

Dons Trust Board

Minutes of Meeting Thursday 14 January 2016

The Cherry Red Records Stadium President's Lounge

7.30 pm

Members

Matt Breach (MB)

David Growsns (DG)

Mark Davis (MD)

Jane Lonsdale (JL)

Nigel Higgs (NH)

Roger Evans (RE)

Tom Adam (TA)

Colin Dipple (CD)

Invited

Mick Buckley (MBu)

John Dolan (JD) (Chair, Election Steering Group – for Section 2 only)

David Reeves (DR) (Secretariat)

Michael Hayes (MH) (Secretariat)

Rob McGlinchey (RM) (Secretary)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Sean McLaughlin and Erik Samuelson.

2. Report of the Election Steering Group Chair

JD presented the report of the Election Steering Group. The ESG is proposing two main procedural changes. The first proposal is that events and debates should take place and manifestos should be issued before the ballot papers are sent out, to ensure that DT members are better informed of who they are voting for before they are asked to vote. The second proposal is that there should be a “modern media champion” to pull together all the sources of the interface between candidates and the electorate.

The ESG also proposes a small change to the ballot paper, which will require members to confirm their agreement before they send their vote. It has also reflected on the appropriate length of a board member's term of office in the light of the one year term required as a result of a resignation. A high proportion of Board positions giving rise to election could lead to discontinuity. Generally, in the light of anecdotal evidence that most board members spend the first year learning the role and have only one effective year before re-election, there could

be a case for extension of the present two-year term. How a one year term would actually work is not clear, noted JD. It could potentially be used as a “taster” for candidate members.

JD invited questions from DTB members.

MD asked whether the ESG has thought about starting the procedure earlier. JD responded that soundings indicate the DT has a longer process than most, and if someone is thinking about standing for the Board, they should prepare before the process starts.

JL highlighted that there are issues about hustings and who would organise this next time. JL was keen on having a question and answer session for candidates. JL added that the hustings allow voters to make informed decisions and that podcasts need to be an official part of the election process. JD accepted this and will discuss further with the election steering committee. DG supported this also.

RE said he would have reservations about a “taster” term for candidates.

JL said that the DTB has a role in encouraging people to stand, and should do more to explain what it is like to be on the DTB.

TA asked what was meant by contacting proposers for “verification.” JD said that this involves obtaining confirmation that they did propose the candidate in question, that the proposal form was posted when it says, and other similar checks.

JL suggested that the names of a candidate’s proposer and seconder should be shown.

NH enquired what the position of the ESC was on whether a sponsor should be eligible for Board membership. JD said that, in his opinion, there is no reason why an individual connected with a corporate sponsor should not stand, but for the period of the election his or her name should not be in the programme each week. There should be no ban on volunteers standing, even if they have a visible profile.

CD noted that some individuals had not realised that they could cast six different votes. JD confirmed that communication surrounding the number of votes could be improved, and that the ESG does look carefully at single votes where not voting for any of the other candidates may in some cases boost the candidate voted for.

MB asked JD to consider whether holding elections for the entire board biennially might be more vibrant and engage more new candidates. JD reiterated the importance of continuity, which could be impaired with the potential of having more than half the board composed of new members.

JL proposed, and the DTB unanimously agreed, a vote of thanks to the ESG and to JD.

Action: JD agreed to circulate to the ESG the points made by the DTB for consideration, with a view to coming back to the DTB with suggestions for the future.

3. Final Draft Minutes from 19 November meeting and 29 November teleconference

These were approved. JL emphasised the importance of keeping to the “7 day rule” for DTB members to make comments on Board Minutes.

4. Election of DTB Officers for 2016

(a) MB was unanimously re-elected as Chair, and accorded a vote of thanks for last year. It was noted that the Board needs to agree a job description for the role of Chair. This to be one of the matters for discussion at the extra Board meetings.

(b) DG indicated that he did not wish to continue in the role of Vice Chair. MD was nominated and unanimously elected. DG was thanked for his work as Vice Chair in 2015 and previous years.

(c) SM was unanimously re-elected as Treasurer and thanked for his work in 2015.

5. FCB Update

(a) FCB Monthly Report

MB said that AFC Wimbledon Manager Neal Ardley has been looking at four areas of squad improvement. *[This section has been redacted]*

Tom Beere and David Fitzpatrick have returned from loan spells. It is intended that NA and Jeremy Sauer (JS) will be invited to attend a DTB meeting soon, potentially March or April as other business allows.

MBu said that there are issues with the training ground pitch that are being resolved. *[This section has been redacted]*

Action: NA and JS to be invited to attend a DTB meeting.

(b) Stadium Update

The various conditions that will be imposed in the planning consent, such as the maximum number of games that can be played, are regarded as acceptable.

Over the long-term, capacity will be increased to between 19,000 (larger hospitality) and 20,000 (smaller hospitality). It is hoped that it will be possible for capacity to be expanded by stages depending on available finance. Temporary seating will be an option if circumstances arise such as a cup tie with a premier league club.

MD asked whether the section 106 agreement has to be agreed before referral to the GLA or after. RE confirmed this and said that ES had approved the timeline contained in the Gantt Chart (see 5(c)).

NH asked about internal design and the outcome of the conversations about the DT and DTB requirements. MBu said there is now a mock-up of how the west stand will look. *[This section has been redacted]*

MB asked for a “where are we now” report regarding the latest design and suggested that Andrew Williams (AW) should attend a DTB meeting to brief the board.

JL asked about fans’ consultation on design – this should be done even if there is not much scope for variations. The DTB needs to understand the present position before acting.

DG said that he had obtained comments from the DTB, DT members and fans and passed them on to the design team.

Action: MBu agreed to come back to the DTB on consultation issues raised.

In response to a question about standing terrace issues, MBu said there are two issues, financial and regulatory. NH asked when a decision has to be made; MBu said he did not think this would be required before tenders are awarded.

RE asked how confident that club is that the pre-tender estimate for building costs is accurate. MBu said the club is relying on figures prepared by Mott MacDonald that has considerable experience in this area. The club will not have a more accurate idea of costs until all the tenders are in.

On naming rights, a detailed sales brochure has been prepared and the club has employed an ex-commercial director of the FA to run the marketing on a commission basis. *[This section has been redacted]*

MB informed MBu that the DTB will wish to sign off on the identity of any naming rights sponsor.

MD asked who is leading the community share issue? MB said that he is working with ES on this. He feels that we should seriously consider a community share issue even if we obtain sufficient stadium finance from other sources, noting the positive benefits of the approach and other potential areas for funding (e.g. training ground).

Action: AW and ES to be invited to a meeting with the DTB to discuss all new stadium issues.

MBu and ES to be invited to DTB meeting as soon as possible to report in detail on all funding avenues including bank lending, community shares and other sources.

(c) Player Engagement

The paper on Player Engagement was discussed. The Board felt that it was fine so far as dealing with the Stevenage issue was concerned, but more should be done to avoid similar issues in the future. *[This section has been redacted]*

JL said we should give more publicity to the events where players provide a positive contribution, i.e. Junior Dons party, foodbanks, and other community activities. In connection with the player's Christmas party, JL noted that the date of the JDs party was offered after the date of the players’ party so as to ensure their availability.

NH wondered whether with increasing professionalism we are losing contact between players and fans. He emphasised that while this will inevitably happen to some degree we must not lose sight of where we have come from as a club and retain as much as possible of the things that make us special.

It was generally felt among DTB members that there should be both more player engagement and also more publicity for the significant things that they already do.

DG suggested this was material for a programme article provided that the positives were emphasised.

MBu said that these issues should be handled sensitively. He would like the objective to be encouraging the fans to get behind the players.

(d) Chelsea and Ks Update

MBu summarised the status of the deal with Chelsea.

Action: MB to arrange a DTB meeting with DN present to go through the terms of the deal with Chelsea, having previously circulated the current version of the contract with a note from DN summarising the changes since DN's last summary (the last summary to be circulated to new DTB members).

DG said that a formal agreement covering Ks departure from KM is in draft and being negotiated with the Ks directors. It covers the issues summarised at page 3 of the FCB Report. In fact, there are two agreements, one covering the licence termination payment, and one covering the escrow terms for the further payment. ES is seeking tax advice confirming that the further payment to Ks will not be taxable in their hands.

Action: The DTB resolved to authorise DG and SM (1) to agree the licence termination agreement with Ks and (2) to negotiate with Ks the terms of the further escrow payment agreement and bring it to the DTB for approval

DG is also assisting Ks set up a fans ownership structure. The aim is for the new structure to go live in March 2016.

The DTB resolved that DG be thanked for his work in supporting Ks.

(e) Project Timetable

The two timeline charts presented by RE were considered. RE identified the three key issues in the timeline as being the section 106 agreement including GLA and Judicial Review issues; contractor issues; and financing issues.

Action: MBu to request ES to provide monthly cash flow statements

g) Other FCB issues

MD proposed and the DTB agreed congratulations to the Under 18s for their successes against Watford, Newcastle and other teams. He wondered if any cash could be made from the next FA Youth Cup fixture at KM. MBu said the date had not yet been set for the fixture and there would be a short lead time, but some revenue should be achieved. IH and DC are working on this area. JL noted that John Green wants to come to the next FA Youth cup game. RE suggested that the team parade at the Mansfield game.

There was discussion about having individual player profiles for the Under 18s, or whether this might upset the development squad. It was thought better to profile the entire squad starting with development players and then senior U18s.

JL noted that the usual list of complaints made and praise received had not been included in the latest FCB report. These should be reinstated and should include the carvery.

TA asked what activities would be accommodated at the new stadium, in particular the Foundation. MBu indicated that no detail has been finalised on this matter.

NH suggested that the Dons Draw should be included in the FCB Reports, notwithstanding that it is run by the DTB. MBu said that James Booth (have we explained that he is an external consultant employed by the club to look at various issues relating to our use of social media, etc. ?) would be looking at this as part of the exercise he is undertaking.

JL said that the club should be aware of the power of media. She welcomes the fact that James Booth is looking at Comms generally and will produce a report next month, but is concerned that it links up with the DTB. MB said this will be done.

JL noted that there was no reference to the We are Wimbledon Fund this month within the FCB Report and wondered what was happening with it? MB said he was working on the bank account and would update at next DTB meeting.

Secretary's note: The list of complaints made and activities praised are included in FCB reports on a quarterly basis, as per agreement with the DTB, and so was not missing from the report that was considered. These will be included in the next FCB quarterly report.

6. DTB Update

(a) MB agreed to circulate notes of the 10th January meeting and other materials sent to him.

(b) JL reported that Webjam are offering the service FOC from January 2016 to December 2019. This means the DTB will have significantly benefited taking into account the two years we have already enjoyed. In return, Webjam want some benefits from AFCW, including using the club as a reference site for other fan owned clubs to consult. They also want some sponsor related benefits from the FCB. The DTB authorised JL and DG to agree these subject to IH approval, and circulate. The board congratulated JL on a very successful result.

Action: JL and DG to agree sponsor related benefits with Webjam in principle, subject to IH approval, and circulate to DTB.

7. AOB

In view of time, it was agreed that the AOB items on the agenda would be carried forward, and that a skype or teleconference would be organised to discuss in particular the Co-Option Discussion Paper.

MB agreed to circulate the Stall Rota.

DTB members were asked to update their entries on the Skills Matrix before the conference call.

DG urged members to attend the Ladies' games at Sutton United.

Thanks were minuted to all who helped with the Junior Dons Party.

Action: NH to organise skype or telephone conference to discuss Co-Option Paper

MB to circulate stall rota, DTB members to update entries on Skills Matrix

Meeting ended at 10:38pm

Next Meetings: Monday 15 February (7.30 pm) and Special on 28 February (2:00pm)

DTB MEMBER ACTIVITY SINCE BOARD MEETING ON 19 NOVEMBER

Matt Breach

- Manned DT Kiosk at all home games
- Attended FCB meetings and reported back to DTB
- Chaired AGM
- Contributed to DT Programme Pages
- Responded to many queries from members including safe standing, fan engagement, stadium finances, constitution, etc.
- Prepared DTB “off-site” meeting for new Board and engaged pro-bono consultant support for taking this work forward

Mark Davis

- Away on holiday

David Growns

- Continued processing final details updates after the BiTT vote
- Working with Jane Lonsdale on the Webjam project
- Attended the Merton Planning Committee meeting
- Represented members at the Remembrance Sunday service

Nigel Higgs

- Drafted paper on DTB co-option and sent to DTB
- Attended AGM.
- Followed up member's complaints about post-match events at Stevenage home game.
- Updated my skills on DTB skills matrix.

Jane Lonsdale

- **Junior Dons:** Sunday 6 December - organise and run the Junior Dons Christmas Party, follow up with girls teams; Haydon Page: coordinate, prepare and submit pages for Wycombe (21 November), Stevenage (12 December) and Bristol Rovers (26 December).
- **Webjam:** Sunday 29 November DTB teleconference on Webjam; Monday 21 December meeting to agree Job Profile for volunteer Web Designer, arrange for it to be advertised. Arrange meeting with Webjam team for early January.
- **Election:** Sunday 22nd November - Participate in DTB Election Hustings and take part in podcast broadcast.
- **Dons Trust Engagement with wider community:** Monday 7 December - Attend Launch of Supporters Direct House of Commons event to launch Community Owned Sports Clubs.
- **Other Meetings:** Thursday 10 December - attend Planning Committee; Thursday 17 December - attend Dons Trust Annual General Meeting (Wimbledon).
- **Foodbank** Organise communications around Foodbank postponement.
- **Members:** Respond to queries from members about constitution; player engagement; new stadium. Request information from membership secretary on Dons Trust membership.

Sean McLaughlin



Roger Evans

- L.B. of Merton Planning Committee
- AFCW PLC Meeting
- Stadium Timelines
- BITT
- Blue & Yellow Club work