

Draft minutes of the Special General Meeting of the Wimbledon Football Club Supporters' Society (the Dons Trust) held at The Cherry Red Records Stadium, on Thursday 20 September 2012.

Apologies

Matthew Breach opened the meeting with apologies for absence from Dons Trust Board members Simon Bath and Kate Terriere, plus a number of other DT members who were unable to attend.

Minutes of the SGM held on 2 May 2012 (Agenda item 1)

The members unanimously passed the minutes of the SGM held on 2 May 2012 (Paper SGM0912-1).

Club Update (Agenda item 2)

Erik Samuelson gave an update on the New Stadium project, plans for future development at The Cherry Red Records Stadium, the recent consultation on raising additional finance, and the process for recruiting a new first team manager. The current position on our hopes to return to a new stadium in Wimbledon, with an initial 12,000 capacity was outlined. In the meantime, Erik was meeting local political leaders in Merton, Kingston and Wandsworth to keep them fully aware of developments. There was a lively discussion in which a number of questions were answered. Members were also introduced to Andrew Williams, who has been providing the Board with invaluable consultancy advice.

As regards the current stadium, Erik said that there were hopes that the East Stand might be able to be re-developed at a more minimalist level than had previously been anticipated. Discussions were taking place with the Sports Ground Safety Authority to explore options.

As a consequence of the uncertainty regarding the new stadium and the East Stand re-development, Erik said that the DT Board had decided to put the current consultation process on hold for the time being, until the situation was clearer in terms of the scale of any additional finance needed.

There was a discussion on next steps following the departure of Terry Brown and Stuart Cash. Following a proposal from a member, the meeting expressed its appreciation of Erik Samuelson's leadership, particularly over the previous few days. Erik then explained the process for recruiting a new manager, and the involvement of Harry Bassett in this. He confirmed that Harry was not a candidate for the post. To date there had been a very good response to the advert, which closes on Tuesday 25 September. There would be two rounds of interviews, with Harry accompanying Erik in the first. In response to a question, Erik said that the successful candidate would be expected to fully appreciate and buy into the history and culture of the Club.

Other questions included the selection criteria, performance managing the new managerial team, the position of other full-time footballing staff and the Club's football philosophy. Erik said that he and several Board members had visited the training ground the previous day, and spoken to the players and staff.

Matthew Breach said that the DT Board's role would be to provide oversight of the shortlisting and selection criteria, and would ratify the Football Club Board's recommendation for final appointment. Matthew confirmed that he now attended FCB meetings, and this was proving valuable as an initial sounding board on behalf of the DT Board.

Trust Update and Reports (Agenda item 3)

Following a 15 minute break, during which Zoe Linkson went home as she was feeling unwell, Matthew Breach said that members had been sent the AFC Wimbledon Action Plan, which detailed progress to date on specific aspects of the Plan. Rather than DT Board members reiterate what was covered in the Action Plan, this section of the meeting would discuss specific points led by Dave Growns and Nicole Hammond. He invited members to email DT Board members directly with any questions about items not specifically discussed at the meeting, email addresses are on the DT section of the website.

There was a question from the floor concerning an earlier proposal from Dave Boyle to encourage new blood onto the DT Board. Matthew said that the proposal had been agreed in principle by the Board, although how to best proceed was still under discussion. Dave was working with David Hall, of the new Secretariat, to explore options for next year's elections. In the meantime, Simon Bath had confirmed that he would not be standing at the forthcoming elections, so there would be at least one opportunity for a new member to join the Board. A question was raised about the possibility of the DT adapting its constitution to more closely mirror the Supporters Direct model. Matthew said this was also being examined in advance of the 2013 elections. Another question covered the frequency of elections, and a suggestion that elections might, in future, take place every two years. Matthew said that the Board would look at that idea, with the potential impact of a wholesale change of DTB members at once significantly lessened now as the FCB structure is working well.

Dave Growns said that the new Dons Trust website would launch in the following few days. Although it would form part of the official site structure, it would be hosted separately and not by Football League Interactive. Dave introduced David Reeves to the meeting, who had joined the Secretariat team and would take particular responsibility for communication between the Board and members.

Dave Growns said that the New Members Working Group recruitment drive would begin in November. Volunteers to help man the matchday stand would be very welcome. The group was also looking at how lapsed members might be encouraged to rejoin, and whether it would be possible to align DT membership renewal to a single time each year. It was suggested by a member that aligning DT membership renewal with season ticket renewal would be ideal. Other questions included the timeliness of DT announcements on the website, the possibility of an online combined DT/Club calendar and a suggestion for Junior Dons to have free membership of the DT. Matthew said these were helpful ideas and would be explored further.

Nicole Hammond introduced the next item by explaining that the Community Working Group (formerly the Survey Working Group) had been exploring the possibility of setting up a charitable trust to encompass DT activity within the local community. However, with the Community Football Scheme also looking to adopt charitable status, there was good sense in the two being aligned into one charity. Erik Samuelson said that establishing a charity made a lot of sense, particularly with the Club having been awarded a Football League Trust grant of £30,000 for sporting involvement in education, health and social inclusion. It would also enable us to reclaim VAT, would make sponsorship funding more attractive, and would further energise the CFS. Erik said that the only downside was a possible negative impact on fund-raising.

Clive Yelf outlined recent community activity, such as the Big Blast Band, in which the DT had worked with High Path Day Centre and Merton Music Foundation, 'Paint a Womble' in Morden Library, a planned Spelling Bee with Merton libraries and local primary schools, a mascot race to raise money for the liver Disease Foundation, 'Stadium Schools' which involved local school children carrying out football-related tasks and tests at the stadium, and 'Walking Football' for over 65s.

Nicole said that the proposal would be for community aims of the DT to be transferred to the new charitable trust. Questions from members included how funds would be ring-fenced for community work, and the role of the trustees. Erik said that there would be four trustees – two external (fans) and two from the Club, including the Chair who would have a casting vote.

A verbal proposal to proceed further with plans to establish a new charitable trust was informally agreed by the meeting. It was confirmed that the term 'community' would encompass Merton, Kingston and adjoining boroughs and counties, although it was agreed that one-off donations eg to Kit Aid to Africa would not be excluded. Clive Yelf added that it was important that 'community' should not be viewed as separate from the rest of the club. He said that the Community Working Group was open to ideas from anyone who had personal experiences of issues or needs that may offer community involvement opportunities.

Any Other Business (Agenda item 4)

Issues raised by members included:

NPower Facebook prize - Erik Samuelson said that the £20,000 won for the Club by fans last season would be spent on refurbishing the main bar and providing commentary for hearing-impaired people in the stadium.

New website - in a lively discussion, Erik Samuelson agreed that the FLi site experience was disappointing. He confirmed that a meeting had taken place with a number of concerned clubs and Football League Interactive, at which Geoff Seel and Chris Slavin had attended on behalf of the Club. An action plan to address the shortcomings was being urgently sought from FLi.

Geoff Seel said that, on the positive side, an Android app had now been launched, and an iPhone app submitted for approval. Erik confirmed that the Club was not paying FLi for the site.

Terry Brown and Stuart Cash - following a proposal from the floor, there was a unanimous appreciation from those present for the huge contribution Terry and Stuart had made to the Club over the past five years.