continuing to pursue PayPal as discussed at previous Board meetings, but no response had yet been forthcoming.

Development work on the website with BK is going well. PB reminded board colleagues of the decision taken previously to make a donation to CiviCRM and asked for authority to use his own credit card for the purpose, this being the only accepted method of payment. In discussion, PB was discouraged from using his own credit card. Instead, it was agreed that the Trust should seek to obtain an organisational credit card. PB was tasked with exploring options and making a recommendation to the Board at a future meeting.

6. Trust Social Media: Development & Management

CH introduced this item and identified a number of key questions that needed to be addressed, namely: how does the Trust manage social media output going forward, not least because of the recent resignation of Bob Pickett?; what rules are to be adopted regarding what is, and what is not, acceptable in terms of content and responses?; how should the Trust itself respond to on-line criticism and how should it interact with non-members who comment on Trust matters? A lengthy discussion followed with contributions from all

present. In conclusion, the following outcomes were agreed: (i) as a priority, a solution to the current problem of blocking contributors to the Twitter account must be found. BK to lead; (ii) a dedicated resource is required to manage the Trust's social media output, including a relaunched Instagram account, and assistance should be sought from external sources, including Trust members. RD to lead recruitment; (iii) in principle, all Board members should act as moderators in the long term but BK to take the lead in the short term.

7. Marketing: Summer Refresh?

RD introduced this item. He explained that a number of matters had occurred recently which, if combined, suggested that it might be timely to undertake a review of the marketing of the Trust. Examples included external criticism of the Trust which clearly indicated a lack of understanding about the Trust's purpose, requests from members for Trust merchandising and comments made about aspects of the Trust's visible identity including the logo and website splash page.

A lengthy discussion followed before general agreement was reached that a review, albeit limited in the first instance, should be undertaken during the summer months with ideas for potential changes reported back to the Board for decision at a future meeting. RD and PB were tasked with leading the review, with the support of other Board members as appropriate. Board members were invited to share any specific thoughts and ideas that they might have with RD.

8. Other Officer Updates

(i) Research and Technical - RSt explained that the King Web research work stream had stalled, but would be recommenced soon with additional input expected from Jason Jennings. He confirmed that BCFC accounts are due imminently and will be subject to close scrutiny once they are published. RSt also confirmed that he will be writing to the City Council soon regarding the current status of the ACV with regard to St Andrew's. RSt updated the Board on the creation of the shell company and explained that things were progressing well, with the company expected to be registered very soon. Finally, RSt drew attention to the funding model recently announced by the Newcastle United Supporters Trust, and a general discussion followed. It was agreed that the model had merit and should not be ruled out from a Blues Trust perspective, but that time should be allowed to review its success, or otherwise, before any consideration of following suit;

(ii) Press and Public Relations - in KA's absence no update was given. Noted that RD is to pick up public relations going forward;

(iii) Projects Management - NC updated the Board on continued progress with Plan B since the last meeting in March. He explained that he was working on the preparation of a draft prospectus to support the share offer, and he summarised a recent update meeting with [REDACTED]. He confirmed that a further meeting of the Plan B group would be held soon;

(v) Membership - LM explained that the membership drive was progressing well, with numbers continuing to grow. She further explained that arrangements were now in place for routine follow up with members and responders who contacted the Trust. Finally, LM confirmed that she was continuing to research the BCFC Academy with a view to publishing an in-depth analysis in due course;

(vi) Fan Unity - in MH's absence no update was given. CH to pursue matter of Trust representation at St Andrew's safety committee meeting;

(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.

9. Any Other Business

(i) RD explained that he had had recent contact with Bolton Wanderers Supporters Trust regarding a possible fund-raising activity (in memory of Frank Worthington) and that during the discussions the offer of advice and assistance was made in support of the Trust's Plan B work stream. RD to share contact details with NC for follow up;

(ii) In discussion it was agreed that a further Zoom meeting with members should be considered at the season's end. RD to action;

(iii) Given the absence of four members from today's meeting, it was agreed to undertake a brief review of current meeting arrangements in case more convenient alternatives were necessary. RD to consult Board members;

(iv) It was agreed that portfolio holders be asked to submit a short summary of their activities and progress in the event that they are unable to attend Board meetings. ALL to note.

11. Date of Next Meeting

- Saturday 29 May 2021 at 11.00 via Zoom.

The meeting finished at 13.16