

Dons Trust Board (DTB)

Redacted minutes of meeting held at 7.30pm on 12 September, 2018
The Cherry Red Records Stadium, President's Lounge

DTB members

Matthew Breach
Mark Davis (Chair)
Colin Dipple
Nigel Higgs
Tim Hillyer
Jane Lonsdale
Cormac van der Hoeven

In attendance

Erik Samuelson (Club CEO)
Joe Palmer (Club COO)
Tom Brown (DT Secretary)
Hannah Kitcher (Secretariat)
Roger Edmonds-Brown
(Secretariat)

1. Introduction and apologies

Apologies were noted from Board members Roger Evans, Sean McLaughlin, and Charles Williams. Apologies were also received from Andrew Howell (Secretariat).

PART 1 – WITH FCB REPRESENTATIVES

2. FCB Report

The DTB had received the regular monthly report from the Football Club Board (FCB). A number of topics from the report were raised by the Board.

Finance

It was noted that the **cash flow** had improved this month, largely due to the revenues received from the West Ham United match.

Tim asked why the Barclays repayments were due to finish in November, and Erik said that this was due to the sale of the stadium. Erik added that Barclays were aware that the amount owing (£300,000-£350,000) would be paid before the end of the year. Erik confirmed, in answer to a further question from Tim, that there would not be a penalty for early repayment.

The upcoming audit was discussed, and it was agreed that, as the timetable was tight, it would be prudent to wait until late October to announce the **date of the AGM**.

A more general discussion ensued about whether the AGM should be in the traditional month of December, as advocated in particular by Jane, or whether it should be in January so that it could be combined with the start of the stadium consultation, as suggested by Roger by email. It was agreed to wait until a clearer accounts timetable had been established. Jane pointed out the benefit of having more meetings rather than less, and said that when the AGM was announced, there should be a reminder of the constitutional deadlines for members' resolutions.

Commercial

Under sponsorship, Jane queried whether the **12th man package** was on the website, and Joe thought that, if not, there may be a broken weblink.

Action: 12th Man package- Joe to check the 12th Man package is on the Club's website.

The Board discussed the recent change of bar manager.

Digital

Mark said the link to the microsite had been distributed to DTB members, and that Joe would preview it at the next night's SGM. Joe said the microsite should be ready by the following week and clarified a query from Jane that the site was a source of information regarding the new stadium and to engage with the wider community, but not a means of consultation. Jane asked if the next night's microsite presentation at the SGM could be tweeted beforehand.

Action: Microsite- Joe to tweet to DT members that this will be given a 'sneak preview' at tomorrow's SGM.

Catering

Cormac asked if the temporary licence application for the **conversion of the turnstiles** into catering points had been approved, and this was confirmed by Joe. Jane asked if this new facility could be promoted.

Action: Extra catering points at turnstiles- Joe to advertise this new facility.

Joe said there would be further publicity on the new food options and said these new ideas of hot bags, etc. would take some time to bed in.

Ticketing and customer database (CRM)

Cormac said that **turnstile team** had not heard back from the Club about what the error codes were that were appearing on the SKIDATA units. Joe explained that the turnstiles were operating fine but the problem was around the database, and they were currently investigating the issues and awaiting feedback from SKIDATA. Joe agreed to provide feedback to the turnstile team as soon as he received it.

Action: Barcode Entry- Joe to contact the whole turnstile team to update on current status

Jane highlighted the problems caused by the **delay in Dons Trust membership data being included on the CRM system**. Webjam, for example, did not have all the membership information required for a member-only site. Joe explained that the CRM system did not previously have a membership functionality but this was now possible, and they were waiting for a member of the IT team to return from holiday for testing.

Action: DT Membership data – Joe to speak with IT team for a status update

Cormac asked if matches like West Ham United could be loaded onto season ticket cards, and Joe said this was possible, but there was a problem created with multiple records that needed to be resolved. Jane thought David Gowns had 'de-duplicated' the database some time ago, but Joe said that new records had been rapidly added. There was some surprise expressed that the envelopes for the West Ham tickets were hand-written.

Mark said it was an opportune moment for the Board to note their **thanks to office staff** for all the extensive hours they had put in ahead of the West Ham United game.

The Dons Trust Board also noted its **thanks to Neil Messenbird** who, after 16 years working in the cash team, and also supporting the Dons Draw, had decided to step down. Erik had met with Neil to discuss the issues that led to him stepping down. Mark said that Rick Thomas was getting round to talking with all members of the cash team.

Operations

Tim said that the issue of **fans in wrong areas of stadia** had been raised at a recent Football Supporters Federation (FSF) meeting with the Independent Ombudsman, and Tim asked if significant money had changed hands for Sunderland fans to obtain our tickets. Erik said he had no information on that but said about 64 tickets had been recovered.

The board sought clarification on the recent issues in the John Green stand.

Cormac was concerned with the potential danger to junior turnstile people of **tickets changing hands at the West Ham game**, particularly as there were no stewards to provide support. Erik agreed that there should have been stewards present.

Jane asked when the Club planned to implement the provision of **free sanitary products** in the ladies' toilets. Joe explained this would not be in time for the next home game against Scunthorpe.

Erik reported that Ivor Heller was due to have an operation towards the end of the month, and would be out of commission for between two to four months. The Board wished to record its best wishes to Ivor with his operation. Colin asked who would be taking Ivor's place for the Man of the Match awards.

Action: Man of the Match presentation – Joe to consider who will take Ivor Heller's place.

Board members raised the issue of the **poor service on ifollow**. A more general discussion ensued about this and the live-streaming of Saturday afternoon matches, as for the Gillingham match the previous weekend. The Board agreed to invite members at the SGM to feedback the issues they were experiencing and their views on live-streaming, with a view to taking follow-up action with ifollow and feeding back to the EFL on live-streaming.

Tim said there had been a turnstile problem at Burton and Gillingham as a result of a low estimate of our travelling fans. Erik said the club could only give its best estimate.

Betting partner

There was a discussion about a potential betting partner.

3. Stadium Update

Erik provided the Board with a **stadium update**, including from an updated version of his stadium report to the board.

The s73 planning submission was now validated and was now out for consultation, and Erik felt this represented a substantial step forward. The application could possibly be heard at the 18 October Planning Committee, although the 15 November meeting was more likely.

Erik had met with a potential replacement contractor the day before, and it had been agreed to send them the RIBA3 details (i.e. developed design stage). They would then develop a proposal within four to five weeks which might be suitable for signing or might need further refinement.

The grant form had also now been signed and sent off to the Football Stadia Improvements Fund.

4. Upcoming SGMs

Mark said that the 4 October date, which had been pencilled in for the next SGM, had now been cancelled and another date during the week commencing 5 November had been mooted.

The Board then discussed the **proposed agenda for the Dons Trust SGM** scheduled for Thursday 13 September which included:

1. A **stadium update from Erik**, including the history of the project and a reminder to members as to what had happened so far, a status report, and the issues which may affect the original timetable. It would then cover the need to tweak the design and then the tender process.

Erik would explain the change of contractor by saying that, following meetings with Scotts, the Club felt it needed new ideas and challenges and so it was best to make a change. Erik said that, at this stage, the new stadium was costing more than we expected, and while this is quite usual we were looking for someone with good ideas to drive the costs down. A change of contractor at this stage was not an unusual action to take between prospective clients and contractors. DTB members agreed with this.

Jane said there may be questions from a community perspective about the crèche and café, and Erik said there were grant possibilities that could be explored.

There was a discussion on the options for membership consultation. Colin suggested having open meetings between DT members and the Stadium Committee to improve communication and provide members with a clear plan for consultation.

2. **Explanation of Restricted Action.** Mark did not expect this to be as long an item as the stadium update and should be allowed to run, and Jane said that the SGM overall should be structured so as not to make members feel they were being cut off time-wise. It was agreed that Mark should announce at the start of the meeting that the meeting would close by 10pm but that another meeting could be held if there were outstanding questions.
3. **Discussion with members.** Possible topics were identified including:
 - a) Members' thoughts on the Checkatrade Trophy
 - b) Members' thoughts on iFollow and live-streaming matches at 3pm on Saturday, to provide an opportunity to gather feedback to pass onto the EFL. Tim and Matt sit on the EFL fans' consultation group, which is attended by an executive running iFollow. This provided a direct route to communicate these issues to the EFL.
 - c) Clarification around Joe's involvement in the development of Canberra.
 - d) Other questions which may come up: DT Elections and mediation with Milton Keynes.
 - e) Matt Breach would also remind members of the forthcoming consultation on what fans and members want us to be as a Club.

Stadium Consultation

The following discussion was to prepare for the next day's SGM and for possible content in the stadium consultation.

It would be explained to members that a mid-season opening of the new stadium in the 2019/20 season remained a possibility but the possible physical options were fairly constrained for financial reasons. In an email from Roger read out by Colin, operational issues he suggested to be consulted on early in the New Year included ticketing, catering, disabled access, greyhound stadium heritage, and travel to and from the stadium.

Matt said that input regarding bar and catering should also be gathered. This prompted a debate about where on the spectrum of free house to a tied deal with a major supplier of beer/lager the bar should be. Nigel believed that with this and other issues, it should not be a straight commercial decision, as the fans should be considered not just as a cash cow to be 'rinsed'. He added that fans were expecting it to be better and different at the new stadium. Jane agreed and said that the suggested covered concourse should be pursued so as to mirror the experience currently enjoyed outside the bars at our current home. Joe clarified that a deal with a major supplier of beer / lager did not preclude provision of a range of real ales from small producers.

It was agreed that Erik would talk to Roger before tomorrow's SGM regarding the stadium consultation presentation.

Nigel asked if Erik could circulate his presentation before tomorrow's SGM.

Action: Stadium presentation: Erik to circulate the finished stadium presentation before tomorrow evening's SGM.

Erik and Joe left the meeting at 9:40 pm.

PART 2 – DTB ONLY

5. Approval of August DTB minutes

The Board **approved minutes of the 13 August board meeting**, subject to some minor editorial points. Jane noted that a lot of the content was proposed to be redacted in the published version and it was agreed that, wherever possible, a short summary of the matter discussed should be included.

An **additional Dons Trust Board meeting** had been held at short notice on 25 August 2018 to agree to change stadium contractor. Jane had taken notes, from which Tim had produced a set of minutes. Matt agreed to finalise the minutes and to produce a very short summary for the published minutes.

6. Working Group Update

Matt reported, on behalf of the **Strategy & Organisation Committee**, that the Consultation working group would be meeting on 24 September.

Mark reported, on behalf of the **Oversight** Committee, that he and Matt would be meeting Erik in the near future.

As regards **Operations** Mark noted he had an old desktop computer which he proposed putting in the Dons Trust kiosk. The desktop computer could be used until it no longer worked and then an investment made in a basic laptop or tablet. Tim highlighted that the Trust had run out of membership forms and the Board debated whether there was a need to reprint more forms if they could help members join online whilst on kiosk duty. It was agreed to photocopy some forms to have as back-up but, going forward, the default should be to support members to sign up online in the kiosk as advertised on the branding on the outside of the kiosk.

Jane asked for an update on the membership tool Nigel was investigating. Nigel agreed to investigate.

Action: Nigel to provide an update on the membership tool by November DTB.

7. AFC Wimbledon branding

There was a discussion on some branding options presented by the FCB.

8. Merchandise pricing

Mark said there was now a merchandise pricing discussion thread on the board's Webjam, and the emerging view was that approaches to merchandise pricing should be reflected in the forthcoming strategy consultation. Tom suggested that the shirt pricing strategy should be put on the shop website, and this was considered a good idea. It was also suggested the general benefits of AFC Wimbledon shirts be highlighted, i.e. it is cheaper for a child to buy a shirt, it's the same shirt the players wear, guaranteed to remain current for two years and all profits go to support the Club's budget.

Action: Merchandise pricing -DTB to ask Erik and Joe to explore ways to explain our pricing structure to the fans.

9. AOB

New AFC Wimbledon Ladies Board

The Board formally approved the directors of AFC Wimbledon Ladies as Erik Samuelson as Secretary, David Gowns as Chair, Mike Richardson, Dennis Lowndes, and Debbie Francis (Director of Football). There would one other lady appointed for gender balance, and further nominations would be brought to this Board for approval.

Action: Mark to enquire about reporting relationships with Ladies

Meet the Met

Tim highlighted that the Met Police have ceased their "Meet the Met" meetings due to lack of take up from clubs. Going forward they would be running more formal, and tightly organised meetings, with two representatives from each of the London clubs. The Board agreed that Matt and Tim should continue to represent the Trust and Club on this basis and noted their thanks for their representation. The next meeting was on 8 October.

DT Merchandise

There was a discussion thread on Webjam about DT merchandise, such as badges. Tim estimated the latter would cost about £1,200 - a modest amount bearing in mind the low expenditure on membership administration.

Tottenham Hotspur

Jane Lonsdale noted that the Tottenham Hotspur Trust had been coming under pressure on the forthcoming Carabao Cup game against Watford to be played at Stadium MK as they had wrongly been portrayed in the media as advocating a boycott. The Board agreed that there was no need for the DTB to make an official statement about this but, if asked, would clarify that neither the Tottenham Trust nor the Dons Trust were seeking a boycott.

The meeting concluded at 10.40pm