

SGM0914-1

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 May 2014.

Apologies

Dons Trust Chairman Matthew Breach opened the meeting with apologies for absence from a Sean McLaughlin, Moorad Choudhry and Iain McNay from the Dons Trust Board.s.

Minutes of the AGM held on 5 December 2013 (Agenda item 1)

Members unanimously passed the minutes of the previous AGM.

Consultation process for Season Ticket Pricing (Agenda item 2)

Mark Davis introduced this item. He said that at the last AGM, it was agreed that the Board would consult on any future season ticket pricing proposals. In the event this did not happen before 2014/15 season ticket prices had been announced, for which the Board offered its apologies.

However, the Club had undertaken a market survey on the potential impact on fans of a 15% increase in prices. Around 10% of respondents said that they would not renew their season tickets at this level of increase. The Club concluded that this response was sufficiently significant, consequently the price increase for 2014/15 was limited to 10% in all stadium areas, except for the YGT stand.

Mark said that retaining our League 2 status was challenging, as we were around 20th in the league player finance table. There were a variety of options we could apply right across the board in terms of ticket pricing, as well as considering other fundraising options. Club strategy was essentially underpinned by the fact that we are a fans club. The Club's planned return to a bigger stadium in Merton would also be an important consideration. This wider consultation would be the subject of discussion at the December AGM.

Board member Kris Stewart then asked for views on the recent season ticket prices increases. A number of issues arose from the resultant discussion:

- The price differential between the ChemFlow End and the YGT stand, and ensuring ticket holders for the latter couldn't enter the former. Kris acknowledged that the club was fully aware of this problem but essentially it was an operational, not a pricing, issue. A member was disappointed that last season the CF End was often jam-packed whilst the YGT Stand was half empty.
- The role of the Club within the local community and the costs associated with this. Kris said this was a key point if we were to move back to Merton, as we will need more funds to demonstrate our community commitment. A member expressed the view that if a 10% increase in season ticket prices directly resulted in our success in the London Senior Cup through better youth development, then that would be a wonderful impact.
- Another member asked, with the Club about 9th in terms of League 2 attendances, where did we sit in League 2 in terms of ticket pricing? Club Chief Executive Erik Samuelson said that it was not that simple, but we were about average in terms of prices. However he asked

members not to place too much weight on this, as many other factors came into play in terms of total funding.

- The decision to sell the best main stand seats at the full adult price. Kris said that there was a related issue of 'sold seats' remaining unfilled on match days, and a member also raised the issue of youth team members occupying seats.
- The importance of encouraging children to become lifetime fans and to involve them in the Club's future was also raised, as was the need to ensure that, when we moved to Merton, we had a policy to ensure the stadium was filled.
- A view was expressed that season ticket holders were 'penalised' by the offer of reduced entry to some Tuesday games. Erik said that in fact this had only occurred twice last season. The Club was of the view that this was a worthwhile policy, bearing in mind that most season ticket holders were going to miss some games anyway. Erik said that after 17.3 games a season ticket holder effectively got their money back.

Other points discussed included:

- A member's view that it was more important to focus on the We Are Wimbledon Fund as a primary means of fundraising and not to 'alienate' fans with ticket price increases.
- Ensuring that absent fans with tickets in the main stand let the Club know in advance of their intentions to miss matches. Erik explained how the club already emails all season ticket holders before each match. An analysis of absentees indicated that around 100-120 regularly returned their tickets.
- The issuing of seats to other club scouts. Erik said that this was a reciprocal arrangement, but he was keen to review which seats they were allocated.
- DT Board member Jane Lonsdale said that when Nicole Hammond was on the Board she had led a whole raft of consultation based on a number of options or stories, which had resulted in the development of the Club's strategy. The Board would like to adopt the same approach with the ticket pricing consultation. It was important to consult with everybody and to aim to have a response to take to the December AGM.

Members Resolution: Club Representatives proposed by John Stembridge & Gerry Hever: "To instruct the Dons Trust Board to devise and propose by the next SGM a process whereby two Dons Trust members are selected to act as club representatives at each match day" (Agenda item 3)

John Stembridge put forward this resolution to members. DT Board Chairman Matthew Breach said that it had been discussed at a recent Board meeting, during which Board members expressed their agreement in principle; however the issue was how to make it work.

Matthew said that the Board was happy for a vote in favour, and to take it forward. At home games it was easy, the problem arose with away games. There were limitations on complimentary tickets, and hospitality, as well as a dress code. Also some clubs do not recognise the DTB as 'owners'. It was also important that Board members had opportunities to network with other boards. However, the Board undertook to come up with a proposal for the next SGM.

After a further short discussion, a show of hands indicated that about one fifth of those present would be interested in being club representatives. Jane Lonsdale summarised the Board's view by saying that the idea was to get DT members more involved, and to show that the Club is owned by its fans.

The resolution was carried by a show of hands with the vast majority in favour, 6 against and 1 abstention. Proxy votes received were 40 in favour, and 1 against.

Report from the Football Club Board (Agenda Item 4)

1. Deduction of three points

There was a lengthy discussion about the incident last season, which had resulted in the Club being deducted three points by the Football League for fielding an ineligible player. Members expressed concern that this was the second such occasion since the Club was re-formed, and wanted reassurance that it could not happen in the future.

DT Deputy Chairman David Grows, who had investigated the incident on behalf of the DTB, gave a detailed explanation of what had occurred, and the subsequent recommendations he had made to both Boards. He said that the Club and DTB had communicated this in detail to all fans at the time. But he stressed that it had not just been a situation of someone making a mistake, as the circumstances around the office accommodation and sickness/holiday absences were also relevant. He confirmed that Erik Samuelson for the FCB had taken away the recommendations for detailed consideration and implementation.

Erik said that, as he had written in a matchday programme article, as Chief Executive he was ultimately responsible for the error. He confirmed that the recommendations would be put in place, including a tighter process, use of the FL extranet, and moving some staff to a new portakabin to improve the overall office environment and remove the risks of error caused by being overcrowded. Erik said that people had to accept that enhanced office support would cost more money. He added that some clubs would like the FL to explore whether it was an appropriate penalty to deduct points for administrative errors.

Other points discussed included:

- The feasibility of an online process of player registration. Erik said that ultimately it was individual clubs' responsibility, however he would be suggesting to the FL that a system could be set up to enable clubs to put team sheets online, that could be checked against player registration data.
- The huge transition from non-league to FL club. Was the FCB comfortable that the Club's administration was set up to FL club standards? In reply, Erik commented that other club secretaries the FCB had spoken to had acknowledged the error could have just as easily happened to them. Almost all point deductions had arisen in League 2 clubs run on a relative shoestring.
- The robustness of the Club's succession planning and processes in the event that key administrative staff left the club. Erik agreed that it was time to revisit the process manual to minimise the risk of key knowledge being lost when people left. Similarly, how robust was the Club's IT systems? Erik felt that they were sufficiently so.
- The unusual nature of Jake Nicholson's contract. Erik explained the nature of the multiplicity contract in question.

2. New stadium update

Erik reported on the latest developments, including the status of the inspector's report, the planned public exhibitions and consultation process, and possible milestone dates should everything proceed smoothly. In that event, the club might potentially be looking to begin season 2017/18 in the new stadium. In response to a member question, Erik said that in the event that the Galliard deal fell through, the Club would consult with members before proceeding any further.

3. Loan player issue

In response to a question raised by a member, there was a discussion about a player on loan to the Club last season who had previously received bans for racially abusing an opponent. Their view was that the individual should not have been brought into the Club. Matthew Breach said that the matter had been discussed with the FCB, and that both the FCB and Neal Ardley had been aware at the outset. He clarified that the matter involved two incidents in one game.

Following checks on character references, the FCB had been satisfied that the loan should proceed. Most of the DTB, but not all, had agreed that it was a pragmatic decision. He confirmed that looking ahead, there was not a formal policy to cover this kind of issue, a matter that would be examined further with the intention of clearly articulating our policies in future. One such issue of this kind was whether or not the Club should pay players' agents. The policy had been not to do this, however things had moved on and it had to be recognised that virtually every club now pays agents. This was legal, but morally perhaps more questionable. The DTB had agreed with the FCB that in future exceptional circumstances it would be deemed acceptable. Nonetheless, individual members of the Board were opposed to paying agents; Kris Stewart explained to the meeting why he personally was not in favour.

In response to a further question, Jane Lonsdale said that Supporters Direct had been approached for advice and they were happy to provide the Club with assistance to tighten up its governance procedures.

More generally, Matthew Breach said that the DTB felt that the Trust could be more proactive in its campaigning role. Recent examples of effective campaigning were over the FA 'B teams' proposal and strategic loan deals. He said that the Board would look at introducing a suitable process to support this in future that would avoid any 'last minute' responses and enable more strategic oversight. Erik added that however much preparatory work was done, the Club and Trust would also have to be prepared to be flexible when circumstances demanded it.

4. DTB minutes

A member asked if Board meeting minutes could be posted on the DT website more promptly than at present. Matthew agreed that this had been an issue, but the Board was seeking to get minutes posted within a week of the meeting at which they were agreed.

5. Financial Fair Play

A member asked what the system was for monitoring FFP, and how it impacted upon clubs with small gates. In response, it was explained that the FFP calculation was based on wages paid plus transfer fees, set against a complicated measure that is closer to club profit than turnover. It was permissible to spend 55% of that sum. In 2013/14 the Club spent 81% of the allowable funds.

6. EPPP audit update

Erik reported on the recent second audit, for which the result was awaited.

Any Other Business (Agenda Item 6)

Away support – it was suggested by a member that the Trust should recognise those fans who attended all away matches, travelling fantastic distances in support of the team. It was agreed to look at this further, with possibilities including recognition on the club website or in the matchday programme.

Alan Bennett – it was suggested by a member that Alan might usefully write articles for the programme. Erik said that this had been discussed by the FCB and was certainly open for future consideration.

The meeting closed at 10.15pm