

Dons Trust Board Meeting

Thursday 9 January 2014

The Cherry Red Records Stadium

President's Lounge



MINUTES – redacted version

Members:

Matthew Breach (MB)
David Grows (DG)
Kris Stewart (KS)
Mark Davis (MD)
Sean McLaughlin (SMc)
Iain McNay (IMc)
Zoe Linkson (ZL)
Jane Lonsdale (JL)

Invited:

Erik Samuelson (ES)
Ivor Heller (IH)
David Charles (DC)
Nigel Higgs (NH)
David Hall (DH) – Dons Trust Secretary
Andrew Williams (AW)
Andy Mytom (AM)
Derek Wilson (DW)
Michael Friel (MF)
Kevin Owens (KO)

Apologies:

Moorad Choudhry (MC)

David Reeves (DR) – Secretariat
Eric Page (EP) – Secretariat

Ref	Item	Action
	The meeting began at 19:00.	
1.0	Presentation from Stadium Architects	
1.1	MB introduced AW, AM, DW, MF and KO to the DTB and invited them to make their presentation on the new stadium proposals.	
1.2	AM / DW presented the architects' latest 3 dimensional plans using the monitor. Some key elements within the current plans include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Initial design is based on a 20,000 seat stadium. This is a gross figure and when the seats taken up by wheelchair viewing platforms, media etc. are taken into account the overall seat count as currently designed is 18,464.Ticket entry is from the North stand and East stand elevation, and Southeast corner and Southwest corner.Changing rooms are located beneath home support in the Southwest corner.It's proposed that on Level 2 Hospitality, in the Southwest	

	<p>corner, views are created from the concourse onto the pitch.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheelchairs numbers have been established by guidance in Accessible Stadia, which provides 159 wheelchairs spaces. In addition there are 99 companion seats. • The stadium has been designed to maximise crowd atmosphere. Max Fordham (services) and Momentum Engineering (structures) have reviewed acoustic, lighting, materials and layout to maximise the impact of environment. The floodlights have been engineered to light only the pitch. Each light will be aimed and focused with little overspill to residential areas and no reflection off the roof. However, although the beam will be focused on the pitch, the light source will still be visible when the lights are on. This will provide an identity for the stadium and act as a beacon for approaching fans. • The outside of the West stand is facing the National Grid site so the external materials will take into account the fact that few people will see them compared with the other elevations. • The East elevation is to be fully constructed in Phase 1 so that residents will see, from day one, what the outside of the finished stadium will look like. • Movement Strategies have been developing crowd modelling of the stadium and surrounding areas to makes sure that fans can enter and leave safely in the required time frame. This exercise will continue when results of matchday surveys are collated. 	
1.3	<p>AW then explained that having designed the larger stadium the next stage was to deconstruct it and show the position with the smaller capacity of 11,000. Some key considerations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions around scale of permanent structure – how many seats are put in initially • Issues around upfront costs to consider • Some key choices will be later on as stadium increases, e.g. whether to put boxes on south stand – or general admission • The pitch construction is good but not designed for 2 or 3 games per week without further investment 	
1.4	<p>AW then explained the next steps. The first step is the Planning Inspectorate investigation. The public meetings are due to be held during w/c 20 January. The overall site is expected to include the Volante site. This is not included in the current designs. AW indicated he expects a decision from the Inspector around April. The Inspector’s decision is whether or not to support the council’s proposal to designate the use of the site as being for sporting intensification. AW said this designation would allow its use as a football stadium.</p>	

1.5	Subject to this AW explained that the second step would be to submit a planning application at some time between April and June. Work to date on the stadium design has far exceeded what is required for an outline planning application.	
1.6	Subject to that step three would be to prepare detailed designs for the tendering exercise. This would take several months. There are options whether to have one contractor or more for the whole site. AW indicated his preference for one. The construction sequencing will be important but construction could be 12 – 18 months from a cleared site so might be available for opening in 2017/18 season. Or, being cautious, 2018/19.	
1.7	AW was asked what the position would be if the Inspector does not support our required designation for the site. AW explained that Galliard will retain ownership of the site and such a decision would not preclude our submitting an application but would adversely affect its chances of success.	
1.8	MD asked what the position is with regard to the residential units on the site. AW explained that the sales process will reflect that there will be a stadium there and valuations have been calculated accordingly. ZL asked about access across the internal housing courtyards. AW indicated the courtyards are likely to be enclosed.	
1.9	AW was asked about planning timescales to build up to 20,000. AW explained that planning authorities generally include a 5 year timescale for such ‘reserve matters’ but in practice timing will largely be up to club.	
1.10	<i>This item has been redacted from the published minutes.</i>	
1.11	IMc asked about when we next have to raise some funds. AW explained that further funds will probably need to be drawn down when the full planning application is submitted. ES explained that for AFC Wimbledon we would be looking to do the share issue last. He said the process of drafting materials to support selling the naming rights is now underway – it is better for a sponsor’s name to be associated early before an alternative name becomes embedded.	
1.12	KS asked about the pitch size. AW explained this would meet current FIFA standards. The distance and height of the first row in relation to the pitch is about the same as the The Cherry Red Records Stadium.	
1.13	MB thanked the architects’ team for their presentation who then left. The meeting reconvened after a short break.	

2.0	Apologies for absence and draft minutes of last meeting	
2.1	Apologies for absence were received from Moorad Choudhry (MC), David Reeves (DR) and Eric Page (EP)	
2.2	ES and MB said they had some comments on the draft December meeting minutes, and agreed to pass these onto DH, who would collate them for final approval.	ES/MB/ DH

3.0	Football Club Board Update	
3.1	<p>ES took the Board through the January FCB report. ES and IH explained about the deal with American book writer John Green. John Green has a 1.8m Twitter following and is encouraging his followers to support us. He has also paid for some ad hoardings. We are expecting some representatives from Nerdfighters at the Torquay match. <i>[This item has been redacted from the published minutes.]</i></p>	
3.2	<p>KS asked about the note in the FCB report about away fans and reduced bar takings. ES explained that we have to consider safety as well as the commercial position but we would investigate further. IH commented that defeats can lose us around £1,500 on bar takings.</p>	
3.3	<p>IH was asked about the function bookings over the festive period which had helped generate extra funds. In response to a query about the new year booking IH explained that an incident in the car park and some related staff abuse were dealt with effectively. IH explained that bar profits were generally improving as the operation had become better and the queuing time had been reduced.</p>	
3.4	<p>MB asked about the new recruits through the YDP programme. NHi commented on the success particularly of Daniel Pearce.</p>	
3.5	<p>There then followed a discussion on options around potential new merchandise and sales of old kit. IH explained announcements on any changes would be made in due course.</p>	IH
3.6	<p>JL asked about the resale of season tickets as there were a number of empty seats at recent games. ES / DC explained that we budget for around £1,000 from season ticket resale per game. ES said that the club was preparing a document re season tickets for 2014-15 and that the idea related to reducing the concessions in the main stand was in line with one idea that was mentioned at the AGM. JL asked to see a copy of this.</p>	ES
3.7	<p>IMc asked about the players coming and going during the January window. ES explained the position regarding Charlie Wyke and others who were being considered, including Aaron Morris. Other changes were possible but would be dependent on the budget. Current arrangements / proposals have been kept on budget but were being kept under review.</p>	
3.8	<p>KS asked about the Football League's questionnaire on re-introducing standing in football grounds and specifically re safe standing proposals for the Championship. ES said that we were</p>	

<p>3.9</p> <p>3.10</p>	<p>backing this and the FCB would come back to the DTB with their proposed response to the questionnaire.</p> <p>MD said he had worked on the turnstiles for the first time over the Xmas fixtures (as had JL) and asked about away fans' concessions on his gate as there seemed to be a lot of them. ES agreed to review the reports to see if the numbers were disproportionate and get back on this.</p> <p>ES took the DTB through the current cashflow. Whilst the figures at the end of December were less than expected we were awaiting payments from Plymouth and Southend for their ticket sales. January was expected to be better but current cautious estimates suggested that we could still be down on the previous forecast by the year end. It was noted that the rolling payments from the WaW Fund were nevertheless helpful. IMc said he felt we were still in a far better position financially than many other clubs.</p>	<p>ES</p> <p>ES</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appointment of Additional Director</p>	
<p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p>ES presented a paper proposing that Mick Buckley (MBu) be appointed as an additional Director to the Football Club Board. MBu's primary role would be developing and completing the work on brand definition and subsequently on maximising the benefits from it. He would also take a lead role in financing as regards the club generally and the new stadium in particular. ES noted that MBu's advice is always well thought out and we expect that he would also provide constructive and challenging input to other board members. It was being proposed that MBu would attend all formal (i.e. monthly) board meetings and most of the other (weekly) meetings. ES explained that the intention was to offer the same remuneration as IH and NH.</p> <p>Members of the DTB discussed the proposal initially with others from the FCB present. FCB members then left and DTB members deliberated further. It was agreed that MBu's skills and understanding of the club would be a valuable addition to the team. However some members felt that the process for recruiting to the role should ideally be more open and were concerned with the lateness of the proposal being put forward. After much discussion the DTB agreed (with one abstention) that MBu be appointed to the role. Further details to be agreed between MBu and ES. MB/SMc agreed to talk to ES regarding the earlier notification of key proposals in future.</p>	<p>ES</p> <p>MB/SMc</p>

5.0	Appointment of an Associate Director	
5.1	<p>ES reported that he had been made aware of a third party who was interested in putting some money into the club in exchange for becoming a director. ES had met the individual's representative and discussed a range of possible options. The person in question is a locally based individual and Wimbledon fan. It was clear that he would not want to be a passive director as he feels he has a lot to contribute. His background is in marketing and he recently sold his company investments and is looking for something that interests him. He would be prepared to invest a significant sum. <i>[This item has been redacted from the published minutes]</i>. ES said he had rejected the idea of an interest free loan but had proposed that, subject to the necessary approvals, an appointment could be considered for a year at a time, to allow both parties to reappraise the situation and decide if they want to continue. ES told the person that we would expect a non-returnable fee to be paid and they discussed what other things might be covered by the role, for example, he may be invited into board rooms, home and away.</p>	
5.2	<p>ES explained to the DTB that he would like to get people from the FCB and DTB to meet and interview the individual. <i>[This item has been redacted from the published minutes.]</i></p>	
5.3	<p>The DTB discussed the proposal with the FCB. Various DTB members pointed out that that there had been extensive discussion about this with members at the 2012 DT AGM. It was agreed at that time that the DTB would go away and consider the different options open to the DT and club for bringing in additional investment from private individuals.</p>	
5.4	<p>After some discussion it was agreed that the DTB would need to put together a document for consultation with the wider membership ahead of the next SGM in May. MB would lead on this. In the meantime it was agreed that the FCB should continue the dialogue started by ES and explain the current position / timetable to the person in question.</p>	<p>MB ES</p>
6.0	Next Meetings	
6.1	<p>The meeting closed at 22.45. There would be a Special DTB meeting to consider proposals on a new organisational structure on 22 January. The next regular DTB meeting would now be held on Monday 17 February 2014.</p>	