

# **Dons Trust Board (DTB)**

Minutes of virtual board meeting held at 6.30pm on 14 December 2022

## **DTB members**

Kris Stewart (Chair)  
Graham Stacey  
Hannah Kitcher  
Luke Mackenzie  
Niall Couper  
Michele Little  
Charlie Talbot  
Anne-Marie Godfrey (Co-optee)  
Graeme Price (Co-optee)

## **In attendance**

Martin Newton (Secretary)  
Chris Phillips (Observer)  
Mark Lewis (Observer)  
Richard Shepherd (Observer)  
James Macdonald (Observer)  
Matt Lowndes (Observer)

## **1. Introduction**

Apologies for absence from Freddy Flaxman.

Kris welcomed newly elected members who were in attendance as observers and thanked the outgoing members, Graham, Hannah, Luke, Niall, Charlie and Anne-Marie for all of their work and commitment during their time on the Board.

## **2. Minutes and Actions List**

The minutes of the meeting on 16 November were unanimously approved, subject to any further redactions to be reviewed and completed as soon as possible.

On redactions, Charlie suggested that for future meetings, discussions such as during Danny Macklin's attendance should be recorded in much more general rather than detailed terms as 'the Board talked about'. This suggestion was agreed unanimously.

On Freddy Flaxman, Kris reported that there was no update to the position as outlined last month.

On the actions list, the following was noted:-

Strategic direction, which including aspiration of Championship football in 5 years – Noted that the Strategy would be 'referred to' at the AGM. A vote had not taken place at last year's AGM and a review/update and vote on this would probably take place at the proposed Special General Meeting in the new year when votes on other governance decisions were required. To be considered at first meeting of the new Board.

Directors and Executive Boxes - use of unsold boxes under the 'potential sponsors' criteria of the complimentary tickets policy and inviting DT

members into the Directors Box at Plough Lane on matchdays – Niall reported that Danny had confirmed a rebranding exercise for boxes and that this would be part of that strategy. To be taken forward by the Member Services & Engagement theme group.

Membership Secretary appointment and role changes and membership integration – An agreed action plan was required focusing on integration of memberships in time for 2023-4 season. John Stembridge and Winners were working together on this, with Stephen Godfrey putting analysis together on what changes were needed. Currently, there was not 'live product' on Secutix. Noted that season tickets may be on sale earlier for the 2023/24 season than for 2022/23

Memorial Garden costs - Costs received and Luke would continue to be involved after stepping down from the Board. Action closed.

WAWF money/Dons Draw – Michele reported that a meeting had taken place with Danny, Mick and John Lynch looking at various initiatives.

DLAG de-merger from Foundation and DT Charity Approach – Application to the Charity Commission from DLAG submitted. Monthly meetings were taking place with Phil Rudling from the Foundation, Xavier Wiggins and Craig Wellstead, with Michele as DTB representative.

WiSH – further scrutiny of future proposals – Michele confirmed she would be involved with WiSH going forward in place of Niall. Kris suggested that the Culture and Mission theme group could consider initiatives going forward.

Members Survey – Noted the survey had been shared and the action closed.

Closure of PLB – Kris confirmed he would draft a letter of thanks from DTB.

Options for future equity sales and issues around reducing DT ownership below 75% - Noted Charlie had drafted parts of the options paper and would remain a Finance Committee member. Kris said that the proposed Special General Meeting early in 2023 to deal with governance restricted actions could be used as a launch for conversations about matter of equity. A verbal update would take place at the AGM about plans for a Special General Meeting.

'Her Game Too' consultation on signing-up – Hannah confirmed that the survey would go out Friday afternoon to close the action.

AGM – Kris said that slides were needed for the AGM. Charlie confirmed that the 'tech side' was still in planning. Hannah was testing Zoom. Action would be closed by AGM.

Charlie Alpeira – Michele reported that Charlie Alpeira continued with his work identifying and recording policies and decisions. Noted that David Grows would be providing SharePoint access for Charlie A.

Annual Appraisals – Michele to lead on annual appraisals for board members.

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

None.

### 4. **Strategic Direction**

It was noted that the Strategic Direction had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

### 5. **Women's Team 2023 Plan**

Michele spoke on the women's team 2023 plan, confirming that a discussion had been held with Mick Buckley and Danny. Danny was due to meet David Grows to discuss further.

### 6. **Board Theme Groups**

#### Culture and Mission

On player recruitment and MK, Kris referred to the proposals in the paper.

Niall asked that it be formally recorded that he opposed any kind of dealing with MK.

Agreed (Niall against) that:-

In respect of the recruitment of players:

- 1) We will not sign a player directly from them.
- 2) We will not pay a fee for a player where we have reliable information that a fee is payable to them via sell-ons or other clauses.
- 3) Otherwise, it is for AFC Wimbledon to decide on the recruitment of players, and we offer the following advice:
  - a) while there is a range of opinions, the general feeling from previous discussions among members was that we want to interfere with player recruitment as little as possible, and that short / loan spells with them should not be a barrier;
  - b) players closely or deeply associated with them might have work to do for many of us as fans, and may be given less slack if they start slowly or have a difficult patch; and

- c) the DTb's Culture & Mission theme group is happy to offer specific thoughts if asked about any player, but any decision remains firmly and clearly the football side.

In respect of recruiting other football staff:

- 1) We won't employ someone who has been the first-team manager / head coach / any similar position with them.
- 2) Otherwise, it is for the football side to decide on coaches, and we offer the following advice:
  - a) the same issues may apply as with players, relating to the depth and length of the association; and
  - b) the DTb's Culture & Mission theme group is happy to offer specific thoughts if asked about any individual, but any decision remains firmly and clearly within the football side.

This policy shall continue unless & until rescinded / amended by the DTB.

### Member Services and Engagement

On MS&E actions, Michele reported that the newsletter had gone well, and that a new member of the Board would be required to take responsibility for it. Noted that Foundation information had been omitted in error.

On Board changes, Michele reminded outgoing members of the need for a personal email, handover notes and anything else for SharePoint.

### Oversight

Noted that there were no oversight actions at the moment, pending work being completed on governance changes.

Michele confirmed that the DT and Club accounts had been signed off, with a delay on the internal quarterly DT accounts now to be reported to the next meeting as she had been engaged with the club audit.

In response to a question from Charlie, Kris confirmed that the MD report to the PLCB should still come to the DT, with the Oversight group bringing that to the meeting.

Noted that the current MD report covered changes to training ground; that the club were fined in relation to incidents at both recent Sutton games; ticketing; staff 1 to 1s had been completed; catering; strategy review and improvements to the second floor and third floors; website and streaming; overhaul of IT; and staff benefits/payments.

*The Board adjourned at 8.05pm, reconvening at 8.15pm after a 10-minute break.*

On the education hub, Michele said that Danny and Spencer had visited Sheffield Wednesday last week to look at their project, that there were likely to be 'community benefits' in the partnership with Richmond upon Thames that might provide a boost to the club's staff base, and that the third floor would ideally provide a multi-purpose use (folding doors, opened up for events/hospitality) so not just entirely for education hub use going forward. The need was for an appropriate business plan and marketing input to monetise and exploit the space.

### Community

Niall spoke to the revised actions list circulated by email during the meeting and the update was noted.

Hannah made the point that the Board needed to agree a DTB lead on Junior Dons. Kris confirmed a decision on new roles and responsibilities would follow as soon as possible. Luke said that he agreed the JD representative should be on the Community group.

On B corp, Niall reported that more work was needed.

### **6. Diversity and Inclusion**

On D&I, Niall reported that on diversity data it was proposed to contact Amwar Uddin for assistance and help with setting targets. Anwar was a former Bristol Rovers player who helped set up an initiative form for Dons for Diversity. Niall stated that a good representative sample was not collected before so good practice in collecting diversity data would be looked into. Kris also suggested contacting Exeter City for help with this.

### **7. AOB**

Graham said that the Hall of Fame launch was tentatively scheduled for January and would benefit from a 'master timeline' to fit in with other initiatives around DLAG/Foundations/Club/WAWF relaunch. Kris agreed that this should be a DTB action.

Meeting closed at 9.07pm