

Dons Trust Board

Minutes of Meeting Wednesday 13 July 2016

The Cherry Red Records Stadium President's Lounge

7.30 pm

Members

Matt Breach (MB)

Mark Davis (MD)

Nigel Higgs (NH)

Roger Evans (RE)

Colin Dipple (CD)

Sean McLaughlin (SM)

David Growns (DG)

Invited

Neal Ardley (NA)

Jeremy Sauer (JS)

Erik Samuelson (ES)

Rob Crane (RC) (Secretariat)

Michael Hayes (MH) (Secretariat)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Jane Lonsdale, Tom Adam and Rob McGlinchey.

2. Update from NA and JS

MB explained that the DTB fully supports the Academy but needs to justify its cost to DT members. As part of that exercise the DTB has a duty to monitor progress and presentations should therefore be made to the DTB at least once per year.

JS introduced himself and made an illustrated presentation with the aim of giving the DTB an understanding of what the Academy does and how it does it. There is a pyramid starting with the under 7s and ending with the under 21s. Funding is received from the Premier league as part of EPPP for the under 9s to the under 18s, but not for the under 21s for whom the club bears the full cost. There are 164 players who are currently supported by a team of 61, including 9 full-time and 20 part-time staff plus students and about 20 volunteer scouts.

The AFC Wimbledon Academy is a Category 3 Academy for which the club must contribute 50% of the central funding. Last year the PL contribution was £275K and the club's contribution was therefore required to be £137.5K, although in fact we spend considerably more than this. This year we expect to receive funding of £340K. There is no significant perceived benefit from proceeding to Category 2.

The overall vision is to achieve five main goals:

a) Producing players for the first team.

- b) Fulfilling potential on and off the field.
- c) Becoming the strongest and most productive Cat 3 Academy.
- e) Creating a nationally recognised pathway from foundation to the first team.
- f) Producing 25% of the first team.

“Home Grown and Hungry” is the motto.

Delivery is achieved via the Academy Performance Plan, which is a living programme that is revised each year. There is a light version and a full version, the latter (which contains over 400 pages) is mainly for audit purposes. An audit measured against the full Performance Plan takes place every 3 years. There is a software tool with 10 KPIs to be measured. The last audit was 2014 at which a 57% score was achieved (pass mark 50%). The next audit takes place in 2017. There will be a dry run this year to ensure we are ready. Failure would in practice mean we would have to close the Academy or default to Cat 4. That would mean only having under 18s and under 21s, which would be unacceptable to us as a club.

Governance is achieved by a Technical Board which meets quarterly and approves budget and strategy, and a management team which meets monthly.

JS explained the contract system, ranging from no contracts for U7s and U8s, one year contracts for U9s – U12s, 2 year contracts for U13s, further 2 year contracts for U15s, then 2 year contracts for U17s and U18s. U17s and U18s are paid and the Club has a responsibility for their full time education, which will now be delivered by Southfields Academy. The top of the pyramid is the U18s from whom some will be selected for professional contracts and join the U21s.

The pressure points for interest from other clubs come at the U7s/U8 level (competition for potential); then at U14 (when ability can be better assessed); and finally a greater risk at U16 level. We have a good track record because we can demonstrate a greater chance of ultimately making the first team.

NA was asked to comment. He felt that his six years running the Academy at Cardiff has been invaluable experience for his role as AFC Wimbledon Manager. In view of competition from other London Academies, the club has to offer something different and it can demonstrate opportunities and the chance of first team football. In the past 2/3 years, 8 Academy players have made first team appearances and although not all have been able to sustain a first team place, it demonstrates the potential.

Another key factor is that the U21s train with the first team twice a week, which enables NA to observe their progress much better than simply by attendance at U21 games. There are also mentoring programmes which focus on individual players to develop their strengths.

NA observed that the average age of a first team debut in the EFL is 20 years 7 months. The key problem is to bridge the gap between 18 and 21. He commented that Man U, Spurs and Southampton are among the leading Academies. *[This section has been redacted]*

JS commented that the Brentford Academy parents were invited in when Brentford closed their Academy.

JS outlined the financial pros and cons of youth development, but said he did not anticipate any great future cost escalation. Short termism would spend the money on the first team, but other

considerations make youth development worthwhile expenditure in the longer term. *[This section has been redacted]*

JS concluded the presentation by promising to circulate a copy of his presentation, inviting questions (and further questions by email), and encouraging DTB members to attend training sessions.

RE asked how we deal with lifestyle issues, and what support is given to leavers? JS gave some examples of how we help them to take responsibility for themselves (e.g. their kit). Leavers are helped towards e.g. U.S. scholarship programmes, part time coaching roles, and parents are involved. The PFA will subsidise non football courses for leavers at 50%.

MD asked why we take U7s and U8s. JS said they are part of the selection process for the crucial U9s.

In answer to a question from RE about changes to the loan system, NA said that Academy players can still be loaned.

NH asked about risks associated with the 2017 Audit. JS said he is making sure that the habits that got us through the 2014 Audit are embedded and maintained. The PL inspectors who make periodic visits have been asked to challenge staff at their inspections. JS undertook to come up with some KPIs for the DTB. ES commented that the external auditors are up for change which is another risk. ES noted that we failed the 2014 audit the first time around largely because as a new Academy we were not able to do well on the development metric (in terms of first team appearances). JS said that he plans to make the Academy Performance Plan targets smarter and deliverable, avoiding targets which are outside the Academy's control. ES said that he is trying to find some financial measure of success.

[This section has been redacted]

The DTB recorded its thanks to NA/JS, and asked for a repeat performance around this time next year.

Action: JS to circulate copy of presentation and prepare KPIs for DTB.

(NA and JS left the meeting)

3. FCB Update

(a) Budget

The 2016-2017 Budget had been circulated and was considered. ES noted some adjustments which will need to be made. The FL decision that TV rights be shared equally will necessitate revision, and the Beer Festival must come out. *[This section has been redacted]*

The DTB unanimously approved the Budget.

The cash flow statement was discussed. It assumes no further consultant fees for the time being and nothing from Galliard yet. *[This section has been redacted]*

(b) Stadium Update

ES has heard nothing concrete yet about the Mayor and how he will deal with the calling in. *[This section has been redacted]*

(c) MGL sponsorship

MB explained that the DT is being asked to repeat the payment of £500 to MGL. It was agreed to pay, but to ask the MGL to write an article for the programme saying how the grant helps them and what they do with it. It was also agreed that the DTB should examine the wider issues of sponsorship generally, and to formulate a strategy to be introduced in subsequent years, which would link in to the policy for the Ladies and Girls.

Action: Pay £500 to MGL subject to request for programme article saying how this helps and will be used.

(d) FCB Other Issues

Franchise Games

Issues concerning the Milton Keynes games were discussed. ES reported that the FCB had homed in on “what do we want to achieve”. *[This section has been redacted]*

Other Questions on FCB Report

SM asked whether the club has passed the capability status. ES said not yet, it involves around 60 documents, but we passed last year.

RE asked about appreciation for the playoff volunteers. ES said that no special event has taken place, but individual thanks have been given to key people.

MD raised three questions which JL had asked him to pose. Do the two accountant departures from the club mean there is a wider problem? ES outlined the circumstances for both leaving and did not think there was a wider issue. On AFC Bay, JL asked why we appear to be buying as well as selling. ES thinks we are not buying from outside, but will confirm. JL also asked that congratulations be recorded to those concerned for the successful kit launch.

EFL (formerly JP) Trophy

ES reported that the FCB had considered the new rules for the EFL (formerly JP) Trophy. ES has spoken to some other EFL clubs. *[This section has been redacted]* ES’s conclusion is that the DT should state its position. MB said that the DT has already gone on record that it is opposed to B teams and to the EFT proposals, so that as a minimum the DT should say it is a ridiculous idea; the second issue is whether the DTB should instruct the FCB to do anything. He thought we should continue to play in the Trophy this year, whilst in the meantime we should try to win it, but hope that the competition dies.

Action: The club should compete in the Trophy, and will not field an under strength team, but the DTB should campaign with other unhappy clubs. MB will draft a statement after feedback from this Sunday’s SD meeting.

Action: Campaigning issues to be on the agenda for the August SGM.

Ladies and Girls Funding

There was discussion about payments requested by Ladies and Girls. *[This section has been redacted]*

Action: It was resolved to pay what was paid last year (£15K) in two instalments without offsetting the outstanding kit money, which should be repaid out of subs when received. The wider governance issues should be discussed and clarified over the next year.

(ES left the meeting)

DTB Only

4. Sponsorship and Supplier Policy

It was agreed that the draft ethical sponsorship policy should be issued to DT members for discussion at the SGM. Members should be asked for their views. RE will draft a paper for the SGM which will be based on DG's paper with input from this meeting and any other comments sent to him.

[This section has been redacted]

Action: RE to prepare draft paper for the SGM.

5. SGM Planning

Papers to be sent to members by 8 August.

It was agreed that Agenda items should include:

- Webjam Presentation by JL
- Ethical Sponsorship
- LLW discussion
- Stadium Update
- Campaigning

All papers presented to the SGM should be agreed beforehand by all DTB members.

6.AOB

- The DTB approved SM's suggestion about membership renewal dates and subscriptions, subject to MD's gloss. This means that people who have joined part way through the year should be offered a part refund of subs but only if they wish to claim it.
- NH suggested that the DTB should consider the YDP/Academy presentation, excellent though it was, and decide what the DTB needs in terms of further or continuing information.

[This section has been redacted]

DTB Co Opted Member.

Following interviews (9 telephone, 4 in person), the Co Option subcommittee (MD/JL/MB) will recommend a candidate and want to make a decision next week, to be announced at the SGM.

Webjam

MD read out a report from JL about the Webjam pilot commencing 22 July with 100 members including the DTB and original test user group. 2 familiarisation sessions scheduled for September. Comms are being geared up. RC will start suggesting content.

The meeting finished at 10.50 pm.

Next meeting Monday 15 August, 2016.

DTB Member Activity Since Board Meeting On June 14

Matthew Breach:

General: Responded to members' enquiries on a range of Trust and Club topics.

Co-Option of Board Member: Undertook (with MD/JL) face-to-face interviews.

Campaigning: Worked with Supporters Direct and other Trusts on generating a significant push-back on the EFL proposals for B teams in the EFL and the EFLT.

Mark Davis

Sifting and interviewing applicants for co-option to the DTB. Ongoing work, with Nigel Higgs, to refresh the organisation structure paper originally produced 2 - 3 years ago.

Jane Lonsdale:

The Trust Webjam project plan meetings on 23 June and 8 July. Implementing the marketing plan working with copywriters and designers to write the emails for members, organising flyers to be designed and printed for inclusion with new member packs and season ticket distribution, articles on OS and DTOS, arranging follow up phonecalls to 100 pilot users.

Haydon Page Making suggestions to programme design team to incorporate changes to the Haydon pages on children's feedback. Collating information for 16-17 programmes; creating new player profile questionnaires using questions submitted by junior dons.

JD's Christmas party: liaising with club to find a date for the party.

Co-option of Board member - youth engagement: taking part in telephone interviews and face to face interviews of candidates (23 June, 29 June, 11 July).

Member Enquiries: Responding to member enquiries on: Co-option of Board member to engage with 16-35 year olds; The Trust Webjam; EFL trophy proposals; membership.

Supporters Direct Summit: accepting an invitation to speak at the conference on "successful campaigning" - getting information and writing presentation.

Other: attending the Wimbledon village fair and assisting the Foundation; representing the Trust at the Mayors breakfast ahead of the celebration parade on 3 July.

No other member activities were submitted to the DTB Secretary