

**Dons Trust Board (DTB)**  
**Minutes of a board meeting held at 7.30pm on**  
**21 April 2021**  
**Meeting was held virtually and recorded via MS Teams**

**DTB members**

Jane Lonsdale (Co Chair)  
Xavier Wiggins (Co Chair)  
Niall Couper  
Tim Hillyer  
Hannah Kitcher  
Edward Leek  
Luke Mackenzie  
Graham Stacey  
Charlie Talbot (Vice Chair)

**In attendance**

Joe Palmer (Club CEO)  
David Gowns (DTB Secretary)  
Michele Little (DTB Treasurer)  
Roger Edmonds-Brown (Minutes)  
Matt Stockbridge (Observer)

**DTB, Joe Palmer**

1. **Introduction**

**Apologies**

There were no apologies received.

**Notices**

Jane asked that if papers were intended to be presented to meetings, to let either her or David know as far in advance of that meeting as possible so they could be accommodated in meetings.

Jane and Xavier were due to interview Nick Robertson on Friday at 3pm at Plough Lane, so as to produce a video to raise awareness before the SGM on 28 April.

**Action:** Jane and Xavier agreed to put together before the interview a list of questions for Nick.

2. **FCB Update**

Joe gave an update:

**Footballing issues**

- Mark Robinson and his team were thoroughly focussed with on-the-field gameplay considerations such as penalty takers and back up goalies
- The membership of the Football Board was discussed
- The salary cap issue was still not settled, with a possible update to be given at the next League meeting in about three weeks' time

- There was some anger among the clubs that there were no clear directives from the Government on Covid protocols in regards to 21 June being the date for relaxation of the rules. It appeared the likely step by that June date would be to 50% capacity, which would mean all our current ST holders would get into the first matches of the next season

### **Stadium Matters**

- For the 18 May test event, Liverpool u23s would be the opponents. With the first two priority seating groups, the ground was now nearly full (at restricted capacity). On Thursday the stewarding plan should be finalised, and would be submitted to the Council. A SAG meeting with the Council would then hopefully provide the final sign off
- The London Broncos application was still in.
- The Covid vaccination centre was now in full operation, with a dramatic increase in numbers seen recently

### **Other**

- There was no update on a possible film about the club
- Season Tickets were due to be launched 4 May. The system was ready to go, with good help from the club's ticketing system company, Secutix, and with a planned announcement by the beginning of next week. The associated letter and certificate, to thank people who had bought a Non Refundable Season Ticket, signed by Jane and Xavier, were due to be sent out by next Monday

### **Questions on Joe's update (above) and FCB report**

Comments and questions were invited and responses by Joe included the following:

- Jane asked about the recent retail assistant recruitment advert which would be advertised externally.
- Jane asked about the Player of the Season votes, and Joe said that he would check on progress

**Action:** Joe to check on Player of the season status

- Tim asked for an update of Ayoub Assal and Matthew Cox's contract talks
- Graham asked if the club was happy to play with Liverpool u23s following that club's ESL involvement, and Joe said that he didn't see it as a reason not to play them.
- Graham thought local residents to PL should be placated about London Broncos proposed groundshare with appropriately worded leaflets, and Joe had asked Mike to prepare a suitable text. Any

ideas from DTB members, some of who lived in those wards, would also be welcomed by Joe

- Graham wondered if the pub would be ready for the Euros, and Luke was concerned about continual delays to the pub opening date and the financial loss to the club now that local hostelrys were opening. Joe said the club had a licence and so could set up a bar quickly so as to serve drinks for the Euros
- Terell Thomas was now fully recovered from his illness
- Luke asked for programme sales and the effect of the recent promotion, and Joe apologised for their absence

### **Sundry Items**

- Jane was pleased at the speed that the player interviews were being shown post match, and noted the four recent wins in a row that had helped the club in its efforts to avoid relegation. Jane wished for Joe to officially pass on the DTs thanks to Mark Robinson, the coaching staff and all the players
- Graham asked if Mark Robinson had accepted his offer, and Joe said he had, and was very excited about the job. Xavier reminded Joe about the announcement of the long-term football structure. Joe said Mike would be talking to Mark and would pull together a piece, hopefully by the end of the current week.
- With tomorrow's finance meeting in mind, Jane asked Joe to send her the document showing structure and costings of all staff now and as planned.

**Action:** Joe to send to Jane the all-staff structure document for tomorrow's finance meeting

### 3. **Accounts**

Edward said there had been a few small variations in the March management accounts, but was still projecting a loss at the end of this season. More importantly, these accounts provided context for next season's budget.

Tom Mak, the new Financial Controller, was due to start officially first week of June, and had agreed with Edward to provide a draft of a financial update for DT members in the next two weeks.

**Action:** Draft of proposed financial communication to members to be circulated to DTB members, with the aim to share with DT members in mid-May.

### 4. **28 April SGM preparation**

David reported that not many people were responding to the SGM invitation with proxies, and along with Jane, noted that the small number of fairly neutral social media comments seemed to indicate that members

were content with Nick Robertson being on the PLC Board. Hannah said there were 178 registrations.

**Action:** A reminder to be sent out, with a link to the video of Nick Robertson's interview with Xavier and Jane. Hannah agreed to draft an email and send to David, so that the reminder and video link could be sent out this coming weekend.

**Action:** Xavier agreed that he would give Nick a heads-up to expect members' questions.

The board agreed that i Nick's video should note be shown at the SGM.

## 5. **Lifetime /25 years season tickets**

This item would be covered at the following day's finance meeting.

### **AOB**

#### **Tomorrow's Finance Meeting**

Jane thanked the Finance Committee for all its work to date, and Edward for the papers he had produced in preparation for tomorrow's finance meeting.

#### **London Broncos**

Luke said that the Chair of the Broncos Trust would appreciate a tour of the stadium.

#### **Matchday Streaming**

Charlie asked if the next day's Balham London Senior Cup game could be streamed in the light of Joe's network embargo before the test event. Joe said that it could be, as well as the remaining home game shows up to our last home game on 9 May, but apart from those games he wanted people to leave the network alone until after the 18 May test event.

#### **Fair Game**

Niall thanked Joe for his introduction to Accrington Stanley, which had led to that club signing up to Fair Game.

#### **ESL**

Jane was pleased at the fans positive response to the club and Trust stance on the ESL, and thanked Joe for his input in this matter.

Joe left the meeting

### **DTB only**

## 6. **Minutes**

Jane asked that all the DTB members review the minutes, as the whole Board should be accountable for the content.

### **17<sup>th</sup> March minutes**

These minutes had been in the folder for the previous two weeks, and Jane urged all DTB members to review them so that they could be published by the coming weekend.

### **7<sup>th</sup> April minutes**

David said the minutes of the 7 April had been returned by Ollie and were in the May meetings folder, for DTB members review.

## **7. Treasurer Update**

### **Meeting Costs**

As Covid had meant an increase of mail-outs for AGMs and SGMs, Michelle said that the meeting costs, particularly for printing, had been £8k for the first nine months compared to £5.7k for the same period last year.

This provoked David into bringing forward a project, to draft a letter, which Jane and Xavier agreed to sign, to send to 180 members- half of which supply an email address anyway- and persuade them to please change to email communication.

**Action: David to draft a letter for signature**

Jane thanked Charlie, Graeme Price and Dave Boyle for their meticulous hard work involved in presenting the Purpose Foundation at the DTB/PLC Board meeting in March, and collating the Q&As.

## **8. Roles and Responsibilities of Comms secretariat support**

Hannah agreed to prepare a separate paper for a future Board meeting.

## **9. Youth co-option**

### **Comments and questions on youth co-option paper:**

- Luke asked how this could be made to work this time and Hannah said it would need DTB support, and the co-optee's time would have to be protected by the DTB doing more of the agenda setting
- Michelle said her 21 year old son thought it would be quite intimidating to lead a youth board
- David thought a mentor would be helpful, and that a lower age of 16 would equate with the start of the voting age for the DT.
- Luke supported the idea but questioned if the timing was right in light of the priority of the finance debate

- Jane said that perhaps a Youth Board was a step too far, and instead better to invest time to scope the role with a Board co-optee.
- Xavier felt this was better as a July onwards task, when some strategy and structural matters had been developed and delivered

**Action:** Jane noted that with possible PLC Board co-options onto the DTB, the youth co-optee should be ring fenced and the matter to be revived at the June DTB mid-year priorities review. The Board was in agreement.

### **Ideas board suggestion**

An ideas board was suggested to capture and follow up on all the good ideas that were being generated by members and fans – one of which was the new membership package - and Hannah suggested a sub-section on Pro-Boards. It would help engagement of new people, and Niall said that there were those among the new Dons Makers who would be keen to pick this up as a discrete project.

### **Operations Group**

At the last Xavier/Jane/Joe weekly meeting, Xavier said the operations group needed to be reinvigorated, but Joe had disagreed, preferring a hybrid operations/new projects oversight group.

## 10. **D&I initiative**

Jane was disappointed that the D&I initiative appeared to be a 'nice to do', rather than a reaching out to engage with our own community with its potential commercial benefits in advance of the season ticket sales. . Jane thanked Marc Jones for his graphics work, the photography by Chris Floyd, and Niall who had written an article to support its release.

## 11. **Champagne song**

A complaint about the Champagne Song had been received from a member. It was felt by the Board to be offensive in a number of ways, but Charlie believed that it was difficult for the club to have a policy on what fans could sing, and better to try and placate the complainant directly.

The DTB discussed the DTB's role, that of football fans, the atmosphere at games, the matchday experience and the club debate and views on banning it previously

**A vote** was taken as to whether there was an appetite for a wider discussion at a later meeting.

Results of the vote:

**Yes** Hannah, Niall, Graham

**No** Tim, Xavier, Jane, Edward, Luke

### **Abstention** Charlie

**Action:** Jane said that she and Xavier would respond to the complainant, saying that the Board had discussed their complaint at the DTB, and that the Board had agreed that it would not take the matter further, or take the matter to the members.

### **AOB**

### **BCorp**

Niall introduced this topic. Companies in this scheme give as much consideration to their social and environmental impact as to their financial returns. Niall said he would find out where the club may be on the BCorp assessment, what work would be involved for the club, and report back.

### **Pub naming**

Luke said for historical reasons the Honours Committee suggested the pub name should be either The Batsford or The Sportsman. Niall felt that this could have D&I implications, and Hannah felt that for proper consultation the survey should provide fans a wider choice. Charlie suggested that that if there was a consultation, the final decision was between two names.

**A vote** was taken as to whether there should be a wider consultation.

Results of the vote:

**Yes** Hannah, Niall, Graham, Jane, Tim, Charlie

**No** Xavier, Edward, Luke

The vote indicated a wider pub naming consultation.

**Action:** There would be a wider consultation on the pub name, and Hannah and Luke would liaise to put the survey together.

### **Finance Meeting 22 April**

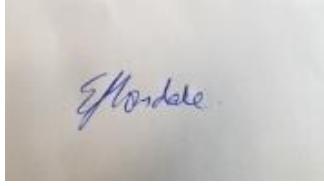
David advised that there was not a minute taker at the meeting, and Conor would be using the recording for the minutes.

There was a conflict of interest mitigation, as Edward had produced the financial data that would be voted upon, and thus could not vote on any of the financial decisions, and so Jane asked Charlie as DTB Vice Chair to take a casting vote in the event of an even 4:4 split.

Jane said that the agenda would need to include a decision on the 25 year STs proposal and agreement on the budget

It was noted that there were some recommendations about the playing budget from the previous week's financing meeting attended by PLC members, and Michelle would email Jane the recommendations and put a draft of the minutes in the folder.

The meeting concluded at 10.45 pm.

A small, rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in blue ink on a light-colored background. The signature appears to be "E. L. ..." with a period at the end.

Signed on behalf of the DT Board