

Dons Trust Board

Draft Minutes of Meeting Thursday 14 September 2017

Cherry Red Records Stadium President's Lounge

Members

Matt Breach (MB)
Mark Davis (MD)
Roger Evans (RE)
Colin Dipple (CD)
Jane Lonsdale (JL)
Tim Hillyer (TH)
Sean McLaughlin (SM)

Invited

Charles Williams (prospective co-optee)
Hannah Kitcher (HK) (Secretariat)
Andrew Howell (AH) (Secretariat)
Tom Brown (TB) (Secretary)
Charlie Talbot (CT)
Mick Buckley (MBu)
Ivor Heller (IH)

1: Apologies

Apologies had been received from Nigel Higgs (NH), David Gowns (DG) and Erik Samuelson (ES). As MB had been away on holiday, MD agreed to chair the meeting given he had attended the September FCB meeting.

2: Wimbledon Vs. Milton Keynes

At its previous meeting the Board had been briefed that, following a SAG meeting in July, no major changes were proposed to the prior year's arrangements regarding the game v Milton Keynes, which all agreed had worked well.

MD highlighted that the FCB had subsequently received a couple of emails from Shaun Harvey (EFL CEO) requesting the need to acknowledge Milton Keynes by their preferred name on the scoreboard and in the match day programme at the forthcoming match at Kingsmeadow on Friday 22 September. The emails raised attention to the EFL rules about clubs acting in good faith towards each other and not unfairly criticising or disparaging other football clubs. MB highlighted that this is referring to the new EFL regulation 3.5 and that Nick Craig (EFL Governance and Legal Director) had specifically told him when questioned at the EFL AGM in May, that it only applies if the "impacted" club make a complaint and if that what they are claiming is being said about them is manifestly untruthful.

MD explained that ES had drafted a response the effect of: "this is how we did it last year, the club went to incredible lengths to keep the match safe, this decision was part of that and it worked well, therefore AFCW propose to do same again this year." A discussion around the table focused on the fact that we should stick with last year's approach in the name of safety, explaining that it worked last time and that we want to antagonise the least amount of people in a volatile situation. It was also noted that the opposition had visited the stadium before last season's game and had opted for officials and directors to stand with their fans. They had agreed with the majority of last season's arrangements in advance and hadn't given us any negative feedback on how we ran that game. The board also noted the EFL's comments about 'unnecessary unrest' and observed that using the name 'Dons' would be likely to cause unrest among a far greater number of the fans attending the match than by not using it. Given that the safety of all fans was our highest priority, the DTB unanimously agreed to ES's proposal to run the game on the same operational basis as last year.

3: FCB Report

MD talked through the FCB report in the absence of ES. One point missing from it related to ES' response to the list on potential involvement of/consultation with fans on fitting out the new stadium drafted by RE – generated after ES had asked MB and the DTB to consider all the potential options that the DT members would want to be consulted about. As well as defining the basis for consultation, the list aimed to identify those things that it would not be possible to consult with fans on, with the reason why, so that DT members could be informed and their expectations managed.

ACTION: MB and RE to chase ES for a response to the consultation query.

JL asked whether AFCW yet had a cost for roof repairs to our current stadium. IH explained that they don't have the cost yet; there has been a full inspection and the pricing up process is in train. MD suggested that, in effect, this cost should be included in the new stadium budget because it is part of the transition to the new stadium; the meeting thought that would be a sound approach.

ACTION: DTB to ask ES to clarify if the roof repairs should be in FCB cashflow or in the new stadium budget

MD noted that there was an item about safeguarding and that it was discussed at FCB that it would be an item that would come to a future DTB meeting.

RE asked IH about a reference to catering at the training ground. IH said there have been lots of issues there because the numbers catered for have grown exponentially and the kitchen is not fit for purpose, but that they are working hard to remedy this.

JL asked about the financial performance of AFC Bay. IH explained that last year they set a target of £15k and believed they achieved approximately £14k, with their target being quite ambitious. This year they have achieved approximately £1700 in the first month (July) and £1300 in the second month (August), which means they have had a healthy start.

4: Stadium update

MD explained the contents of ES' paper on the current status of the New Stadium project. Progress continues to be made but the legal discussions are taking longer to conclude than expected.

[Section redacted]

5. COO Recruitment Update:

IH stated that he had expressed a wish to join the DTB meeting to enable him to get a better understanding of the process planned for this recruitment. SM explained that the DTB have appointed SRI, a recruitment consultant company that specialises in sport and entertainment roles. Their initial advert has already received good interest; applications close on 22nd September. By the end of w/c 25th September, SM explained that they should have produced a long list of approximately twelve candidates. From that they would produce a shortlist of six to eight that would be subject to initial interview. The shortlist would then be reduced to three or four candidates who would spend some time at the Club, which would include a presentation to a wider audience (including FCB members) and then a more detailed interview with a panel including MB and ES. SM clarified that they agreed with SRI that in the first round of interviews they wouldn't have too many people on the interview panel; RE and SM are leading the process, in good communication with MB and MD.

MB added that it would also be useful to publish the detailed process and dates for the DTB, as well as the FCB, so that they can plan and agree who would be involved in each of the interviews.

A discussion then took place that covered how the new role had evolved, the communications around the process and the need to ensure that the culture of AFC Wimbledon is not lost as we continue to evolve our activities as we move into the New Stadium. The DTB resolved to ensure that the FCB are kept fully informed during this process and are involved in ensuring our culture is protected.

< Break >

6: Branding

Charlie Talbot joined the meeting to outline the branding exercise that he is leading on the FCB's behalf for the AFCW organisation. CT – after apologising for the need to use marketing “speak” for his presentation - outlined that the problem that AFCW is trying to address, as a brand, is that we don't really have the architecture or infrastructure a brand of our size would expect to have. For example there is limited formality around defining who we are, what our values are and what our major selling points are. CT confirmed that he has the latest version of the DT vision and said that whilst the DT does a lot of work around this it is a good example of the problems as that message doesn't necessarily translate across to the club office, on social media, when the manager and players are being interviewed, or in the club's media material. In particular, how aspects of the brand are presented with regards to the Trust and club needs to be explored, discussed and presented in a way that is clearer to external parties.

CT explained that the club are currently in the middle of a big sales task of selling headline naming rights to the new stadium. The process is ongoing but we are nearing the point in which people will be in the marketplace selling the stadium, and therefore selling the brand, which is where a brand's mission statement and values comes in. Secondly, we are hopefully minus 23 months away from attempting to fill a new stadium with more fans. Before doing that, and putting a bigger team in place to deliver this, there must be clear architecture, do's and don'ts on what can and can't be said etc. There is also a current issue with how the club is being portrayed across some aspects of social media. All of these things would be significantly helped by having clear brand guidelines (a style and design guide) to give to people.

MB explained the DTB has just kicked off trying to refresh the strategy but doesn't foresee much of a major change to any of that (it will mainly be the objectives and actions). The main thing that aligns with the exercise that CT and the club is undertaking, is getting to grips with how we are represented as an 'organisation' (i.e. including the club, foundation and trust).

CT outlined what he needs from DTB, at this stage in the process. He has been talking to people within the club about what they currently do and don't say about the club. The Academy is currently the area of the club that has worked it out best. CT explained that the club will be holding some focus group evenings in KM and Wimbledon with as diverse a group as possible (including younger fans), so would like to have some representation from the DTB but not all and would encourage them to suggest friends and relatives that would represent a wider range of views. CT said they are planning on holding the focus groups as soon as possible, with the focus groups in the next few weeks and present the guidelines for approval by the club/DTB as soon as possible after that.

ACTION: MB to get hold of a copy of a presentation by FC United, from a talk in Sweden, on their branding to pass to CT.

7: Youth Engagement

Introducing Charles Williams, MD reminded the meeting that the DTB had agreed that following Matt Spriegel's resignation, they would contact CW, one of the candidates JL, MB and MD interviewed for the role approximately a year ago. MD had contacted Charles and given he was still interested in the role, invited him to talk to the board this evening about himself and his thoughts for the role.

CW explained he applied for the role because he believes it is important for future of trust, and club in general. CW was keen to learn from other Trust run clubs where there was a perceived disconnection

between their Trust and supporters to avoid a similar level of disengagement, acknowledging there is a risk of disengagement if we don't invest in engaging with younger fans. He added that he applied for this position, as opposed to standing for election to the board, because he likes that he has a clear task and role with the Board.

CW explained that he plans on starting by looking to characterise the target age group (16-35) and look at what the different sub-groups within this are and how to engage with them. The first step would be for him to look into data and the differences in demographics of the Trust vs Club membership, before coming up with a strategy for the DTB. The strategy would by necessity be aligned with the branding work that CT outlined earlier in the meeting

CW outlined what he needs from the DTB to make this work is clarity about what he can do without approval. He will also require decisions to be approved between meetings to ensure things move quickly. CW explained some of his specific ideas, some of which have changed from last year when he initially applied, these include:

1. Explore the tangible and intangible benefits younger people want from trust membership. This will require looking into the recent membership survey data by age and considering what is feasible, practical and affordable.
2. Transition from Junior Dons.
3. How the Trust is presented and what you get when joining.
4. Being clearer about the brand of the Trust and emphasising that they are the owners of AFC Wimbledon.
5. Engaging younger volunteers through being clear that it is a development opportunity that offers training, mentorship etc. and is more of a package for younger people.
6. Exploring the channels used to communicate with people and whether we are using the right media, so as to create a strategy around how the Trust communicates through them.

JL pointed out that this is a co-opted role, which can only last until the elections in December, and asked what approach should be taken to this. MD reminded the board that when we had recruited Matt Spriegel in July/August 2016, we had said that the current members of the board were minded to renew the co-option following election and to extend for a year, recognising that there was at least a theoretical risk that the board might not be so inclined once the elections had taken place. The same arrangement was proposed here.

MBu asked CW how he will know whether he has been successful. CW explained that this is partly why we need to get the data right and look at how many members we have. This will also need to be part of the work that he does first; look at what success does look like and how we will measure it.

[CW was asked to leave the room for the DTB to discuss his co-option.]

The DTB discussed CW's role and objectives and voted unanimously in favour of co-opting CW, with MD welcoming Charles Williams to the board.

8: Diversity and Inclusion

JL explained that she had first raised this in July and has now circulated a paper. Since then she has met with Anwar Uddin (from Kick It Out) and said that he is supportive of the idea of using such a screening to kick-off a sequence of diversity events over a period of time, suggestions as outlined in the paper. He told JL there could be access to some funding from Kick It Out for assisting with running such events. TH noted that he had attended the Pride in Football conference last summer held in the National Football Museum and Paul Elliott was an excellent speaker at the event. He may be an option for speaking at an event hosted by AFCW.

The DTB voted unanimously in favour of increasing and improving diversity within AFCW and football more generally and voted unanimously in favour of screening the Wonderkid film and arranging an event around it.

JL added that there is a training programme available for players, staff and management and Amar Uddin said that he would be happy to arrange something that fits in around the players. MB undertook to raise this with the FCB, with JL sending her paper to MBu.

ACTION: JL to send her paper to MBu.

ACTION: MB to raise the holding of Diversity events with FCB.

9: AOB:

- **Christmas Junior Dons Party**

JL had asked for this item to be added to the agenda as she had asked for volunteers to co-ordinate the event at the last meeting and wanted an update. RE and MD offered to help, but not to run it. The DTB discussed and agreed this should be an event that was continued and it was agreed to advertise the role via the Official Site and the DT Official Site.

ACTION: JL to advertise a call for a project manager and volunteers on the official site.

CD noted thanks to JL for organising the Christmas Party in previous years because it is hard to get people to get to do it.

- **Round the table:**

TB noted that he is resolving communication with John Dolan regarding elections.

The DTB then received an update on the ladies and girls sections from MB.

JL noted that some board members had noted problems posting on Webjam. She reminded board members that Webjam, for security purposes, times out after a period of time, therefore if writing longer posts, best practice would be to do so in Word before copying and pasting into Webjam when completed

RE asked about communications around telling DT members of the signing of the Section 106. MD explained that the view expressed at FCB was that the importance of that message is such that club should communicate to its fans all at the same time. JL noted that, if it is delayed, then we should say something to manage expectations about the announcement as getting more queries on Webjam about the S106.

TH noted some issues around volunteer code of conduct and social media policy to be added to next months' meeting agenda.

ACTION: MB to request an update from the club on the VLO role.

MD noted on the subject of board minutes that it would be helpful to have a quick readout of the agreed actions to be circulated via email the following day. TB agreed to do this.

< Meeting Closed at 22:50 >