

BLUES TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of the Blues Trust Board held at 11.00 on Saturday 29 May 2021 via Zoom video conference.

In attendance: Cliff Horrocks (CH) (Chair), Karim Adab (KA), Peter Bull (PB), Neil Cottrell (NC), Margaret Decker (MD), Richard Docker (RD), Bruce Kyte (BK), Linda Magner (LM), Rob Simpson (RSi) and Richard Stanley (RSt).

Agenda Items

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting, and in particular Paul Champ (PC) and David Squires (DS) who had recently been approved as Associate Board Members (via email exchange). CH explained that PC and DS would be invited to all future meetings of the Board.

2. Apologies for Absence

Mark Holland (MH) and Chris Street (CS).

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 April 2021 were noted and approved.

The revised Officer Portfolios, amended following discussion at the last meeting, were noted and approved.

4. Chairs Report

CH introduced his report. He began by acknowledging the efforts of all concerned with the publication of the recent open letter, which had been produced in partnership with Tilton Talk. The letter had received very encouraging feedback and was a good example of partnership working. CH noted that excellent posts were continuing to be published on the website and that appropriate editorial control was being exercised by Board members given the recent decision not to publish an article submitted by a member because of concerns about content.

CH confirmed that a meeting with Birmingham City Council's Safety Committee was confirmed for 8 June to discuss issues of concern at St Andrew's. He also explained that he had received an update from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] confirmed that investigations outlined previously were ongoing. CH also noted that relations with [REDACTED] appeared to be back on track, and paid tribute to LM for her efforts in this regard.

In response to a question from PC concerning the recent reshuffle of Director's at BCFC, CH confirmed that the moves had been pretty much expected. RSt added that the separation of the stadium from the football club was a cause for concern and the situation needed to be monitored very closely going forward.

5. Financial Report

PB introduced his report and made reference to the latest accounts which had been circulated to Board members on 26 May. He explained that the financial year end was approaching. RSt agreed to check the year end accounts. PB confirmed a current operating surplus of £837 and reserves of £1796.

PB explained that the previously agreed donation to CiviCRM has now been made and also that an additional software package had been purchased for one month only, to support the distribution of bulk emails using Google Drive.

PB explained that the Trust held 2400 shares in Birmingham City PLC, and asked if they should be written off or written down in value given that there is no market in the shares and likely to be of little or no value. In discussion, it was agreed not to write them off at the present time. RSt agreed to review the situation and undertake a financial assessment with a view to maybe revaluing them in the accounts for the year ended 30 May 2021 where a healthy surplus is currently being shown.

With regard to membership, numbers of both full members and followers are continuing to increase. Current figure is 348 full members, a net increase of 15 from the last meeting.

Finally, PB explained that PayPal has refused the Trust's request to implement a facility to aid its proposed introduction of membership subscription payments as discussed at previous Board meetings. Instead, PayPal have suggested an alternative approach which PB will consider.

6. World Football - Local Perspective

By prior agreement, DS was invited to make a presentation to the Board on his background, his current employment role at FIFA and a number of developing issues in world football that had potential implications for Birmingham City. The presentation, which generated a number of questions in open discussion, was very well received and appreciated by Board colleagues. DS agreed to circulate the slides shown in the presentation. RD to arrange. CH thanked DS on behalf of the Board.

7. Fan-led Review of Football

CH introduced this item and referred to the recently announced Government Fan-led Review of Football. He confirmed that a final report is expected in October, with an interim report scheduled for July. He explained that the Review is an extremely important opportunity for football supporters to set out their concerns for the future of the sport, and to share ideas for improvement. In discussion it was agreed that despite the short timescale, the Trust must also make the most of this opportunity and be clear about what it wants to see from the Review. It was agreed that the Review should be deemed an absolute priority for the coming weeks, with input from all Board members, and that the Trust needs to move fast to develop its contribution. It was further agreed that consultation with Trust members and, indeed, the wider community of Blues supporters, be they individuals or groups, should form an important part of the task. It was also agreed that a structured plan was required as a matter of urgency, incorporating key tasks, timescales and lead officers. NC agreed to produce a project plan for speedy circulation to all Board members. CH confirmed that he had received information from the FSA concerning that organisations involvement in the Review, and the dates of two meetings...one with the FSA and one with the Review Panel and FSA and individual club representatives...which he would be attending. All Board members to note the priority of this workstream.

8. Officer Updates

(i) Research and Technical - RSt left the meeting at 12.30. In his absence, a written update was submitted;

(ii) Press and Public Relations - KA explained that there was nothing new to report;

(iii) Projects Management - NC confirmed that current activity would be paused for the next month or so given the Fan-led Review. However, he confirmed that Plan B was very much on track with a shell company having been established and a draft shares issue brochure in place;

(iv) Membership - LM explained that the membership drive was continuing to go well and that she was pleased with progress to date. She explained that she remained keen to explore incentives for members and that an update letter would be sent to all members who attended the recent Zoom meeting;

(v) Marketing - RD explained that the summer refresh agreed previously would commence once the priority task of the Fan-led Review was concluded;

(vi) Fan Unity - in MH's absence no update was given;

(vii) IT and Website - PB&BK explained that problems had occurred recently with the distribution of bulk emails linked to the open letter project undertaken with Tilton Talk. The issue concerned capacity and had been resolved with the purchase of an additional software package from Google Drive. In addition, it was explained that scheduled reminders to members are not working correctly so BK to review;

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

9. Any Other Business

(i) BK asked for an update on the [REDACTED]. RSt confirmed that it remained an active workstream but it was proving to be complicated and challenging, so progress had been limited. RSt to update at a future meeting;

(ii) RD confirmed that Board members had been consulted about meeting arrangements, as agreed at the previous meeting, and that current arrangements were satisfactory for the majority. Accordingly, Board meetings would continue to be held on Saturday mornings during the summer and be held via Zoom. However, the arrangements would be subject to further review once the new football season commenced and there was clarity about attendance at matches with the possibility of meetings in person being recommenced. RD to arrange further review in due course;

(iii) NC confirmed that the project plan for the Fan-led Review would incorporate a detailed timetable and that it should be expected that additional sole purpose Board meetings would be required to advance progress. ALL to note.

10. Date of Next Meeting

- Saturday 3 July 2021 at 11.00 via Zoom.

The meeting finished at 12.55.