



***Minutes of a Special General Meeting of the Wimbledon Football Club Supporters' Society Limited (The Dons Trust) held online on 31 March 2021 at 8.30pm.***

## **1. Welcome and introduction**

Apologies were noted from David Grown (Secretary), and it was noted that some DTB members may be late as they had been at Plough Lane to assist with streaming the Youth Cup Game (that had just finished).

Jane Lonsdale welcomed members, noting this was the first meeting of 2021 and was a single item SGM to cover a proposal for London Broncos use of Plough Lane. Jane noted that the meeting would be recorded and made available to members via probboards after the meeting.

Jane noted the December AGM minutes would be available at the next SGM (planned for 28 April). It was noted that the deadline for resolutions for that meeting was 1 April 2021.

Jane noted that the club had put out two rounds of information out to members ahead of the SGM, and that questions had also been responded to on social media, at the Meet the DTB meeting with Hannah Kitcher and Tim Hillyer that Joe Palmer (CEO) had also attended.

Jane advised that the voting results from the SGM would not be known immediately as they would need auditing to include proxy votes, and to ensure that members had not voted twice and that only members had voted. The Secretary would do this in the coming days and the results would be available on the Dons Trust Official Website in the coming days.

## **2. London Broncos R.L.F.C. Use of Plough Lane**

Questions were invited, these were responded to by Joe Palmer, Luke Mackenzie, Xavier Wiggins, Edward Leek and Jane Lonsdale.

- 1) What did the club pay QPR F.C. for our groundshare earlier this season?
  - a. Joe: this information is confidential, but negotiations were informed by prior conversations with at least four other clubs
- 2) Can you confirm that any branding in the stadium will be non-permanent and that a London Broncos R.L.F.C. (hereafter, Broncos) crest will not be placed at the stadium?
  - a. Luke: branding is all temporary, electronic infrastructure similar to the arrangement with Chelsea F.C. at Kingsmeadow, there is no anticipation of Broncos asking for their club crest to be displayed
  - b. Joe: there are nopermanent signs planned, an LED display could be shown above the main entrance
- 3) To what extent will there be an overlap in fixtures between the two clubs?

- a. Joe: there will be five weeks of overlap this season as Broncos' season begins in March. The club has primacy of fixture, which is an EFL requirement for any groundshare deals featuring member clubs
- 4) Has the club taken references from Broncos' former landlords?
  - a. Joe: A due diligence assessment will need to be completed prior to any contract being signed
- 5) Does the club share in any television revenues deriving from Broncos?
  - a. Joe: no
  - b. Luke: were the stadium to require further investment, Broncos would bear these costs
- 6) How many years into the agreement is the first break clause?
  - a. Joe: this information is confidential but there is a break clause
- 7) Will merchandise from Broncos be on sale in the club shop?
  - a. Joe: no, not under the current terms

Joe pre-emptively raised the subject of how the club had planned to manage the load on the pitch. He explained that rugby league was less demanding than either football or rugby union and that the maximum overlap would come in summer at either six or seven games, however, he made clear that this was when grass was easiest to regrow. Joe confirmed that he had no concerns concerning the pitch and that a test of a grow light recently had yielded impressive results. It was noted that outside the terms of the deal, Broncos would contribute a per matchday sum for pitch maintenance.

- 8) Would the rugby league have any overlap with ladies or youth club games?
  - a. Joe: the club can determine that but overlap with the youth team would likely only occur with their cup games
- 9) Will club fans be the first to attend a competitive sporting event?
  - a. Joe: the club will host a test event on 18<sup>th</sup> May inviting club fans to attend first
- 10) Will the club be bearing the cost of stewards and bar staff for Broncos matches?
  - a. No, everything would be paid for separately, police are not required for rugby league matches
- 11) How will the presence of Broncos affect progress on developing other stands at Plough Lane?
  - a. Luke: this cannot be considered until arrangements have been made to manage the refinancing of the MSP loan
- 12) Is the expected minimum revenue of £250k [sic] inclusive of costs? Has opportunity cost been factored in?
  - a. Joe: groundshares operate on the basis of the stadium being handed over for the day. However, depending on the time of the kick-off, evening events may still be possible
- 13) When would any deal start and when would Broncos move in?
  - a. Joe: July 2021
- 14) Was a groundshare arrangement always part of the strategy with regards to PL?
  - a. Jane: no, it was not but it has become a prominent subject for discussion given recent financial pressures (not quite true, we future proofed the stadium for this eventually so that we could have the option is such an opportunity arose.)
- 15) What would be the impact on stadium naming rights and sponsorship opportunities?
  - a. Joe: any deal would have a positive impact on items like a beer deal given the demands for larger barrelage and consequently bigger retros. On the subject of naming rights, different commercial partners have taken different views
- 16) Did any DTB members vote against the proposal?
  - a. Jane: no, the proposal received unanimous support from the DTB as set out in the meeting papers.

- 17) Are there any early termination costs associated with the contract?
  - a. Joe: No
- 18) Has the club consulted third-party expertise concerning the load on the pitch?
  - a. Joe: yes, Richard Hayden of Turfcare who led the installation of the pitch is a world turf care specialist has provided his expertise and is supportive
- 19) Is there any truth in rumours that Sutton United F.C. would want to groundshare with us in the event of their promotion?
  - a. Joe: i will not speculate on other clubs wishing to groundshare out of confidentiality to them
- 20) Is the rugby league pitch the same size as the football pitch?
  - a. Joe: the club can host the smallest size pitch allowance by RIB requirements. The rugby goalposts would be on the six-yard line and the in-goal area and run off would extend around 9m behind these
- 21) Have discussions with Merton Council taken place?
  - a. Joe: yes, they have to, and the Council is supportive
- 22) Does the panel think that a more positive attitude on the arrangement would benefit the club?
  - a. Luke: yes, the financial benefits if Broncos prosper are massive
  - b. Xavier: if invited, Broncos are keen to play a role in community initiatives and are keen to establish roots so that further growth is not stymied
- 23) What is the biggest risk to the proposal and how is this being mitigated?
  - a. Joe: unclear what the biggest risk is but concerns on pitch have been addressed; crowd behaviour should not be a concern. It was uncertain whether there would be additional demands placed on access to parking
- 24) Does the club have planning permission for the groundshare?
  - a. Luke: not yet but Merton Council has been very supportive thus far
- 25) Will the deal grant access to permanent office space for Broncos?
  - a. Joe: no, but a few desk spaces will be allowed for some of their staff for a few days a week when needed
- 26) Has the proposed arrangement impacted the club's insurance costs?
  - a. Joe: no change is expected but if there was an additional premium then Broncos would pay this
- 27) Will the pub be able to open after home games with Broncos?
  - a. Joe: that would depend on the kick-off time of the matches, but unlikely
- 28) What are Mark Robinson's thoughts on the arrangement with regards to the pitch's usage and other clubs potentially not loaning us players because of the impaired surface?
  - a. Joe: Mark has engaged with the club's experts and has no concerns
- 29) Do club debenture rights apply to Broncos matches?
  - a. Jane: no
- 30) Will the Broncos offer discounted ticket prices to club supporters?
  - a. Joe: I have raised with Broncos, but this is an open item
- 31) Have local residents been engaged on the proposal?
  - a. Joe: not formally as of yet but this will begin shortly
- 32) How desperately does the club need the money?
  - a. Joe: if the club does not add additional revenue streams, it will not be possible to form a competitive playing budget. The proposal offers a potentially significant income stream that cannot be ignored
- 33) How visible are pitch markings from rugby league during the period of overlap?
  - a. Joe: there will be no pitch markings for the vast majority of the season. During the period of overlap, all possibilities are being investigated to mitigate this issue including, wherever possible, using overlapping markings, but you may see some faint lines at times
- 34) Has the DTB considered encouraging fans to attend Broncos matches?
  - a. Xavier: No as the board did not want to pre-empt any decision. However, if the proposal is approved then it is in the club's interest for Broncos to prosper. Broncos are one of two professional clubs in the rugby league

- second division so have a decent chance of getting to the play-offs and winning
- 35) Do the Broncos play on a Sunday?
    - a. Joe: occasionally yes as well as on Friday nights so there should be minimal impact on overlap with weddings bookings
  - 36) Is the pricing on the deal inflation-linked?
    - a. Joe: the proposal is at heads of terms stage only; the club would consider linking payments to an inflation index
  - 37) What will the revenue be used for in the event that the proposal is approved?
    - a. Joe: ultimately, the revenue helps to secure the club's playing budget
  - 38) What would happen in the event that the Broncos encountered financial difficulties during the period of the groundshare?
    - a. Joe: this will be assessed as part of the club's DDQ, it has been noted that the new owner wants to professionalise Broncos and anchor them geographically
  - 39) What is the payment schedule associated with the heads of terms?
    - a. Joe: the club is paid in advance of each match
  - 40) Has the club factored in increased building, electricity and gas costs?
    - a. Joe: yes
  - 41) Are the final income values based on fixed amounts of percentage of income?
    - a. Joe: percentage of income
  - 42) What is the most concerning open risk?
    - a. Joe: that the proposal potentially upsets or alienates local residents, we will know more when engagement commences
    - b. Luke: there is always the risk of unknown unknowns
  - 43) Are the first games that Broncos play at Plough Lane likely to be competitive ones?
    - a. Joe: yes, as they are ready to play and pay, the club's focus has been on ensuring that the first event at the club is an AFCW one
  - 44) Is the £200k minimum income figure guaranteed?
    - a. Joe: nothing is guaranteed but £200k is a very conservative estimate based on current attendance levels being unchanged which is unlikely
  - 45) Could the groundshare be extended to include a second football club as well?
    - a. Joe: Richard believes that the pitch could accommodate this but that the ground staff team and infrastructure would have to be extended

Jane proceeded to table the single resolution:

**Resolution 1:** I agree for AFC Wimbledon to rent Plough Lane for use for home matches by the London Broncos

Yes 241 (92%), 20 against (8%), 1 abstention (0%)

Jane thanked everyone for their contributions, and noted thanks to Conor Daly for taking minutes and George Jones and Gary Jordan for their assistance, behind the scenes of the zoom meeting.

The meeting ended at 21.59