

BLUES TRUST

Vision : To be an independent, democratic, representative and influential voice for all supporters of Birmingham City Football Club.

Minutes of the meeting of the Blues Trust Board held at 7.00pm on Thursday 30 January 2025 via Zoom video conference.

In attendance: Neil Cottrell (NC) (Chair), Pete Bull (PB), Luke Davies (LD), Richard Docker (RD), Fred Greaves (FG), Jez Hemming (JH), Cliff Horrocks (CH), Bruce Kyte (BK), Linda Magner (LM), Richard Stanley (RS) (Board Members) and Sheila Bonas (Guest).

Agenda Items

1. Welcome and Introductions

NC' welcomed all present to the meeting and, in particular, Luke Davies who was attending his first meeting since being co-opted to the Board and Sheila Bonas who was attending as an invited guest.

2. Apologies for Absence

Karim Adab (KA).

3. Appointment of Officers 2025

RD introduced this item and reminded everyone that as this was the first formal meeting since the 2024 AGM, it was necessary to confirm the appointment of officers for 2025.

The following appointments were unanimously agreed:

- Chair - Neil Cottrell
- Vice Chair - Cliff Horrocks
- Secretary - Richard Docker
- Treasurer and Resources - Pete Bull

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 September 2024 were noted and approved. There were no matters arising.

5. Chair's Report

NC updated the meeting on recent progress with the Football Governance Bill and, in particular, his exchanges with Government ministers regarding a role for supporter trusts in the new arrangements. NC confirmed he had received a written response from Lisa Nandy MP,

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport which he shared with the meeting. NC considered that the response provided some reassurance about the role for trusts going forward, and also drew attention to the identified need for a democratic component with supporter representative groups.

NC confirmed that he has agreed to support Northampton Town supporters trust with a forthcoming lobbying event in Parliament regarding the bill. LD indicated a willingness to attend as well and NC agreed to share the details with him. JH asked if the Trust needed a mandate from Blues fans and Trust members to continue its lobbying in support of the bill? In discussion that was, on balance, not considered to be necessary but it was felt that more should be done to publicise the work undertaken by the Trust previously as a reminder of the role played to date. In response to a question from RS, NC explained that the FSA was in a similar position to the Trust in terms of its expectations for the bill.

Turning to the matter of fan engagement, NC confirmed that [REDACTED] at the club had offered to meet him but, so far, has not been able to confirm an appointment. [REDACTED] had indicated that he was interested in the Trust's views on how things are working for fans.

In general discussion, LM restated her view that it is important that the Trust fights for fans because, although certainly improved, things are far from perfect and where there are weaknesses, they should be pointed out. For example, the club is weak in terms of its overall strategy when measured against existing EFL rules. The club is not minuting fan engagement meetings. And there is no cascade of information from OSC's. FG agreed and argued that the Trust should be asking key questions because no one else appears to be.

Following the discussion it was agreed that NC should continue to seek a meeting with [REDACTED] to identify those things that are working well with fan engagement and things that are not. It was also agreed that NC and LM should arrange a follow up session with the FSA to discuss the club's fan engagement performance.

6. Blues Trust - Objectives and Priorities 2025

NC introduced this item and led a general discussion on what the Trust should adopt as its objectives and priorities for 2025 in the light of the changed and improved circumstances at the club. Ideas submitted by board members before the meeting were noted and considered.

It was agreed that a different approach for the Trust was required and, as a starting point, that existing officer portfolio's should be collapsed.

In discussion the following four priorities were identified and agreed:

1. Club Engagement - to further pursue meaningful dialogue with the club;
2. Football Governance Bill - to continue to monitor, lobby, promote and publicise the bill for the benefit of supporters;
3. Membership - to continue to promote the benefits of Trust membership and to provide activities for Trust members;
4. Wider Fan Engagement - to strengthen engagement with other supporter groups and Blues fans in general on matters of mutual interest.

It was agreed that the Trust's independence was crucial and a unique selling point. As an independent voice on Blues matters, this was likely to continue to be of value with the media and the Trust should be prepared to have and express an opinion on things. JH expressed the view that this was a real opportunity for the Trust and one that should be embraced.

A number of other ideas to promote the role of the Trust were discussed. These included the potential opportunity provided by the matchday drop-in cafe, the organisation of further events and activities for Trust members and an appeal to all Blues fans to share memories in support of the forthcoming 150 anniversary of the club's formation.

It was agreed that RD would capture the key points from the discussion and circulate a short paper for consideration by all.

7. Club Updates

Nothing specific was identified for discussion at this point in time, and it was agreed that the item would appear again on the agenda for the next Board meeting in March.

8. Financial Report

PB introduced this item with reference to his written report previously circulated. Figures relating to operating surplus, general reserves and membership numbers were noted.

PB asked whether a donation should be made to Trinity Church for the use of its facilities for the matchday drop-in cafe? It was agreed to wait until the season end before making a decision.

PB confirmed that annual report submitted to the Financial Conduct Authority is now “live” having been approved.

9. Any Other Business

- (i) RS explained that he had been planning to prepare an article on the recent damage being caused to vehicles on match day, but having spoken to one of the leading campaigners the article was being held in abeyance;
- (ii) CH drew attention to the following activities that were happening shortly: a matchday march from the Roost to the ground in support of a campaign against knife crime, continued use of the match day drop-in cafe and the need for on site support, and an event with George Parris taking place at Maggie’s pub after the forthcoming match with Rotherham United.

10. Date of Next Meeting

- The date of the next meeting was agreed, after consultation, as Thursday 3 April 2025 at 7.00pm via Zoom video conference call.

The meeting finished at 9.00pm.