Role Profile: Dons Trust Secretary

Purpose of the Role

The Dons Trust is a Community Benefit Society and the majority owner of AFC Wimbledon. The board has decided to appoint a paid Secretary to lead and professionalise the secretarial function, supported by up to two volunteer Assistant Secretaries.

This role has historically been performed on a voluntary basis. However, the growing size of the Society's membership, the increasing complexity of governance challenges, and the need for specialist governance, regulatory, and administrative expertise to support the Trust's future development and operational needs means the Board has determined this should now be a contracted, paid position.

The Secretary is a non-voting officer of the Society, distinct from the elected Board of Directors. The role is responsible for ensuring the Trust's governance processes operate effectively, compliantly, and transparently. The Secretary works collaboratively with the board but is not a member of it and must maintain independence and objectivity in the discharge of their duties.

Terms of the role

- The Secretary reports to the Dons Trust board.
- The successful applicant must be, or become, a member of The Dons Trust by the date of appointment and continue to be a fully paid-up member of The Dons Trust whilst holding the post.
- This is a contracted paid role, not employment. The role has a limited budget, and the Secretary will need to operate within it to deliver the work effectively, leveraging volunteer Assistant Secretaries and technology to manage workload. The expected time commitment is 16-20 days per year.
- The role is subject to periodic review by the board.
- The Secretary must abide by the confidentiality of board discussions and the policies and guidelines of the Trust.

Key Responsibilities

1. **Board Meeting Preparation and Attendance**
    - Prepare and distribute agendas, meeting papers, and other relevant documents prior to board meetings and General Meetings.
    - Attend all board meetings and General Meetings, ensuring accurate documentation of discussions, decisions, and actions.
    - Manage the logistics and scheduling of meetings in accordance with the constitution of the Trust, the Governance Calendar, and the Society's obligations to its members.

2. **Minute Taking and Record Keeping**
    - Utilise transcription services for board meetings, with written documents focusing on clarifying and recording decisions and action points.

- Ensure meeting summaries and minutes are produced and distributed to both the board and members in line with the Dons Trust board ways of working
- Maintain a definitive record of Board decisions, policies, and constitutional documents.

3. Monitoring Secretary Communications

- Monitor and manage the Secretary email inbox and chat channels on an ongoing basis, ensuring queries and correspondence are directed to the appropriate individuals in a timely manner.
- Flag urgent or time-sensitive matters to the board as required.

4. Regulatory Compliance and Best Practice

- Produce and submit all necessary filings to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in a timely manner.
- Keep up to date with regulatory changes affecting Community Benefit Societies and ensure the Society's compliance, including requirements from the FCA and the Independent Football Regulator (IFR).
- Keep up to date with relevant best practice guidance (e.g. from Co-operatives UK, the Football Supporters' Association) and recommend changes to Society policy as appropriate.

5. Governance Development

Oversee the development and / or regular review of key governance documentation, including:

- Standing Orders for the board and meeting processes
- Governance Calendar for the Dons Trust
- Standing Orders for members' meetings and meeting processes
- Election policies and processes
- Other policies and processes to support the execution of the Society's rules
- Risk register

6. Management of the Secretariat

- Lead, mentor, and coordinate the work of the Assistant Secretaries.
- Delegate appropriate tasks and ensure effective delivery across the secretariat team.
- Support the development of Assistant Secretaries as a pathway to future board or officer roles.

7. Liaison and Support

- Liaise with the Elections Steering Group to support fair and effective elections.
- Provide guidance to the Board on constitutional and procedural matters.
- Provide additional support to the Board and Society members as required.
- Assist in the organisation and facilitation of any special projects or initiatives.

Person Specification

Essential

- Proven expertise in the Secretary's role within a Community Benefit Society, co-operative, supporters' trust, or comparable membership-based organisation.
- Significant experience advising or supporting societies on governance, capital raising, or regulatory compliance (experience with multiple societies strongly preferred).
- Strong understanding of the legal, regulatory, and constitutional framework for Community Benefit Societies registered with the FCA.
- Understanding of key issues and debates in the football sector, and more specifically the challenges facing fan-owned football clubs.
- Understanding of the distinct roles and powers of board members, officers (including the Secretary and Treasurer), and other non-voting contributors within a co-operative governance structure.
- Excellent organisational and time-management skills, with the ability to work independently within limited hours.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills.
- Proficient in using transcription services and relevant technology tools (including Microsoft Teams and SharePoint).

Desirable

- Membership of, or association with, a recognised governance expert body (e.g. Co-operatives UK Governance Expert Panel).
- Experience of working with or within football supporters' trusts.
- Experience of constitutional review, rule changes, or society restructuring.