Dons Trust Board Meeting, Wednesday 9th April 2025, Plough Lane

In attendance	Apologies	Also in Attendance
Angus Fox (Vice chair)	Sean McLaughlin (Chair)	George Jones (Secretary)
Simon Hood	Martin Drake	Reece Wheeler-Kelly (Assistant secretary)
Hannah Kitcher	Alex Folkes	Phil Hastings (Club Foundation) Item 2
James Longhurst	Ian Robinson	
Graeme Price	Michele Little (Treasurer)	

1. Introduction, Apologies and Protocols, and Directors Interests

The meeting began at 6.10pm. Apologies had been received from Alex in addition to Sean, Martin, Ian and Michele who were at a Blue and Yellow club event at the House of Lords. AFC Wimbledon chair Mick Buckley also gave apologies for the same reason.

George began the meeting by informing those present that despite the number of absent board members there was a quorum in line with the constitution to allow the meeting to proceed. George informed the board that in the absence of the chair the vice chair would control the meeting and that means Angus would chair the meeting. George concluded by asking the board if anyone had any interests they needed to declare in relation to items on the agenda for the meeting. No board members raised any conflict.

It was also explained that a portion of the meeting was being filmed to potentially be part of the documentary series following the club. However, nothing confidential would be discussed in that section of the meeting.

Angus then began the meeting

2. Foundation Update

Angus then introduced Phil Hastings (CEO of the club foundation) to the rest of the board.

Phil then made a presentation regarding the operations of the club foundation. Phil informed the board he has been in post for a few months now and the foundation were about to begin a new three-year strategy. Phil then informed the board that unity with the rest of the club has improved significantly post flood with the foundation and club now sharing office space. He then introduced the strategy that was set to be launched on the 8th May at the foundation awards night. Simon then asked how the foundation is funded, Phil responded that it is a mixture of community fundraising, donations and EFL grants. Graeme asked how this is split and Phil responded by saying we get around £100k from the Premier league and £35k from the EFL which combine to make around 10/15% of the foundation budget but there are other grants. He added that the biggest financial struggle is getting grants that are unallocated to allow them to be spent on core costs.

Phil then presented the three-year strategy. The ambition is to be “London’s leading community club” including becoming the leading foundation in the local area even with the competition from premier league clubs. The areas of focus for the three-year strategy are Merton and Wandsworth. Angus asked if the map showed what geographic areas we have which are in conflict with other clubs. Phil added the premier league foundations get 10x the central funding that EFL clubs do. Phil shared a map showing the deprivation levels in different areas of the target areas. He reiterated the plan for a wellness hub to replace the old downstairs foundation offices. Phil then informed the board on how he intended to measure the impact of their operations. Graeme offered to put Phil in touch with the relevant people in the London Community Foundation that could assist with fundraising via matched fund raising.

Phil set out the pillars of the Foundation’s operation and strategic actions. James asked to be kept in the loop on diversity issues due to the similarities with issues facing the trust. Phil informed the board that a previous club they had a youth fans board made of the people from the local schools with a focus on ED&I projects. He added this project worked very well and would be happy to work with James on something similar. Phil then explained the work being done with the girl’s project. Phil explained what the foundation needs to be able to achieve its objectives over the three-year strategy. Phil clarified that they have 19 full time and 15 contract staff. Angus asked Phil to share the slides with the rest of the board. James asked how the foundation works with little league, Phil responded by saying they don’t do as much at the moment but it is something that should grow over time. Phil then added the only way the EFL will increase the funding they give us is to better governance and compliance. Graeme asked if the regulator will have any impact on their funding, Phil responded by saying he didn’t know. Phil confirmed a launch breakfast for a new women’s coaching programme called LeaDon will take place on the 29th April, He went onto praise Marc Jones who is pushing for the foundation to get more publicity on club channels. Angus asked Phil to send through a list of key dates to ensure DTB attendance at key foundation events.

Phil left the meeting at 7pm

3. **Strategy Update**

A discussion took place in relation to the Dons Trust strategy document.

4. **Approval of previous minutes**

The minutes from the March meeting were approved subject to some further redactions.

5. **Ratification of email decisions**

No email decisions were taken this month.

6. **Club Board Meeting Summary and Questions**

This item is now a standing item where the DTB's club board representatives will report back from the most recent club board meeting. The minutes from the most recent club board session were shared the previous evening. A discussion then took place on what was presented in the minutes.

7. **DTB Actions List and Club Board Action Monitoring**

The board went through the outstanding actions list. This included a discussion on being more vocal in support of the independent regulator. It is agreed Alex work towards making a public announcement. An update was also provided on the latest repairs following the flood. The club are continuing to investigate the possibility of potential future revenue streams. A discussion took place on the latest status following the job advert for the membership and marketing managers with some very high level candidates. It was agreed a DT board member would sit in on the second interview.

8. **Dons Trust Finance, Plough Lane Bonds, Debt and equity update**

As Michele was unable to attend this meeting no update was provided.

9. **Electric Substation**

A brief discussion took place on how the substation fits into the risk register.

10. **Sky TV deal, early kickoffs and members survey**

James provided an update on the latest ahead of the proposed members survey to discuss the impact of the early kickoffs. It was agreed to look into an additional smart survey device license or to look into alternatives. Reece updated the board following hearing back from contacts in the rail industry who confirmed that moving to 6 weeks notice would have limited impact on costs. Graeme confirmed that there are no penalties in the EFL contract if Sky miss their notification window.

The secretary left the meeting due to a potential conflict on the next item.

11. **<u>Women's team</u>**

A closed board session was held.

12. **<u>SGM Planning</u>**

The secretary re-joined the meeting.

George provided an update on planning for the Spring SGM. George confirmed it would be taking place in the Legends Lounge on Monday 28th April from 7pm. George then confirmed that it had been agreed that there would be a more relaxed informal feel to the event to try and reduce the "them and us atmosphere" that they felt had been present at previous meetings. George also confirmed that the meeting would be live streamed via the club app with live written questions taken via the Dons discord. Advanced questions could be submitted via email up to 24hrs in advance of the meeting. George then went onto explain that the meeting would follow a slightly different structure to previous meetings. At the start of the meeting at 7pm there would be a Q&A with journalist and tv presenter Jacqui Oatley who will talk about her experience coming to Wimbledon games and talk about football in general. George hoped this section would be hosted by Maddi Sweetman who George felt would be excellent addition. The meeting proper would then begin at 7.30pm. George concluded by adding that the notification had already been sent to the printers to be distributed to those members who still receive paper copies and would be made online the following day around midday. A discussion took place on what the likely members' questions would be. James suggested having a document of likely questions and answers and who would answer different topics.

13. **<u>Closed Session</u>**

A further closed session took place with no one entering or leaving the meeting.

14. **<u>Dons Discord</u>**

George and Reece provided an update following disciplinary action being taken on the platform. George and Reece then asked for permission to put an advert out asking for more moderators to reduce the workload on both of them and it was agreed that George and Reece should try and attract some new online moderators. A discussion took place on the usage of Discord compared to the previous platform. It is agreed Reece would complete a 6 month review of the platform for the July meeting.

15. **<u>Online Safety Act</u>**

Angus provided an update on the latest work undertaken with George and Reece to ensure compliance with the Online Safety Act which is now in force. The update covered the scope and implications of the and the mitigations we are now required to have in place. A discussion took place on the sustainability of online platforms. A discussion took place surrounding the benefits of an off-platform policy. A discussion then took place regarding the publication of some elements of the risk assessment. It is agreed to make some slides and introduce the topic at the SGM. It was also agreed that George and Reece should go ahead and develop an off-platform policy. It was also agreed to publish a version of the assessment on the website.

16. **Board Working Groups**

a. **Communications**

Nothing from the working group.

b. **Constitution**

George provided an update on the constitution working group. The group has nearly finished it's line by line review of the existing constitution and has reached agreement on a majority of key decisions. The new FSA model rules which will form the template of the new constitution are currently with the FCA for sign off. Once that has taken place the work to form our new constitution can begin.

c. **Culture and Mission and Oversight**

No meeting this month.

d. **Fundraising**

Graeme provided an update on the latest from the working group.

17. **Update on Club Chair Recruitment**

Angus provided an update. A discussion took place on potential club structure and future options including getting external advice. It was agreed to make the announcement following the Club Board meeting.

18. **Risk Register**

George informed the board there had been no changes to the risk register since the previous meeting and reminded the board to inform them if they felt any changes were required that they were not already aware of.

19. **Replacing Board Vacancy Update**

George reminded the board the skills audit questionnaire had been circulated but only Graeme and Martin had completed it. George reminded the board this was an essential bit of work to identify skill gaps to aid the board in making a decision on how to fill the existing vacancy and reminded the board that time is of the essence and asked them to complete it by the end of the weekend.

20. **AOB**

a. **DT Rota**

The board were reminded to fill in their availability for the rest of the season.

b. **Newsletter**

George raised the issue of a number of major errors in the most recent newsletter. George asked for them or James to have to sign off on future newsletters before future publication to ensure there is no repeat.

c. **Heritage site**

Angus is continuing to progress making the old heritage site active again.

d. **Coaches**

A discussion was held about the coach suppliers from the club. It was agreed Graeme would speak to James Wilcox about it.

e. **ED&I**

A discussion took place on who should take on the ED&I remit of the board. It was agreed to discuss it at the next meeting.

The meeting concluded at 10pm.