

BLUES TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of the Blues Trust Board held at 7.00pm on Thursday 26 August 2021 via Zoom video conference.

In attendance: Cliff Horrocks (CH) (Chair), Pete Bull (PB), Paul Champ (PC), 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), Liam Hindley (LH), Mark Holland (MH), Rob Simpson (RSi), Chris Street (CS) and David Squires (DS).

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 July 2021 were noted and approved.

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairs Report

CH introduced his report and began by confirming that he had recently written to senior officials at the club seeking answers to several questions regarding the outstanding ground repairs and offering support and assistance if required. He had also had personal contact with Edward Zheng and Ian Dutton whilst attending the match at Luton on 21 August and, whilst he had received a warm reaction, no formal response to his correspondence had yet been forthcoming. It was agreed that still further representations should be made.

CH explained that he had undertaken a TV interview with Midlands Today at the commencement of the season, the focus again being on the challenges being faced by supporters concerning the unavailability of seats. CH also identified the recently announced BCFC shares issue as a cause of some interest. It was agreed that further work was required to fully understand the motivation of the club in appearing to write off further debts to the tune of £58m in return for more shares.

In discussion it was agreed that the Trust needed to share more information with members, and quickly, about what the Trust was doing to challenge the ground repairs issues. It was recognised that frustration amongst supporters was growing and that it was important that members had confidence that the Trust was trying to get to the bottom of things. NC and RD agreed to draft an article for early publication. It was also agreed that the Trust should be prepared with another article in the event that the club again postponed admission to the stands for the next home match against Derby County.

In answer to a question, CH agreed to make further contact with [REDACTED] research project.

5. Financial Report

PB introduced his report with reference to the financial update paper circulated prior to the meeting. He confirmed a current operating surplus of £1435.00. He updated the meeting on progress with the recently relaunched online shop and confirmed that it is now generating more activity. As a consequence, it had become necessary to revise (upwards) the charges that are made for posting items. In discussion, RSt agreed to consider any accounting implications of the postal charges.

PB explained that the year end accounts have been submitted but, to date, no response has been received. A Trust Barclaycard has now been obtained, as previously agreed, with PB and RD account holders. Membership numbers have continued to increase over the past month.

6. Governance and AGM

RD introduced this item and made reference to his note which had been circulated prior to the meeting. He confirmed a proposal that the number of appointed board numbers should remain as they are for the foreseeable future, and that the board should be flexible in its appointment of co-opted members depending upon special circumstances and any skills gap. Additionally, any number of other Trust members could be appointed to support portfolio holders within a sub committee structure if and as required. The proposal was agreed. It was also noted that portfolios would, as usual, be reviewed at the first meeting after the forthcoming AGM when the composition of the new board was known.

RD also confirmed arrangements for the AGM on 4 November. The Board agreed to appoint MD to lead the Election Management Group because RD was required to stand in the election given the completion of his current term of office at the AGM. The Board noted that MD had confirmed she would be retiring at the AGM. On behalf of the Board, CH thanked MD and paid tribute

to her for the tremendous contribution she had made to the Trust since its creation in 2012.

7. Acquisition of St Andrew's

CH introduced this item and summarised a recent discussion he had had with a Trust member, [REDACTED]. A note of the conversation had been sent to all Board members in advance of the meeting. CH asked if the idea of creating a fund for the purpose of acquiring St Andrew's, or potentially even the club itself, was worth pursuing? It was agreed that potential contributors would most likely be either (i) supporters (or companies) willing to contribute very large sums or (ii) those individual supporters making donations on a much smaller scale. In discussion it was agreed that the idea should be explored with a view to implementation, but it was acknowledged that a great deal of detailed preparatory work would be required beforehand. NC reminded the Board of similar initiatives undertaken by supporters of other football clubs, not least Hearts in Scotland and, more recently, Newcastle United. It was agreed that the creation of a fund, rather than a shares issue, was the preferred route to take. It was noted that much of the work previously undertaken on the Plan B project was likely to be relevant with regard to this proposal, and it was agreed that the Plan B work should be revisited. It was agreed that NC arrange a meeting of the Plan B project group at the earliest opportunity and that an invitation to attend the meeting be extended to [REDACTED].

8. Project Plan Update

NC introduced this item with reference to the updated Project Plan which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The report was noted and the Plan accepted without amendment.

9. Shell Company Logo

RSt introduced this item and reminded the Board of the need to develop a corporate identity and logo for the new shell company. In discussion it was agreed that the task be referred to the Marketing Sub Group.

10. Other Officer Updates

(i) Research and Technical - RSt explained that, on this occasion, he had nothing to report;

(ii) Press - in the absence of KA no report was given;

(iii) Projects Management - NC referred to the updated Project Plan adopted under agenda item 8;

(iv) Membership - LM updated the meeting on a number of recent activities and overall progress. It was noted that membership is continuing to increase. LM confirmed that she was working on a number of ideas to further boost membership and that steps needed to be taken to improve communications with members. To this end, she hoped that a further Zoom meeting with members could be arranged soon for a general discussion about the football club and the Trust. Also, she confirmed that she was planning to re-introduce a bi-monthly newsletter, with contributions welcome from all Board colleagues, and that a revised welcome letter for new members was also being planned. In discussion it was agreed that the Trust should make available a "members friend", that is, someone who could take up issues with the club raised by members eg ticketing enquiries. LM to consider;

(v) Marketing and PR - RD explained that the first meeting of the Marketing Sub Group had been held on 12 July, and he drew attention to the minutes of the meeting which had been circulated prior to the meeting. In particular, he highlighted the key actions agreed by the Sub Group. These were noted without amendment. PC highlighted the need to seek out business partners who might be prepared to sponsor the Trust so that identified activities could be seed funded. There was general support for this idea and the Sub Group was tasked with pursuing it for consideration by the Board at a later date.

(vi) Fan Unity - LM confirmed that she had taken on the role in the absence of a portfolio holder, and pending the appointment of a new one, and had begun to put together a data base of other Blues supporters groups and to reach out to them;

(vii) IT and Website - PB explained that he and BK had had no recent meetings but were hoping to catch up again soon. All was currently functioning smoothly however. PB also explained that he was looking at the idea of introducing a new Facebook Group for Trust members (and possibly non members too) to facilitate interactive discussion around matters of interest, and not least Blues matches. The idea received general support and PB was asked to implement at the earliest opportunity if it could be delivered;

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

11. Any Other Business

(i) RD reminded board members of the need for all colleagues to support on line Trust activity, including the supply of match day photographs for LH and PB to post on the Instagram and Facebook accounts, the writing of articles for publication on the website and contributing comments to online discussions. It was noted that the increasing importance of the Trust's on line profile should

not be underestimated, particularly given the key corporate objective of growing membership, and all Board members had a part to play. Board members were also asked to do what they could to encourage friends and contacts who were Blues supporters to become Trust members. To this end, a generic WhatsApp message had been circulated prior to the meeting which could be easily adapted for personal use.

12. Date of Next Meeting

- The date of the next meeting was confirmed for Thursday 30 September at 7.00pm via Zoom video conference.

The meeting finished at 9.15pm.