

# **Dons Trust Board (DTB)**

**Redacted minutes of meeting held at 7.30pm on 9 April, 2018  
The Cherry Red Records Stadium, President's Lounge**

## **DTB members**

Matthew Breach (MB – Vice Chair)  
Mark Davis (MD – Chair)  
Colin Dipple (CD)  
Roger Evans (RE)  
Nigel Higgs (NH)  
Tim Hillyer (TH)  
Cormac van der Hoeven (CH)  
Jane Lonsdale (JL)  
Sean McLaughlin (SM)  
Charles Williams (CW)

## **In attendance**

Erik Samuelson (ES - Club CEO)  
Joe Palmer (JP – Club COO)  
Mick Buckley (MBu – Club NED)  
David Charles (DC – Club  
Operations Director)  
Ivor Heller (IH – Club Commercial  
Director)  
Andrew Howell (AH - Secretariat)  
Hannah Kitcher (HK - Secretariat)  
Terry Langford (TL – Secretariat)

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## **1. Introduction and apologies**

Apologies were noted from DT Secretary member Tom Brown. The DTB welcomed to the meeting the new minute taker, Terry Langford.

## **2. Pre-meet for discussion with FCB**

The DTB ran through the agenda for the first part of the meeting, ahead of FCB colleagues joining the meeting.

### **PART 1 – WITH FCB REPRESENTATIVES**

## **3. Commercial partner**

ES updated the DTB on exploratory discussions with a potential commercial partner.

## **4. Stadium**

### **Update**

The Stadium Committee had met with ES. An amended tender was awaited from Scotts (the contractor). Once this was received, it would be possible to put options to members on stadium design.

There would be an open meeting around 24 May 2018<sup>1</sup> to update

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary's note: Timing is under review.

fans/members about the design, timeline and funding of the new stadium, including options for how to spend the proceeds of crowdfunding. JL pointed out that this may clash with half term week<sup>2</sup>. TH and CH offered to investigate a suitable central Wimbledon venue to hold the meeting. The community space in Wimbledon Library was suggested.

JL asked whether safe standing had been considered. The West Bromwich Albion proposal had been rejected by the UK government despite it being used at Celtic Park.

**Action: CD and RE to suggest dates for the open meeting on or around 24 May. CH and TH to locate an appropriate venue for the open meeting regarding the new stadium.**

## **5. Ticketing and Membership**

### **Part One**

JP presented the Club's proposal for a new ticketing structure. There would be no price increases for the 2018-2019 season. The proposal was in two parts. With the move to the new stadium it was imperative that the Club starts to develop a structure to maximise attendances and thus revenue from ticketing. The first part was to build more value into having a season ticket. JP suggested having a cap for the new stadium of 5,500 season tickets, reflecting the maximum season ticket to capacity ratio of 55% typical in Germany. The cap would not only help to create demand but also help to attract new people to the Club, as selling too many season tickets would reduce the number of match day seats to sell. Match day ticket sales make more revenue than season tickets. The 2018-19 season would be the last season that fans would be able to purchase a five year season ticket. Those fans that are already in a five year deal or purchase one for the 2018-19 season would be able to continue to top up their season ticket for an indefinite period.

The Club was keen to ensure that seats are not left empty in the stadium and that season tickets go to fans who are going to use them. The Club was therefore proposing an introduction of a new minimum attendance threshold of 80% commencing for the 2018-19 season. Season ticket holders would only be able to renew for the following season if they had attended 80% of home matches. Season ticket holders not achieving this threshold would have to reapply with the rest of the fans on the waiting list.

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<sup>2</sup> Secretary's note: Half-term is the week commencing 28 May.

JL considered that the proposals would need to be consulted on with the wider membership, noting the resolution she had put to an SGM a few years ago. MB pointed out that the SGM resolution only related to price increases and that the current proposal did not relate to pricing, so consultation wasn't mandated in this case - rather it would have been good to consult if there was time. JL also noted that this proposal didn't take account of the needs of people of different ages, e.g. elderly fans in hospital, priority for families with children. CH added that it also didn't take into account 18 year olds who temporarily move away to university.

JP said the proposal would enable season ticket holders who cannot attend a match to count as attending that match by simply returning their seat to the Club to sell for that particular match.

JP also advised that the Club wanted to free up around 20 seated places for next season to be used for hospitality packages. The Club was proposing to offer season ticket priority in the new stadium to those season ticket holders who give back their seats to the Club for the 2018-19 season.

## **Part Two**

The second part of the proposal was to align Dons Trust membership with ticketing, to include discounts and priorities. This would help drive greater growth in Trust membership, thereby also increasing income. Some initial ideas of how to do this were discussed.

CW said that a survey of members' views on membership benefits had been carried out and that he would share those findings with JP, so that more detailed proposals could be worked up.

TH said that consideration must be given as to whether the CRM (customer database) is ready to deal with the proposed changes. JP reported that he was talking to David Gowns about accelerating the work to include Dons Trust membership in the CRM.

SM considered that the VAT implications of the proposals needed to be considered further, as there may be implications beyond just charging VAT on membership fees.

MB reported that he agreed in principle with the membership proposal but did not consider there was time for this to be implemented in time for the coming year. JP noted that the Part One proposal could be implemented ahead of Part Two. NH noted that the Part Two proposal could be seen to change the nature of Dons Trust membership. Whilst

not against the proposal, more time was needed to get the proposal and messaging right. MB noted that the May SGM might be an opportunity to test this proposal with members.

MD asked the DTB what they thought in principle of the proposed changes. The DTB voted unanimously in favour of adopting Part One this year; however, Part Two needed more time for consideration. The rationale for the Part One proposal needed to be explained properly in the letter to season ticket holders.

**Actions: CW and CD to liaise with JP to determine the approach to presenting the ticketing proposal to DT members at the SGM on 26 April 2018. JP to incorporate the Part One proposal into the season ticket letter and to send the letter out this week after checking the text with MD and MB.**

JP advised that he was soon to have a meeting with Chelsea to consider implementation of an access control system with a view to sharing the cost with them.

## **6. Football**

MD provided a summary of the discussion on footballing matters at the FCB meeting.

The FCB would be holding an open meeting with AFC Wimbledon fans on an evening of the week commencing 16 April 2018 (subsequently confirmed as Thursday 19 April 2018). The meeting would include an introduction from the FCB and the DTB. It would provide an opportunity for fans to voice their opinions and ask questions. RE suggested it was advisable to have someone chairing the meeting. JL stated that it would be crucial for the meeting to be a genuine listening exercise.

## **7. Approach to 2018/19 Budget**

ES confirmed that the proposal would be to increase the playing budget. The cash for this would come from the contingency in the budget for the new stadium. ES confirmed that the intention was to release this additional money to the playing budget whether we were in League One or League Two next season.

RE requested that controls be deployed to ensure that NA would be using the money wisely. He asked whether some funds would be left for the January transfer window. It would also be important that the funds were not used on excessive wages to players.

NH requested that a strategy be put in place about where the investment is required i.e. what areas of playing staff needed investment.

Summarising, MD stated that, if the DTB were to approve this proposal, it would be looking for assurances, controls and visibility and an evaluation on the spending. ES acknowledged these requirements.

ES stated that there was no guarantee that increased spending resulted in an increase in performance.

MD asked if anyone on the DTB had an objection to the increased playing budget, subject to the conditions he had laid out. There were no objections.

ES advised that he had been waiting for the arrival of JP to update the operating budget which is currently in hand. The FCB would provide a full budget to the DTB in the coming weeks for their approval.

## **8. FCB Report**

The FCB monthly report was noted. All decisions had been discussed under previous agenda items.

On behalf of the DTB MD thanked the representatives from the FCB for their input and they then departed the meeting.

## **PART 2 – DTB ONLY**

## **9. SGM Papers, content and logistics**

The DTB discussed the finalisation of the papers for the upcoming SGM. In the meeting the DT members would be asked to vote firstly on the principle of changing the DT logo, then secondly between the two proposed options.

**Action: MD to finalise the agenda for the SGM the following day to include a reference to stadium finance options and making it clear on the SGM agenda that break out groups would be used.**

The ratification of the decision by correspondence in favour of Paper 6B (proposed SGM paper on Dons Trust logo) was unanimous.

## **10. Minutes and Matters Arising**

MD requested the formal adoption of the minutes from the February and March 2018 meetings. These were passed.

**Action: MD to finalise and sign minutes and to forward to the Secretariat for storing in the minute book.**

## **11. Committee Updates**

The Oversight, Operations, and Engagement & Communication Committees had all provided update reports from their committees prior to the meeting.

### **Strategy and Organisation Committee**

MB provided an update to the DTB from the Strategy Committee. He advised that the Committee had had their first meeting and had been through their Terms of Reference and tasks for this year. The Committee would be seeking JP's input on the strategy for the Club and organisation. The Committee were planning to distribute a survey to members to ask what their priorities are now as the last time this was done was in 2012. They would also be setting up a constitution working group and had recruited a couple of potential volunteers to support this. CH had been briefed on the quirks of the constitution. CW suggested there was a need to simplify the constitution and have an open meeting.

### **Operations Committee**

To address the backlog of IT related tasks the Operations Committee advised their intention to create a sub-committee of skilled IT volunteers who would also help to develop the DT's IT strategy. CW advised that they were also looking for a solution to replace Webjam.

- **Action: The Operations Committee to recruit appropriately skilled volunteers and report back to the next DTB meeting.**

### **Stadium Committee**

The Stadium Committee had met with ES and discussed timelines for the new stadium. Once Scotts had amended the new scope of work and their tender there would be lots of updates to the DTB. This would

include any extras and whether there would be any spare money. A decision would need to be made about how to regularly update fans with progress.

### **Oversight Committee**

The report from the Oversight Committee was noted. The report covered liaison with David Grows in relation to the Ladies & Girls section, creation of a new template for Board minutes, feedback from the recent FCB meeting and a reminder of the forthcoming AFCW PLC AGM.

### **Engagement & Communications Committee**

The report from the Engagement & Communications Committee was noted. The report covered recent progress with recruitment of people to manage the Junior Dons section, Webjam, Diversity & Inclusion (as covered in the Fleetwood programme), work on updating the Trust's logo, work on the volunteers' code of conduct and other miscellaneous matters.

## **12. Approval of Foundation Rules for Trustees**

The DTB discussed the approval of rules for Trustees of the AFCW Foundation as there weren't any previously in place. The rules put parameters around expectation of trustees and the number thereof. The DTB agreed that they were content for the Foundation to adopt the new rules.

## **13. AOB & date of next meeting**

SM presented the DTB with the accounts for year ended June 2017. The DTB approved the accounts and authorised SM to sign the Letter of Representation. SM advised that the audit report had substantially changed. MD signed the accounts. As the accounts were overdue the DTB aimed to ensure prompt submission to the Financial Conduct Authority and Supporters Direct.

JL advised that the first Diversity and Inclusion Working Group meeting was scheduled for 21 April 2018 and asked for board members to let her know if they were interested in attending. JL also raised the question of Junior Dons' roles. She also asked, now that JP had been here for four months, when the DTB would see the Club's plans for branding and JP's strategy. MD agreed to follow up on this with JP.

- **Action: MD to chase timing of branding report by next meeting.**

The meeting concluded at 10.45pm. Date of the next meeting: 10 May 2018.