(Paper SGM0816)

Draft Minutes of the Special General Meeting of the Wimbledon Football Club Supporters' Society (the Dons Trust) held at The Cherry Red Records Stadium on Thursday 7th April 2016 at 7.30pm.

1. Apologies

Dons Trust Chairman Matthew Breach (MB) opened the meeting with apologies for absence from DT Secretary Rob McGlinchey and DT member Paul Jeater.

2. Approval of minutes from AGM on 17th December, 2015

The minutes of the AGM were approved unanimously.

3. Admission prices for 2016/17 season

MB drew members' attention to the background paper on proposed price increases. The intention was to increase season ticket and matchday ticket prices if and only if the club was promoted to League One so as to provide additional revenue to give AFC Wimbledon a chance of being competitive in the higher league.

Mark Davis (MD) presented the results of the ticket pricing survey of supporters (not just DT members) that had been undertaken in late 2014. The results of the survey had now been published on the DT website[1].

Noting that survey responses regarding the need for consultation on ticket prices were mixed, MB said that there was now a specific pricing proposal on the table, so it was considered opportune to consult on it. He invited questions and comments and asked Erik Samuelson (ES) to answer questions of an operational nature.

> *Q (Jake Prager): How would the increase be managed, now that renewal forms have been sent out?*
> A (ES): If you apply before 2pm on 7 May, then the price is unchanged. New prices will be announced for applications received thereafter. Those applying during the play-offs will receive a partial refund if the club is not promoted.
>
> *Q (Ray Downham): Will prices be reduced in the following season if the club is relegated from League One?*
> A (MB): That will be decided as part of the budgeting process for the following season, but prices rarely go down.

[1] http://thedonstrust.org/2016/03/31/sgm-ticket-pricing-discussion-background-paper/

Q (Matt Jennings): What would be the impact on the playing budget?
A (ES): Based on this season's wages budgets in League One, if you take this year's spending and add the extra solidarity money, we would be 23rd. Adding in £90k from the ticket price increase would put us about18th.

Q (John Dolan): Looking at the number of matches that a ST holder needs to attend in order to make a saving relative to buying on a game by game basis, how do we compare to other clubs?
A (MB / ES): Originally, ST prices were set high in order to raise funds. Over time, ST prices have risen less quickly than matchday admission prices, so this has moved closer to the norm. Last season, the break-even point was 17 – 18 games. Clubs will take different approaches, depending on the extent to which they fill their stadium capacity. In our case, seats are in high demand.

Q (Julian Edwards): Why is the discount for over-65s higher than other clubs?
A (MB): We have always tried to keep prices low for over-65s. However, those over-65s who feel able to pay more can give larger voluntary donations.

Q: Will we be able to cater for larger attendances in League One?
A (MB): We have little additional capacity at our current stadium, so increasing ticket prices rather than attendances is needed to generate additional matchday revenue.

Q (Ed Halls): The discounts for over-65s are too large. Can we vote against one particular aspect of the proposed increases?
A (MB / ES): Members are being asked to vote on a package. There are intricacies to be dealt with such as keeping prices in round numbers. If there is a strong feeling that prices for over-65s are too low, then this can be followed up for future seasons by consulting over-65s. But if over-65s who sit in the main stand want to move as a result of price rises, there are no other seats to offer them, which could be unfair. Pricing at the new stadium will need fresh thinking and consultation.

Q (Ian Hidden): If the club is promoted and then relegated, would players absorb the loss of revenue through lower wages?
A (ES): The Football League requires contracts covering more than one season to specify the wages that would be payable in different divisions. Those of our players who have multi-year contracts are entitled to an increase if we are promoted, but a decrease if we are relegated.

Q (Cliff Simpson): The ST renewal form should provide flexibility to pay a larger voluntary donation than £50.
A (MB): People can pay a larger voluntary donation, but we could look again at the wording on the form.

Q (Xavier Wiggins): Does promotion impinge upon the academy budget? It would be good to have a discussion with DT members about the academy.
A (ES): There is no obvious impact on the academy budget. Total spending on the academy is more than half of the first team budget, although the net cost is lower, at £250 – 300K. Agree this would be a worthwhile discussion.

Q (John Martin): Would promotion result in greater ground safety costs?
A (MB / ES): Not really, except that there might be more high profile games which would have higher crowds and need more policing. Playing Franchise would also have higher policing costs.

Q (Ed Halls): The differential between matchday prices between the Your Golf Travel and Chemflow terraces has increased – why? Doesn't this mean we will collect less money from away supporters than we otherwise could?
A (MB): The view from the YGT terrace is worse than from the Chemflow, and this is true for away supporters too. Stewarding has been increased, to stop YGT ticket holders sneaking into the Chemflow.

Q (Rob Crane): Given that some away ticket prices will now be more than £20, does the new pricing comply with the Football Supporters' Federation's Twenty's Plenty campaign?
A (MB): Yes, because tickets are available for less than £20.

Concluding the discussion, MB called for a show of hands on the following resolution, which was supported by the DT Board:

"To authorise the Dons Trust Board to approve the Football Club Board's proposal for an increase in admission prices for the 2016/17 season in the event of promotion to League One."

The resolution was passed overwhelmingly, with no votes against and three abstentions.

4. Brief on new stadium

ES updated members on planning developments for the new stadium. To the club's surprise, the London Mayor had called in the application[2], despite recommendations from LB Merton and GLA officers to approve it. We cannot be sure of the reasons for the decision. It was probable that determination of the application would be left to the current Mayor's successor – likely to be either Sadiq Khan or Zac Goldsmith.

ES had put an appeal on the club's website urging the club's supporters (and indeed any other London-based football supporters) to bring this issue to the attention of the two main Mayoral candidates. At this stage, detailed representations were not necessary. Following the election, the new Mayor would seek representations. Potentially, the scope of the consultation could be quite narrow – such as cultural heritage - so we should wait to see the specific issues on which the incoming Mayor wishes to consult.

ES remained optimistic that the application would be approved. The timing of the Mayor's move was, however, unfortunate. Whilst our advisers consider that the new stadium can still be ready for the 2018/19 season, the current environment of high construction inflation means

[2] This means that the Mayor decided that the GLA should take over determination of the planning application from LB Merton.

that a six-month delay implies an increase in construction costs of around £1 million. ES invited questions from members.

Q (by email): Will low steel prices help with construction costs?
A: Yes, they will help moderate construction inflation in other areas.

Q (Ray Leyden): Paschal Taggart had not put in an application because his representatives had predicted our application would be called in. Did they know something we didn't know?
A: They probably put a positive interpretation on the situation, and have been wrong in other areas – that our application would fail due to flooding concerns. There is no planning application from Paschal Taggart, and it would cost him a substantial sum of money to produce an application for a site to which he has no rights.

Q (Colin Gales): Is it true that Sadiq Khan opposes our application?
A: Not to our knowledge. Prior to the general election, he had written an open letter setting out his constituents' concerns, to which ES had replied publicly, demonstrating how those concerns were being addressed.

Q (Stephen Adams): Given that the Mayor has cited loss of cultural assets (i.e. greyhounds and stock car racing) as a possible issue, should Galliard present a fait accompli by demolishing the existing stadium? If the incoming Mayor rejects the application, would Galliard / we have an appetite to appeal?
A: Galliard would need to exercise its contractual rights to acquire the site before demolition could proceed. Demolition was unlikely to be a politically astute move. Theoretically, it would be possible to seek judicial review of the Mayor's decision now, although that would cost money and be time-consuming. It was premature to speculate on how we might react to a negative decision by the future Mayor – it depends on the circumstances.

Q (Cormac van der Hoeven): Did we underestimate lobbying activities by those opposed to the application, and what lobbying have we undertaken ourselves since LB Merton's decision in December?
A: We made appropriate representations, and we thought our case was likely to succeed.

Q (Cliff Simpson): Representatives of the Wimbledon Society have commented at a recent residents' association meeting on the successful outcome of their lobbying to have the application called in. Do we know enough about those who oppose the application?
A: A football stadium project will inevitably generate some concerns and opposition. Our approach has been to engage with those parties expressing concerns and to make the case for the project positively.

Q: Since house prices are increasing, could Galliard help with the additional costs resulting from the delay? Might they offer more affordable housing?
A: We are getting as much as we can from Galliard. They are making a number of contributions for social infrastructure under the S106 agreement – it is up to the new Mayor to consider whether the contributions are adequate.

Q: Might the delay cause Chelsea to walk away from acquiring this stadium? Is there a possibility of increasing the price payable by Chelsea?
A: The agreement with Chelsea is in the final stages of being checked, prior to being signed over the coming weeks. After a year of negotiations, we do not intend to renegotiate the price. We have been keeping Chelsea informed and we do not think they want to walk away, but the contract has a date by which they could walk away if the Conditions Precedent are not satisfied.

Q: Could LB Merton put pressure on the Mayor to expedite the hearing, given the need for the new housing?
A: They will need to wait to see who is the new Mayor. As regards housing, the Mayor is unlikely to be excessively troubled by a delay of a few months.

Q: How much will the new consultation cost us?
A: The direct financial cost to us of the new consultation is likely to be very small. If we need to appeal against the new Mayor's decision, or there is a judicial review, then the costs would be higher.

Q (by email): What remaining grounds for objection do LB Wandsworth have? Have we addressed their concerns? Are they real or imaginary?
A: We have addressed the concerns raised by LB Wandsworth's officers.

Q (by email): If the case for turning down the application proves to be overwhelming, would it be helpful to criticise the Mayor? Could we recoup costs? Would he have any personal liability?
A: It is not helpful to direct personal criticism, and we do not expect these courses of action.

Q (Ernie Sharp): Can officers not prevail against one politician's decision?
A: There is a process to go through. An incoming Mayor will not want to make a demonstrably irrational decision, so we will need to make the case for our application. In the meantime, supporters should email candidates.

Q (Colin Dipple): The Mayor has not turned down our planning application; he has decided to call it in (i.e. to take over the decision from LB Merton).
A: Correct.

5. Football matters

Whilst not related to the stadium, ES had received some further questions by email which would be of interest to members.

Q: Please clarify how player loans will work next season.
A: There will be no short term loans next season outside the transfer window. The only loans that will therefore be possible will be: full season from August to May; half-season from August to January; half-season from January to May. Only four loans may be made in total for the whole season (but if a player taken on loan at the start of the season is signed permanently in the January transfer window, then that does not count as one of the four). Possible exceptions are under consideration for

goalkeepers (e.g. an emergency one-week loan) but this issue will need to be taken to UEFA. Thanks to our development squad, we are better prepared for the new arrangements than some clubs.

Q: How much money does the club make for a televised league game?
A: The home club receives £30,000. The away club receives £10,000 plus a contribution to travel and accommodation. Taking into account the expenses of printing the programme, the postponement of the Portsmouth match (which will not be televised) has cost us in the region of £35,000.

6. Verbal updates from DTB members

MB updated members on the allocation of DTB roles for the coming year, as follows:

- Nigel Higgs and Mark Davis will be looking at future organisation, and Roger Evans and Sean McLaughlin will be looking at associated people issues, such as succession planning.

- Matt Breach will be working with Erik Samuelson on any community share issue or equivalent financing exercise.

- Roger Evans will continue his project management role on the new stadium.

- David Growns will lead on our dealings with Kingstonian. He will also lead on communications and on a customer relationship management system.

- Matt Breach will oversee the DT's relations with other external bodies. Nigel Higgs will take on the specific issue of safe standing. We will take an interest in other lobbying initiatives such as Twenty's Plenty and tax advantages for community owned clubs.

- Sean McLaughlin will continue as Treasurer.

- Tom Adam will take on responsibility for DT fundraising.

- Colin Dipple will work with Rob McGlinchey (DT Secretary) to set up a working group looking at membership engagement, including youth engagement, and will work with John Stembridge (Membership Secretary) to support our membership joining / renewal processes.

- Jane Lonsdale will lead on roll-out of Webjam (see below).

MB reported that a policy on board room attendance will be published very shortly. As from next season, visiting directors at home games will be hosted by a DT Board member and a DT member (to be selected by ballot). There will be a tighter policy on who attends the board room at away matches. There is less scope to include DT members in the board room at away games.

MB reported that there will be a consultation on terracing and other priorities for the new stadium. Volunteers with relevant experience in consultation were invited to step forward.

Jane Lonsdale (JL) reported on progress with Webjam, a private social networking tool for communicating with members. This was a way of adding value to members for belonging to the DT. The contract would be signed with Webjam imminently, entitling us to a number of years of free service before charges are payable. It would be rolled out to members in June / July, and members would be advised what they needed to do to use it. Cormac van der Hoeven asked whether Webjam was a way of incentivising non-members to join the DT and whether it might isolate those members who are not DT members. JL clarified that the main purpose was to add value to members who already belong, although it could also be that some non-members join the DT if they think they are missing out on information.

7. Any Other Business

Concluding the meeting, MB indicated that consideration is being given to an alternative location, possibly Wimbledon Brewery for the next SGM.

There being no other business, MB brought the meeting to a close at 9.20 pm.