

# 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 3 April 2025 via Zoom video conference.

In attendance: Neil Cottrell (NC) (Chair), Pete Bull (PB), Richard Docker (RD), Fred Greaves (FG), Cliff Horrocks (CH) (Vice Chair), 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.

### 2. Apologies for Absence

Karim Adab (KA).

### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 January 2025 were noted and approved. There were no matters arising.

### 4. Chair's Report

NC updated the meeting on a number of recent developments. Firstly, he confirmed that he had now been in touch with ██████████ at the club regarding the question of fan engagement. As requested by ██████, NC had submitted a detailed critique which, although recognising that there had been many improvements, identified that work was still required if the club was to achieve its goal of becoming "world class". NC linked his submission to the recommendations of the Fan Led Review, and shared several ideas for improvement including better overall communication with supporters. ██████ had acknowledged the letter and offered to meet to discuss issues raised. The meeting was still to be arranged. NC agreed to share his correspondence with board members.

RS explained that nothing more had been heard from the club about the incident of missile throwing at the recent Reading match so he will now make contact with ██████ direct.

NC confirmed that Neil Moxley has agreed to be the guest speaker at the next "An Evening With....." event for Trust members. The date for the event was subsequently confirmed as Tuesday 3 June.

With regard to the Football Governance Bill, NC explained that the Bill is back with the House of Commons. NC agreed to make further enquiries of Northampton Town Supporters Trust regarding the lobbying event in the Commons that he and LD had previously expressed an interest in attending.

#### 5. Matchday Cafe

CH spoke to this item and explained that footfall on matchdays is getting better. Having persevered with the drop-in meeting place, it is beginning to take off. Visitors include Trust members and non-members alike. So it is providing an opportunity for the Trust to engage with matchday supporters if the desire is there to continue doing so. CH suggested that what is lacking is a strategy regarding its use and purpose. A number of ideas were discussed as things to work on for next season, including a dedicated presence to promote Trust membership and the coordination of other Trust activities to advertise the cafe. It was agreed to review activities ahead of the commencement of the 2025/26 season.

CH confirmed that £55 had been collected at the cafe as charitable donations to support action against knife crime.

#### 6. Football Governance Bill

This item was the subject of discussion earlier during the meeting.

#### 7. Club Updates

- Blues Matters - CH explained that the South Asian sub group was not consulted by the club before an event was arranged during Ramadan. This was disappointing and it reinforced the impression that the club is not committed to proper engagement. ■ expressed a similar view that the club is not truly engaging, and explained that there was no consultation with the Heritage sub group regarding plans for the club's 150th anniversary. RS expressed the view that the whole fan engagement approach by the club appears to be broken. In discussion it was agreed to review how Blues supporters might encourage meaningful engagement and it was agreed to look again at previously considered models for an independent alliance. CH agreed to lead with support from RD.

- Open House - the date of the next Open House was not known by anyone present.

#### 8. Anniversary Activities

In discussion it was agreed to offer a prize of £50 to the person submitting the best anniversary memory article, with the winner not to be decided until December 2025. RD explained that the feature will commence in the close season and run through until the end of the year.

#### 9. Financial Report

PB introduced this item and updated the meeting on the current financial position of the Trust in terms of operating surplus (£817) and general reserves (£4292). He explained that income from membership is declining as numbers fall. PB drew attention to a donation from the late [REDACTED] who, although a supporter of Aston Villa, was aware of the work of the Trust through his cousin and Trust member, [REDACTED]. The donation was warmly appreciated by all.

PB confirmed that a card payment machine had been purchased for use at the matchday cafe to assist the process of recruiting new members. He further explained that the biggest item of expenditure continues to be for the hosting of the website.

The current decline in membership numbers was discussed as a source of ongoing concern. FG asked if Trust badges could be gifted to new members upon completion of membership applications? This was agreed as being a good idea worthy of implementation. LM asked if podcasts could be introduced for next season as a means of promoting the Trust and supporting membership growth? This was also welcomed as an excellent idea, but it was noted that dedicated work was required to produce podcasts. It was agreed to ask JH's advice.

CH raised two matters of finance. Firstly, he confirmed that he will provide PB with a summary of all financial activity undertaken during the operation of the matchday cafe. Secondly, an application had been made recently for funding from the FSA in support of the George Parris event organised by Blues4All in partnership with the Trust. A decision was still awaited, but expenses had already been incurred by B4A. CH asked if the Trust could make a donation to help meet the costs in the event that funding from the FSA was not forthcoming. In discussion, it was agreed to make a donation if required.

## 10. Any Other Business

- (i) Agreed Priorities 2025 - it was agreed to add new items to the Priorities progress list as and when appropriate. This to include the podcasts idea from today's meeting. CH raised a concern that the agreed priority groups might be too open ended and that clarity was required regarding their purpose and functioning. For example, who was the lead officer for each group? It was agreed that further work was required to finesse the operation of the groups. RD to lead discussions on how this can best be achieved;
- (ii) Player of the Year - LH reminded everyone that it would soon be time for Trust members to decide their club player of the year. It was agreed to start the process now with an email to members. PB to action;
- (iii) BK offered to support the Trust's financial accounting role if required. BK was thanked for his kind offer and it was agreed that the idea be further discussed off-line. PB/BK/NC/RD to consider.

## 11. Date of Next Meeting

- The date of the next meeting was agreed, after consultation, as Wednesday 28 May 2025 at 7.00pm via Zoom video conference call.

The meeting finished at 8.57pm.