

Dons Trust Board

Redacted minutes of 30 October 2017 meeting

Cherry Red Records Stadium President's Lounge

Members

Matthew Breach (MB)

Mark Davis (MD)

Sean McLaughlin (SM)

Tim Hillyer (TH)

Colin Dipple (CD)

Roger Evans (RE)

Jane Lonsdale (JL)

Nigel Higgs (NH)

Invited

Erik Samuelson (ES)

Andrew Williams (AW)

Ivor Heller (IH)

Tom Brown (TB)

Hannah Kitcher (HK)

Andrew Howell (AH)

1. Apologies were received from Charles Williams and David Growns.
2. Stadium plan re-visit

Andrew Williams (AW), the stadium project manager, wanted to remind the DTB what it is that is being worked towards. AW circulated a number of coloured copies of the stadium plan. A list of additional options for the stadium had been circulated by email for discussion; these would require additional funds to be raised. AW emphasised that everything that is being done in Phase 1 of the stadium development is consistent with what is shown in the pictures and compatible with the final solution, i.e. a 20,000 stadium.

AW took the DTB through each floor level. On the ground floor level AW directed the DTB to the operational match day space, office space for catering events and interview areas. It was explained that more space would be created as the stadium developed however initially, consideration regarding space would need to be given to whether certain football club departments, for example the finance team, need office space in the stadium on a day to day basis.

AW explained that the kitchen on the ground floor is big enough for all catering requirements i.e. even after we reach 20,00 capacity. At the south east corner, there will be enough space for a club shop which will be visible from Plough Lane. This is prime position for full marketing effect and as such is the most prominent location for the shop. At the north east corner will be the child care centre. AW explained that the mezzanine for this interferes with the structure a lot.

AW confirmed that the stadium is Disability Discrimination Act compliant and in line with the Sports Ground Safety Authority disability requirements. There is space behind every stand for food and drink concessions. What the stadium does not allow for is fan migration to different parts of the ground. It would be difficult to do this as there needs to be strict segregation for safety. This will include after

the match has finished. There are more onerous requirements due to come into effect with the incoming Green Guide.

AW made it clear that the land outside of the stadium walls does not belong to the club and as such it would not be possible to have a bar outside of the ground.

AW went through the features and facilities on the first floor. AW moved onto the second floor and referred to a space capable of holding 500 people at 1.5 metres square per person, suitable for seated dining for events etc. and alternative use as a bar holding about 650 people on a matchday. There is room for an extension to that space which would take its seated capacity to 1,000 people. Demand for extending it would have to be considered. The space has a finishing kitchen attached with the large catering kitchen underneath.

AW moved onto hospitality. The stadium houses a number of boxes/suites including a large main suite with a capacity of 190, another with capacity of 110, five 10 seater boxes and a single 20 seat box on the halfway line. Depending on demand, it may be desirable to change the layout of the boxes; however, that does not need to be decided for some time yet.

NH queried the requirement and whereabouts of the directors box/board room. ES confirmed that there is a requirement to have one but not all clubs comply. ES feels that directors should not be given key commercial space.

AW explained that the design team had been to different places to research what others do with their commercial space. AW believes that this model best suits the needs of the club. The research suggests that the free space (addressed earlier) will be very popular before and after the match although perhaps not at half time.

IH pointed out that, in relation to the open hospitality area, there isn't anything that competes with that for a long way around. IH also confirmed that there would be space in that room for match day sit down food and that it would be open for general admission. Only Sheffield United do similar and IH says that it's hugely popular there.

The meeting turned to the email circulated with a list of additions to be considered which had been costed by Scotts. The list was taken in order of priority.

Firstly, the question was asked whether to extend the first floor concourse from the west stand to stretch around to the south stand. This would increase parking and create a fan area. AW feels that the cost estimate is a little expensive; however there are complications, 10% off would be a fair target.

ES pointed out that there are currently 20 parking spaces during the first phase of the stadium.

The second question was whether to future proof the event space to allow for other options, such as a hotel above it. AW described this as an attractive option but the consequences for the construction would mean pillars would run through the event space and ruin it.

The third option was whether to complete the west stand. This involved either taking the stand to the goal line at the north end or taking the stand around the corner.

The fourth option discussed was covering the east and north areas of the stadium. AW said that having cover over all of the stands would look better.

Safe standing was then discussed and AW explained that the high costs associated with it were partly due to the railing that has to be installed in front of spectators. Temporary seats can be bought off the shelf however standing barriers cannot, resulting in the concept being more expensive. While a

terrace is allowed in Leagues 1 and 2 there are no grants available for terraces. Furthermore, if we want to transfer our existing £750k of grants and apply for more, then the new stadium must be all seater stadium - safe standing does not qualify as a seat.

Further options raised included:

- Concerns regarding permanent structural support of seating eating into concession space;
- The cost for extending the west stand;
- The option of offices above the west and south stand;
- Further roofing options.

AW explained that the purpose of this list was to see what could be agreed as being required. The DTB discussed the business cases for each option.

AW moved the conversation on to looking at what options could be eliminated.

AW confirmed that by completing the west stand, an additional 1,000/1,500 seats would be made available. AW took the DTB through the list provided to eliminate certain options. The options then remaining on the table were:

- i. Option 5. South stand as terrace – which must be bottomed out and put to the membership and a decision made later;
- ii. Option 4. Temporary covers on east and north stand.
- iii. Option 1. South stand concourse.

The DTB found it difficult to find a business case for the other options.

ES explained that these were the best additional options that they could come up with, however he remains open to other suggestions.

AW noted that undersoil heating was another option.

3. Sponsorship survey

TB distributed the results of the sponsorship survey. The results showed that participants in the survey were against any sponsorship from arms dealers, tobacco companies, payday loan companies, political/religious organisations and the porn industry. The interesting points were in relation to sponsorship associated with alcohol and betting. Regarding alcohol, less than half were comfortable with such sponsorship appearing on shirts or in a stadium deal. Regarding betting, 34% were against any form of sponsorship.

Interpretation of the results was debated, with the DTB being unable to agree in the time available whether the response was sufficiently clear to decide whether the club should be willing to proceed with alcohol or betting as a primary sponsor. The open question was also raised as to what other forms of sponsorship should be considered.

JL urged DTB members to read the comments section of the survey as it contains useful opinions from the participants.

The general consensus of the DTB was that the participation from 346 people was a reasonable response. However, without the DTB being able to agree on an interpretation of the results, MB suggested that further analysis of the results may be required. This was agreed. MB's view was that the results demonstrate that participants do not consider alcohol or betting to be an appropriate primary sponsor; however this was not the interpretation shared by all DTB members.

IH stressed the importance of resolving this issue prior to commencing sponsorship negotiations with a company in a particular industry. Finding a potential sponsor and only then gauging supporters' opinion could result in reputational damage for the club. Making a deal can be problematic enough and so the club needs to be clear on what can or cannot be accepted. IH's opinion was that alcohol should be considered; however, he understood not considering betting. IH felt that publicly announcing that we were not going to consider a particular industry such as betting would weaken our hand when negotiating with suitors from other industries. IH also stressed that ethics differ from person to person and whilst one industry can be considered suitable the decision must be subjective, i.e. the 'Guinness stadium' or the 'WKD stadium' both being alcohol related but likely to be perceived differently.

NH felt that the DTB should not ignore the survey just because the results could not be interpreted so late in the evening, which was agreed.

Action: MB will review the survey results, as should all DTB members, and a vote will be sent within the week regarding sponsorship.

MB will also send the survey analysis that he had been referring to during the meeting as this was different from the report held by others at the table.

IH also asked for feedback on considering Middle East sponsors given their controversial image at the moment.

4. COO recruitment

RE and SM confirmed that there was a shortlist for the COO of 4 candidates. Without exception the candidates are asking about the future organisation of the FCB. A steer from MD and NH, who are leading the organisation workstream, was requested. MD reminded DTB members that a paper on this had been circulated a year previously, without comment, but that it was essentially for the COO to propose the shape of the FCB.