

# **Dons Trust Board (DTB)**

Minutes of meeting at Plough Lane at 6.00pm on 10 May 2023

## **DTB members**

Kris Stewart (Chair)

Michele Little

Chris Philips

Graeme Price

Richard Shepherd

Mark Lewis

Matt Lowndes

Kevin Rye

## **In attendance**

Martin Newton (Secretary)

### **1. Introduction**

Kris welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence from James Macdonald.

### **2. Minutes**

(a) The minutes of the April meeting were unanimously approved, subject to some further summary to the public version.

(b) On actions, the following was noted: -

Strategic Objectives – James shared awayday notes. Noted that Nick Robertson would produce a summary of 'direction' to provide relevant information to a potential further significant minority shareholder.

Discussion turned to branding and Kris commented on the need to ensure a 'tie-in' with the strategy update - 'We are fans, we are owners, we are Wimbledon' should continue to be used as that would complement the intention to increase DT membership.

Dons Draw – Michele reported that the Dons Draw revamp was continuing. Some good comms would be needed to highlight the academy funding tie-in.

Project to locate and record previous DT policies and decisions – No further action had been possible on reviewing work so far undertaken. Discussion took place on importance of project in comparison to B Corp and noted that the latter may take 2 years, and that a member of AFCW staff had been asked to get involved in that process.

Women's games at Plough Lane – Noted that meeting had taken place yesterday, regarding pathways, teams. The number of games at Plough Lane next season had been discussed, with a minimum of 4 and an aspiration of 8 agreed. Kevin would co-ordinate a press release on this.

Junior Dons – A discussion was had on the transition arrangements. Matt undertook to oversee this.

Policy on transfer negotiations and fee disclosure – Kris confirmed that discussions would take place with Mick Buckley, Craig Cope etc on the transfer negotiations policy. Subject to those discussions taking place, the Board agreed to close the action.

Vacancy on DTB – Noted that skills shortages required further consideration. Kris considered that a copywriter should be in each meeting to produce a meeting summary for members prior to publication of formal minutes. After further discussion on website content and Board meeting summaries, Kevin undertook to draft a post-meeting summary for the web site.

16 upwards group – Matt indicated he would come back to a later meeting on possible plans for a 16 and upwards group.

Volunteers – There was a general discussion about volunteering at the DT and AFCW, following feedback from members and DTB members.

The Board recognised the immense value of the work done for the DT and AFCW by volunteers over the years and that this carried on today. Kris made the point that volunteers were not 100% 'run' by any single person. Michele suggested that responsibility for this should rest with a paid member of AFCW staff. Chris commented that the way volunteers were regarded seemed to have been lost in transition between Kingsmeadow and Plough Lane. Matt said that clear accountability was required, along with a framework setting out 'rules of engagement', as the value available to the club in this area was significant.

There were a number of ideas suggested for improving how volunteers are recruited, managed and recognised / rewarded. These were to be passed on to the club.

Kris said that Danny Macklin currently had an extensive workload and it was noted that a new Head of Commercial would soon be appointed.

*Meeting adjourned at 19.25pm and reconvened at 19.42pm*

DT memberships – Matt confirmed that work was still required in this area and an update would be submitted to a future meeting.

ProBoard alerts – Noted that the weekly rota idea had now been dispensed with as weekly alerts and other coverage was considered satisfactory. Whoever ‘gets there first’ would answer what they could answer. On the basis of this, the Board agreed to close the action.

Minority shareholders – Kris reported back on discussion from the Oversight group and from the PLCB on the issue of the two PLCB seats which are reserved for representatives of AFCW PLC minority shareholders (being all shareholders other than the DT itself). Up to now, these seats had been filled by the choice of the DTB. However, to be genuinely representative of minority shareholders that situation should not continue.

Kris explained that there were not many options on this, but that for the 2023 AGM it would be sufficient for the DTB to refrain from using its vote, enabling minority shareholders to make their own choice. For future years, the PLC Articles of Association should be updated before the 2024 AGM to reflect this.

It was noted that Iain McNay’s current term ends at the 2023 AGM and Nick Robertson’s at the 2024 AGM.

Kris confirmed that any shareholder could nominate a shareholder for election under the Articles. Nick Robertson’s shares currently constitute the majority of minority interests in AFCW PLC, though this would change if the remaining shares were sold up to the current limit of 25%-1.

Gambling – Noted that no further action at present on gambling.

Comms licences – Kevin undertook to discuss how future SGMs/AGMs would be ‘live streamed’ with James and Richard.

### 3. **Ratification of Email Decisions**

None.

### 4. **Strategic Direction**

Already discussed above.

### 5. **Board Theme Groups**

#### **Community**

##### Actions

Noted that DLAG have independent charitable status now.

On Hall of Fame, Mark would confirm timelines and leadership.

Noted that details would be forwarded on the European Fans Congress – Richard was considering attending.

Noted that Fair Game want the club to get involved in a campaign about the 80/12/8 revenue split. Kris said that Danny Macklin would need to take the lead on that.

### Consultation project

Kevin set out his proposal that the DT engage Olly Deed and Engagecf, the stakeholder engagement agency that Olly leads, to help to create and deliver the piece of consultancy the DTB has agreed is necessary in relation to a range of options that could include making more equity available to sell. The project would engage both with members and with a wider group of fans. The precise details of the project were currently being finalised, and the role of Olly/Engagecf would be to ensure it met the highest possible standards that the project needed to reach. Aside from the member-dedicated consultation events, there would be a set of wider consultation methods used to hear from season ticket holders, matchgoing fans, and also a more generalised survey of DT members (to sit alongside the formal consultative events).

Mark said that he was happy with the proposal and asked if there were any other consultancies that we should consider working with. Kevin explained that while there are others, EngageCF were the best to use for what we need, given Olly Deed's expertise alongside his background in supporters' trusts, as well as the offer of a large discount on usual rates.

Michele explained that given the small amount of money involved, it would not be appropriate to undertake a tendering process, which would be required for significantly larger sums. Other Board members made similar points, particularly in the context of needing to get moving on this work.

After discussion, it was unanimously approved that Olly Deed and Engagecf be engaged.

### **Culture and Mission**

Actions – Richard reported that all of the C&M actions had related to the recent awayday so there was no further information to update the meeting on.

### **Member Services and Engagement**

Actions – Kevin reported that there were no immediate actions that he was aware of.

Plymouth membership, and others, etc – Noted that Mark had circulated information. Matt confirmed that information was being gathered from other clubs. Kevin referred to consultation processes, and information ‘mining’ to see people's views and thoughts.

Appointment of Richard to MS&E theme group – unanimously approved

Integration – Noted that it was proposed that the DT would in future be the single data controller. Subject to the Secretary being satisfied with the finer points of detail, the proposal was unanimously approved

Fans’ forum – Kris referred to the in-depth report published earlier in the day by the club. Following the release of an edited video, which had met with a good deal of negative feedback from some members and fans, this report gave a detailed account of the recent fans’ forum, including questions asked and answers given. It was also noted that the club had said in advance that highlights of the evening would be published following the event, rather than a video of the entire event.

Despite this, Richard suggested, in the circumstances he did not feel that the report had resolved concerns of a significant number of members regarding openness, and that he felt the DTB should now take the lead on the matter to ensure transparency. He said that in his view the matter should be formally raised at the PLCB, should the DTB decide that the full video should be released.

Graeme considered that it would not make sense to make a request going beyond what the club had said in advance it would do, which was to publish highlights of the evening, rather than the full video.

Discussion commenced and in summary Michele considered that the pragmatic solution was to simply release the entire recording; Chris was of the opinion that the DTB should take the lead, respecting fans’opinions on the issue, and that the forum had been technically poor; Kevin expressed the view that a satisfactory solution was needed; Matt said that both the forum and club’s response after had been poor, with online questions addressed first but then not published with the video. He felt that the DTB should make it known that any future forum needed to be run in a far more professional manner. Kevin said that Bradford City always had BBC Leeds running similar events and that it was likely journalists would also do that for the club.

Kris reminded the Board that the discussion was about the correct course of action for the DTB, rather than trying to rerun whatever discussions had been had within the club. As the conversation

continued, it was noted that some members of the Board, whilst fully aware of and respecting the depth of feeling expressed by a number of members, acknowledged that the forum had been organised by the club and that the arrangements relating to it and after were operational matters that the club rightly had responsibility for; that the club had now released an in-depth report on the forum in addition to the edited highlights that had been made available; and that, on balance and for these reasons, there should not be a role for the DTB to play in the matter.

A vote was then taken on Richard's resolution that the DTB should formally speak to the PLCB about the decision to release edited highlights, question the reasons why and bring any response back to the DTB; and that, should the response from the PLCB not be in line with the value of being transparent and open, the DTB should recommend that the club release the full video.

There were 4 in favour of the resolution (Chris, Mark, Matt, Richard), 4 against (Graeme, James\*, Kevin, Kris), and 1 abstention (Michele).

The resolution was therefore not approved

Some further discussion then took place on communicating details of the DTB discussions on the matter after the meeting and it was agreed to publish a suitable communication. This should note that the DTB had discussed the fans' forum with the club and both agreed that it should not be allowed to happen again in the way it had.

## **Oversight**

On Club Budget 2023/24, Kris said that the Oversight theme group had discussed the contents in detail at their recent meeting.

Board members asked questions about the playing budget and about the expectations for season tickets and commercial sales, among other issues. The DTB reps on the PLCB, and the other members of the Oversight group, answered these questions, as well as explaining the process through which the budget was arrived at and the scrutiny which the PLCB undertakes, and the role of DTB representatives on the PLCB in that.

Kris informed the Board that the PLCB proposed the budget and the Oversight theme group recommended that it be approved. The Club Budget for 2023/24 was then unanimously approved.

## **6. D&I**

No further business to report. The Board was updated on recent complaints in respect of discriminatory posts on an internet message

board not run by AFCW or the DT, and steps taken to support fans and members who have been affected.

**7. AOB**

No AOB.

Meeting closed at 9.15pm

*\*In advance of meeting*