

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 18 September 2014.

Apologies

Dons Trust Chairman Matthew Breach opened the meeting with apologies for absence from a number of Dons Trust members, and from the Board: Moorad Choudhry, Zoe Linkson, Sean McLaughlin, Iain McNay and Kris Stewart.

Minutes of the SGM held on 20 May 2014 (Agenda item 1)

It was noted that some members had offered additional views on the ticket pricing item (Item 2 on the 20 May 2014 Agenda). Subject to this the minutes of the May SGM were agreed by those present.

Football Club Report (Agenda item 2)

This item was led by Club Chief Executive Erik Samuelson.

New Stadium: Erik explained the process underpinning the Club's anticipated joint planning application with developer Galliard and the subsequent timetable of events. Should everything run smoothly, it was hoped that this would culminate in the first shovels hitting the Plough Lane earth in autumn 2015.

Although the Club had an ambition to begin season 2016/17 in the new stadium, Erik stressed that there were many hurdles yet to overcome. He said that the Club would next make an announcement once the planning application was submitted to Merton Council.

Q: Was it possible that either the GLA or the Government could get involved in the planning process?

Erik said that both bodies could potentially get involved; if so, the most likely reason would be the need to meet requirements governing the flood plain.

Q: Is the greyhound stadium still a rival?

Erik said there appeared to be no planning application for a greyhound stadium in the pipeline; the more likely scenario was that objections would be raised by the other party to the Galliard/Club application. Erik stressed the importance of as many people as possible writing to Merton Council in favour of our proposals.

Q: What is the Club's current commitment to Kingsmeadow?

Erik said that we have a 125 year lease. There were a number of options to consider about the future of Kingsmeadow, but no conclusions had been reached yet. We were in regular contact with Kingstonian. In due course the Club and DT Board may need to come back to members on this subject.

In response to further questions, Erik confirmed that Kingsmeadow was not key to the funding of the new stadium; that there were no significant Football League obligations to improve the current stadium, and that the possibility of a move to a new stadium would enable us to apply to the FL for further dispensations in respect of major changes eg improving the lux level of the floodlights.

Erik explained the current situation with regard to potential building on the Kingsmeadow site. Being Metropolitan Open Land, there were restrictions. There was also a potential issue of the odour from the Thames Water plant to resolve before houses could be built on the site.

Finally, Erik confirmed that the Club and Board would work to ensure that the best interests of Ks were fully considered in any future proposals for the site.

Recent and forthcoming Franchise matches

Erik said that following the pitch invasion at the end of the Capital One Cup game in North Buckinghamshire, the Club had received a letter from the FA regarding our plans to avoid any repetition. He explained the thinking behind the new fans register which would be put into effect for ticket sales to the JPT game.

Report from Dons Trust Board (Agenda Item 3)

Board organisational structure

Matthew Breach and DTB member Mark Davis gave an update on the DTB's work to improve its organisational structures. It was explained that the Board was close to implementing changes that would introduce a more professional approach to Board business, in particular being more proactive and strategic in its focus.

In summary, the DTB would meet monthly as an executive board, at which members would review a short FCB report. Most time would be devoted to Trust business eg strategy, community, governance etc. In addition, quarterly joint meetings would be held with the DTB and FCB to discuss eg the annual accounts, transfer window business and the Club budget. The FCB would continue to meet weekly to discuss operational issues, but the current, more formal monthly FCB meeting with a DTB member present would be replaced by a formal monthly FCB meeting with a set agenda that would discuss strategic issues affecting the Club.

There were few constitutional impacts arising from these proposals, other than to propose that an FCB member could, in future, attend DTB meetings in a non-executive capacity.

Proposals, in the form of a paper that would include related constitutional changes if appropriate, will be presented to members at the December AGM. If agreed, a trial period would begin in January 2015.

Matthew also explained that the Board was keen to increase the amount of informal interaction with members using an online tool, for example in following up events such as SGMs or holding Q&A sessions after matches.

Q: Has a roles and responsibility strategy been established for the new stadium?

Matthew said that Board had been looking at this, including how any initial strategic model should evolve over time.

Members' Matchday Representation

Matthew Breach apologised, on behalf of the Board, that it would not be possible to discuss members' matchday representation at this meeting, due to the absence of Board members Zoe Linkson and Kris Stewart who were leading on this. It would be revisited at the next General Meeting.

Ticket Pricing

Mark Davis recapped on the topic of Ticket pricing from the last SGM. He apologised that not a lot had happened since then. However, volunteers were being sought for the Ticket Pricing Working Party, and there had been some responses to that request. The hope had been to bring proposals to this meeting, but consultation had to take place before setting a budget for next season. Mark said that it may make sense to split the review process into two, looking separately at season ticket prices and matchday pricing. In response to further questions, Mark said that the review would be all-encompassing, including the future of 5 year season tickets. At the heart of the debate would be defining the economic relationship the Club has with its fans - in other words pricing principles rather than the details. It would also be important to separate out issues around our present stadium capacity and the different challenges a new stadium would bring, where capacity would be less often reached. He also confirmed that any survey of fans would be to around 1000 people, rather than all season ticket holders, and that the consultation would be a broader conversation beyond questions such as "how much more would you be prepared to pay?"

Any Other Business (Agenda Item 4)

Q: What is the cost involved in producing a DT membership card each year, and is a card necessary?

Membership Secretary John Stembidge explained that the Trust paid less than cost price for the cards, which was anyway negligible. He agreed that the time involved in issuing the cards was considerable, but the Board felt that members should receive something tangible for their subscription.

Jane Lonsdale responded to a question about the potential to increase the tangible benefits of DT membership, by explaining more about Webjam, the online collaboration tool mentioned earlier by Matthew Breach. The intention was to use it to interact with members and volunteers, including circumstances when communication ahead of other fans made sense. Webjam was produced by a local company and would be free of charge to the DT. The hope was to trial the tool at the October and November DTB meetings and introduce it to all members within the next 12 months. Jane confirmed that it was thought that there were currently eight members not online, and that the Trust would ensure it communicated appropriately with them. In reply to a further question, Matthew Breach said that a DT member discount on merchandise had not been examined recently, although some years ago a potential VAT liability had been identified if discounts were made available, which could cost the Club around £10,000 pa. Matthew said that the matchday representation proposal agreed at the last SGM would be one potential benefit in future.

Q: What is the Club's view of season ticket renewals and attendances so far this season?

Erik Samuelson said that ST renewals were around 200 down on the previous season. People who had not renewed had been contacted by the Club, and very few had said price was an issue. Regarding attendances, Tuesday matches were around 400 down on last season, with the Burton game being particularly disappointing. But we needed to start winning more games! After the Burton game the Club had emailed all season ticket holders, PLC shareholders, DT members and online ticket buyers to encourage more people to come to the next home games.

Q: Had the recent funds raised from fans been spent, and would there be a further injection of funds?

Erik said that all the funds raised by the WAWF had been spent on increasing the playing budget, enabling Matt Tubbs and Bayo Akinfenwa to join. The Club was very grateful for Mike Richardson's continued generous financial support.

Q: The current DT constitution was no longer fit for purpose; what was the Board doing to bring it into line with newer models?

Matthew Breach said that the Board would be proposing some relatively minor changes to the constitution at the AGM. He said that the Board had not forgotten about the issue, however it was not a top priority at the moment.

The meeting closed at around 9pm.