

**Draft Minutes of the SGM of the Wimbledon Football Club Supporters' Society (the Dons Trust) held on 31 August 2017 at the Cherry Red Records Stadium Kingsmeadow KT1 3PB**

**Board Members present:**

Matt Breach (Chair) (MB)

Mark Davis (MD)

Colin Dipple (CD)

Roger Evans (RE)

Tim Hillyer (TH)

Jane Lonsdale (JL)

Sean McLaughlin (SM)

**In attendance**

Erik Samuelson (ES)

*Approximately 75-100 DT recorded and posted on Webjam and live posting*

**1. Apologies and Introduction**

Chairman Matt Breach (MB) opened the meeting noting that apologies had been received from David Gowns, Tom Brown and Ivor Heller

**2. Approval of minutes**

Members voted in favour of approving the minutes from the SGM held on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

**3. Stadium Update**

MB announced, in advance of a press release going out the same evening that AFC Wimbledon are looking to recruit a COO to assist the executive team to manage their increased workload in light of the build of the new stadium. The new recruit will report to ES and will take over responsibility for some aspects of the club's day-to-day running from him, as well as planning for the move to the New Plough Lane. The search for the new COO will be led by the DTB.

MB read out the press release before opening the meeting for a stadium update and Q&A session with members.

**Q1: Is the Section 106 closer to being signed?**

ES explained that there is a lot of paperwork behind it; five documents with five appendices. Most major documents are complete, including Section 106 itself, 78 planning conditions, the Development Agreement between AFC Wimbledon and Galliard, the transfer of land document and the phasing plan. Last week AFC Wimbledon had long debates and discussions with their lawyers. On Tuesday ES spoke with Galliard and agreed everything that was needed. As it stands, there is

nothing left of any significance to be agreed. There is a meeting next Wednesday to finalise and the ambition remains to sign the document in September.

Q2: Does AFC Wimbledon own the land for the New Plough Lane by freehold or leasehold?

MB said that the last we heard we will get the land by freehold. ES explained that the intention is to own the land by freehold as Merton Council did not want to hold the land. The sale of Kingsmeadow will not be complete until AFC Wimbledon own the New Plough Lane by freehold.

Q3 from TH: Do AFC Wimbledon need to formally go to the council again and what is the timescale after the agreement is complete?

ES explained that the last time the club spoke with council, there was nothing in there that they couldn't deal with so there doesn't need to be another formal planning committee. In terms of timescale, if they sign on 30<sup>th</sup> September, there is one last possibility of a challenge and, should there be a challenge, an accompanying judicial review. There are six weeks in which people can make a challenge and there are two possible cases for challenges. Would then cost the time it takes for the judge to make a decision.

If the contractors were to start demolishing the site on 11<sup>th</sup> October, it's estimated it would take 6-8 months to clear and then remediate the site. They would then be able to start building mid-June and we are still assured can be built for the start of the 19/20 season.

MB told members that the DTB have recently undertaken an exercise of collating everything that members and fans may be interested in contributing to, and having input in, in terms of stadium design. The DTB have created a long list of everything that it is possible for the fans to be consulted over and sorted it in a logical way, putting the things it is possible to consult fans on in a timeline so that the DTB can do selective engagement throughout the process. This process is likely to start soon with top-level things to get a feel for what people think i.e. asking questions such as should the new stadium be a community-hub over a money-making machine, before getting into more of the details.

Q4: For clarification, is it the case that there is no cost to an individual who makes a challenge but if a judge take and the challenge is overturned, then the challenger could potentially incur a huge cost?

ES said that he believes there would be a trivial cost to making a challenge that is overturned and the cost is not significant enough to put most people off.

Q5: In terms of consulting on design elements, will this be with DT members only or also including the wider AFC Wimbledon fan base?

MB said that it is likely to vary depending on question they are asking as to whose views they will ask for.

Q6: When is the plan to move onto Phase 2 and when will there be a finished stadium?

ES explained that it is not possible to answer definitively at this stage. It will be a decision to be made by the club in the future as to whether it is worth investing in a bigger stadium or the team. He added that the television income from the Football league is split 80% for the Championship, 12% for League 1 and 8% for League 2.

Q7: The potential of the safe standing movement has grown recently, is this something that will be possible at the New Plough Lane?

ES explained that the club has previously received £750k worth of grants and if the new ground was not all-seater these would have to be repaid when Kingsmeadow is sold. He explained that he doesn't think he should be the one to decide to have terraces or not but that it is a decision for members and the DTB. He explained that there should be a menu of options put in front of fans outlining what it is possible to do with the money available. The plan is to start building an all-seater stadium and delay the final decision for 6-9 months on whether a terrace is worth the financial penalty. It is important to be aware that a terrace is not necessarily a cheaper option than seating. The South Stand, for example will be fitted out with relocatable seats which are readily available on the market and therefore currently cheaper than the cost of installing a terrace.

Q8: What attitude are the club taking towards the pitch at the new stadium?

ES explained that there is a decision to be made about the quality of pitch we put in at the new stadium. He explained that if we go ahead with the plan to expand the stadium, the North end of the stadium is being built so that it can be taken out in the middle for cranes to be bought inside stadium and it is not yet certain whether this can be done without ruining the pitch so we may need to think of a compromise. Desso pitches cost roughly £750k - £1m. The pitch at the new stadium will be at least as good as the current KM pitch, if not better, and we are aiming UEFA compliant pitch size.

Q9: The contractors have promised that they could build the new stadium in 14-months is that correct?

ES explained that the reason for this is that they are only really constructing the permanent West stand, where there is the hospitality block will be, the rest of the stadium is relocatable. This makes it not as big a job as fully constructing a whole stadium. When the club first went out to tender we were surprised that the winning tenderers said they could build it quicker, however it is possible for the building of stadium and the fitting out to overlap if running out of time; it will be less efficient and cost more but would save a couple of months.

Q10: Does the club expect a big response to community shares?

ES explained that this was something we have discussed some time ago but the government changed the rules since then meaning that it is possible that it is not now the most efficient way of raising money. The club are currently looking into the option of crowdfunding. With regards to finance; Galliard is paying for a significant chunk, the club also have money from the sale of Kingsmeadow and the club also has an option to take out a loan. We can afford to build the stadium on that alone with a little spare. The crowdfunding would therefore be about raising a certain amount of money in order to put in additional options that the fans decide on i.e. a terrace, extending the bar, building a permanent West stand etc. The club would put out the various options to DT members, with costs sought from contractors, to decide what we would like to do if we can raise the amount of money needed to do it.

Q11: Notoriously contractors go over budget and much hinges on quality of partnership with the contractor. Have the club got a relationship with the contractor which we are confident in and which can deliver the stadium on time and within budget?

ES said that he agreed that the relationship we have with the contractors is fundamental. He explained that of the final two contractors we short-listed to, they had an almost identical price for the work but we opted for Scotts because the people felt like a better cultural fit with the club; they understood the AFC Wimbledon culture better. ES added he is convinced we can work with them.

Q12: How much impact and influence will Galliard have on the AFC Wimbledon contractors?

ES explained that there are two contractors and Galliard have their own. For the whole site to work well they will need to be good neighbours.

Q13: Will Dons Trust members be able to have regular site visits once the construction of the stadium starts?

ES explained that he doesn't know the answer to this as of yet. The club have already agreed with Galliard to mount a webcam by the site in order to monitor progress. We have also been talking about the potential of having a drone, however this may not be allowed due to the sensitivity of a neighbouring nearby site. AFC Wimbledon will communicate as much as we can with members on the progress of construction through showing live pictures, although we are not yet sure how practical it will be to take members on the site.

Q14: What is the relationship with the local community around the new stadium? A few people had objected initially, although most local people were ok. What is the relationship with neighbours like now and how will they be managed throughout the process of the build?

ES explained that part of development agreed included the appointment of a Public Liaison Officer and this role includes issuing monthly newsletters about the progress of the whole development site to neighbours which includes updates on issues such as traffic etc.

We will also need to do a communications campaign. David Lloyd chairs the Club's advisory communication team. We have agreed to have two hoardings on site with Galliard. We are also talking to local people and have invited Rosena Allin-Khan, MP for Tooting, and councillors for Wandsworth to come to games at Kingsmeadow. We are also talking to councillors in the ward opposite (Earlsfield) and with Wimbledon MP Stephen Hammond. We are therefore getting the appropriate people on board with the project.

#### **4. EFL update**

MB explained that it was the first time that a member of the DTB had represented AFC Wimbledon at the EFL AGM in Portugal. In previous years, either ES or David Charles has attended however the EFL has rebranded the AGM this year to be an 'owners and chief exec conference'. The club therefore decided this year to raise the profile of AFC Wimbledon as a fan-owned club at the conference.

The AGM was held over 2 days and started with an introduction from the EFL in which they provided an update covering:

1. Results from a survey of all clubs conducted last year asking what is good/bad about the EFL. AFC Wimbledon submitted a response; however, less than half of clubs replied. Only positive community activities EFL do. Negatives focused on issues around financial distribution, lack of diversity, future concerns about ownership etc.

2. The EFL Foundation should be applauded for the work they do, however don't advertise the good they do as much as they could.
3. Not taking up Sky option. Already sold international television rights for the next five years.

MB then attended the EFL League 1 sub-meeting in which they discussed the whole game solution dead from their point of view. The EFL are keen on taking full-time referees down to League 1.

There was a speech from Andy Ambler, head of professional game relations at the FA. He has offered to talk at supporters groups and MB explained that there could be the option to invite him to speak at a DT meeting if members were interested in hearing him speak. DT members raised their hands in general approval of the suggestion to hear him speak at an upcoming meeting.

The EFL has not yet committed to video referees, however it is expected these will be introduced in due course. The format of the Checkatrade trophy was confirmed to include u21 teams which the club voted against.

A new regulation has been introduced preventing clubs/club officials from "unfairly criticising" other clubs/club officials. MB noted that the AFC Wimbledon delegation had raised concerns around how such a rule would view our stance with regards to Milton Keynes, however the EFL legal representative confirmed this would not be an issue.

MB noted that there was also a discussion around the 'Rooney rule', where any interview shortlists relating to a coaching position must include at least one BAME candidate. Last year a trial was run in the Championship, in which of the nine instances the rule should have been applied three clubs ignored entirely. Of the remaining six, three clubs appointed BAME candidates. The EFL have agreed to carry on the pilot and implement across all leagues. There was also a vote on strengthening the sanctions against clubs who choose to ignore it, however this proposal was rejected.

MB opened up the meeting for questions from DT members regarding the EFL update.

Q1: Is there now law in the UK stating that have to make sure BAME people have to be given the opportunity to apply for a job?

MB said that legally there is but it is the application of it. If don't enforce policy then easy to come up with interview shortlist of only white people. Rate of pick up poor.

Q2: Referees are always a contentious issue but as a fan would like to see referees factor in enjoyment of game and the desire for fans to watch faster flowing football. If the referees were to focus more on enjoyment of game and get more flow into the game then that would be a real step forward.

MB said that he can't disagree and part of Andy Ambler's sphere of influence is to get those thoughts back to EFL.

Q3: A few friends in Wombles Down Under have been experiencing problems with iFollow.

MB said that iFollow was talked a lot about and they said a lot about positives and agreed that once the technology is debugged then the concept is good. However, MB conceded that the roll out of the technology had been done too early and not very effectively. The club would like fans

who have experience problems with iFollow to send all the information and details of their issues through to club so that we can then pass them onto Football League in one go.

ES added that he'd asked Chris Slavin, the club journalist, to canvas people for feedback on iFollow. The feedback showed that issues were not too widespread, and indeed generally positive. There were, however, places where the app doesn't seem to work, and a number of recent Radio WDON broadcasts have been cut off. Chris is investigating this and will put out a good practice guide and a summary of questions asked of the EFL and answers received back in due course.

Q4: Was there any discussion at these meetings about rebranding the Football League to the English football league?

MB stated that a minority thought it was a bad idea, primarily due to brand recognition issues in Asia. As a group of 72 clubs, one club one vote. With only three fan-owned clubs and the rest aiming to make as much money as possible, that view generally wins.

Q5: Was anything mentioned on artificial pitches?

MB said that it was not specifically discussed although the FA are likely to mandate that it necessary to have a plastic pitch running around the outside of the pitch. This is currently something that is being looked into and we may be likely to revisit the matter at some point in the next year or so.

ES added that it was fractious when it came up for vote a few years ago. Conference/national league had been leaned on to allow artificial on understanding league 1 and 2 would then do but then they decided not to do so. A lot of clubs feeling under pressure to do something. Support as soon as PFA and MLA are in agreement.

Q6: Was anything mentioned about implementing goal-line technology at Division 1 level?

MB explained that they are reasonably pleased about what has been happening at Premier League level in terms of goal-line technology. However it is too expensive to implement in the other football divisions at the moment.

Q7: On the Checktrade Trophy – previously stance against. Encouraging people to boycott?

MB explained that this will need to be discussed at the next board meeting about how far to put messages out there.

## **5. Survey Results**

Membership engagement survey at beginning of year and presented results of what fans want more/less of etc.

CD ran through the background and methodology of the membership survey conducted towards the beginning of 2017. He noted that 75% of current members see the most important benefit as owning their club, although only 1/3 of members reported that they were satisfied with benefits they currently receive. As a result the DTB is currently undergoing a process of looking at additional benefits which could be offered to DT members, particularly younger members.

He added that the results from the membership survey, as well as those from the more recent ethical sponsorship and elections surveys will be added onto Webjam shortly.

## 6. Final Q&A

Q1: There was a policy that fees were always disclosed if allowed to. Is that still policy?

ES commented that the only transfer fee in public knowledge is Will Manion as it was determined at a tribunal. Otherwise the club is rarely allowed to disclose fees as the other club asks for confidentiality as part of the deal.

Q2: Why isn't rugby, a national sport, not shown in the KM bar?

MB replied that a lot of people want to see England game if on but a lot of people to say they don't enjoy watching rugby. Generally we try to split between bars when on and in general more people want to watch football. We intend to, in general, go with the majority of people want to watch.

Q3: How do you know that?

ES clarified that it is not possible to show different things in the different bars. It is left to the people running the bars and short of doing a survey to ask what people want to watch it is up to them.

Q4: It was a surprise to see the ground so heavily rebranded as Chelsea Ladies. Will we do anything about our signage as AFC Wimbledon?

ES: The reason the Chelsea ladies signs catch the eye is because they are better placed. He has spoken to them about the signage. They intend that the back bar will be their matchday bar and will make the signage to say so on the match day. However, we will continue as if this is our ground even after ownership passes to Chelsea.

Q5: The special general meeting was cancelled in April and it was not advertised on the official AFC Wimbledon site. This is where the majority of people take in their information about the club and club news. Could there be more clarity as to how DT members access and receive information?

MB commented that this is a Dons Trust matter. Dons Trust members are provided with information via Webjam, emails from the Trust and on the Trust website. The Trust aims to make sure everything important is copied onto the club website although this is not intended to be main line of communication to members, it is meant to be a backup. He apologised that the message had not got through to some members.

Q6: more emails from the Dons Trust should come out – emailed out survey helpful but cancellation of April meeting not emailed.

MB agreed that moving a date of a general meeting is worthy of an email and oversight on the Trust's part.

Q7: The club has a number of creative people in its fan base but we do not utilise them as well as we could do in terms of social media?

ES agreed that more can always be done. There has been an increase in use of social media by club over the last year and the club has seen increased Twitter and Facebook following. If people have ideas for doing more the club is very happy to hear their suggestions.

Q8: At the Sutton away game last season, the number of tickets for away fans was not sufficient. There was a ballot of season ticket holders. If this were to happen again would it be possible to take into consideration the length of time that a fan has held a season ticket in the allocation of tickets?

ES admitted that the club arranged the Sutton game badly and would not take the same approach again. The club has been transferring multiple databases onto CRM to have better understanding of the history of individual fans, however he wants to avoid going down the road of determining 'who is the better fan'. Had a small number of emails about how should be done and generally the method suggested was always the best option for that individual. The club, with the new CRM, now have a better record of everyone's involvement. Everyone as a Dons Trust member ought to be on CRM and should formalise this by logging in and registering if not already done so. The club has made a YouTube video about how to register. Key thing in future is that everyone on the CRM, this will include Season Ticket holders, Dons Trust members, Dons Draw, Fans Register, has to register if want to buy ticket for a game.

Q9: Has registered but unable to buy tickets for Brentford game online. The system said that they were not recognised so wouldn't let him do it.

ES: On the site there is link to a helpline so ring office. Or come to club and get to show why not working.

Q10: The match against Milton Keynes worked out well last time in terms of there being no issues at the ground. Does the club have any plans to do things differently this time?

ES: The club has asked for the game not to be on Saturday and the arrangements will be the same as last year. It is anticipated that a similar number of away fans will attend, and slightly fewer on the home side.

Q11: When I have purchased away/coach tickets in the past I have always done so from the concessions window to avoid a booking fee. Will these purchases be on the new CRM system?

ES replied that a match ticket is bought in the office then it should be on the system.

*Meeting closed 21:09*