Dons Trust Board Meeting, Wednesday 10th September 2025, Plough Lane

In attendance	Apologies	Also in Attendance
Angus Fox (Chair)	Simon Hood	George Jones (Secretary)
Graeme Price (Vice Chair)	Ian Robinson	Reece Wheeler-Kelly (Assistant Secretary)
Martin Drake		Michele Little (Treasurer)
Alex Folkes (Online)		
Hannah Kitcher		
James Longhurst		
James Ledward		
David Rey (Online)		

1. **Introduction, Apologies, Protocols and Directors Interests**

Apologies were received from Simon and Ian. Alex, Hannah and David joined the meeting online.

2. **Approval of previous Minutes**

The minutes for the August meeting were approved, subject to further redactions.

3. **Ratification of email decisions**

None

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

The Board received updates on the outstanding actions, including updates on board training and upcoming surveys.

5. **Election Update**

Minuted by the Assistant Secretary.

Martin, Alex and James Le left the room.

The Secretary informed the board that the election would be contested with 9 nominations received. There were issues with two of the nominations highlighted by the Election Steering Group (ESG).

One candidate had been allowed to stand after reviewing their nomination under rule 10.

Another candidate, a current Dons Trust board member, was contacted by the ESG as they felt their manifesto was in breach of DTB Guidelines, and invited to edit it. The board member resubmitted a new version with some changes which the ESG felt was still likely to be a breach as respect for the boards was being undermined, amplified because the candidate is a current board member. The ESG decided to refer this to the DTB to decide what action to take. The board decided that no further action would be taken against that board member in relation to a likely breach of the DTB Guidelines.

A nomination was rejected by the ESG after reviewing it under rule 10 due to the history of sustained serious and untrue defamatory remarks made online about various past and present board members and volunteers. The Secretary informed the board that the decision for the board to make was whether to overrule the ESG's decision after considering the details of this person's appeal and evidence from the ESG. Ian had submitted his views in detail on the subject prior to the meeting due to his absence. Following a lengthy discussion, the board agreed to uphold the ESG's decision.

During a discussion concerning the DTB Guidelines, the board concluded that the decision to uphold the ESG's ruling in the Rule 34 appeal must be classified as an "exceptional item." This was deemed necessary due to a confluence of factors: the need for ongoing confidentiality to protect all involved individuals, the fact that an individual appeal process remains technically open despite being on hold, and the suggestion of potential legal action.

The Assistant Secretary raised an issue with another candidate in the election due to potentially abusive comments made online earlier in the year. It was felt likely that individuals would want to question this candidate about that. Ordinarily, the policy on the Discord server is to remove anything that looks like a personal spat between two people. However, by standing in the election, candidates expose themselves to a higher level of public scrutiny and it would be unfair to the democratic process to prevent scrutiny of candidates in a fair way for things they have said and done.

The board decided to allow the fair scrutiny of candidates on the Discord server within the pre-existing rules.

A discussion took place on how to ensure Discord would be managed over the election process to ensure a fair election.

6. **<u>Club Board Meeting Summary and Questions</u>**

Graeme introduced the topic of the change in structure of Club Board meetings which alters the oversight flow for the DTB. It was explained that the PLC will move to full meetings every other month with interim monthly meetings focusing specifically on finance and strategy. The DTB will continue to receive papers and output from these meetings.

It was confirmed that the aim is for April board to have first budget draft and for June to be for final signoff. It was noted that the DTB will monitor the change to ensure it is able to continue to fulfill its oversight role effectively. It was also noted that some decisions would be brought to interim meetings where necessary.

7. **<u>Dons Trust Finance, Plough Lane Bonds, Debt and equity update</u>**

The Treasurer provided an update on the latest PL Bonds with an additional £76k worth of equity and donations already in September and believed we will end up with over £700k donated/ switched to equity. It was noted that the Cashflow showed the challenges facing the club in late 2026.

8. **<u>50.01</u>**

The board voted unanimously in favour of giving permission to the club board and finance committee to actively seek external investors. Any proposal would still be subject to passing a Restricted Action (RA) membership vote.

James introduced a draft statement that had been circulated. It communicates that we will be actively looking for minority investment. It was noted that it is a constitutional obligation to keep members up to date and to declare we are undergoing this process. The board were asked to submit their comments before a final version could be circulated.

James Lo mentioned a need to decide timing on the 50.01% RA votes. The board agreed that 50.01 would become a standing item on the agenda. The board also agreed to be ready to increase communication from now on regardless of the eventual timetable for the 50.01% RA.

The board voted unanimously against holding the 50.01% RA votes in November in order to focus on presenting the new constitution to members.

9. SGM Planning

George highlighted the mid-October paper deadline for the November SGM and expressed the view the constitution would probably need something else attached to attract the required turnout. The board needed to be ready at every board meeting to decide whether it is time to go ahead or not with a 50.01% RA vote.

10. EDI

James Le noted that International Women's Day (IWD) is on the same weekend as Worldwide Wombles Weekend two (WWW2) so there is a need to make sure that both events get the right level of attention. There is now an inclusion calendar and momentum is building.

James Le also noted that the DTB need to be responsive to requests for help for the upcoming EFL equality review in January as we wish to improve our results.

A discussion took place on the successful disabled supporters' meeting.

11. B-Corp

No Update

12. Womens Team

Due to a conflict this item was minuted by the assistant secretary.

James Lo updated the board about the women's board meeting the evening before which Hannah also attended.

13. Discord

Reece informed the board that further testing had taken place with members who had issues at the strategy meeting and it was a complete success. Reece suggested having a member drop-in session as the next stage of testing. It was agreed to do a virtual kiosk on the platform at the end of election.

14. Board Working Groups and KPIs

- **Communications**

Alex provided a written summary of email activities in the group with nothing further to add. The next meeting would be held the following week.

- **Constitution**

James Le updated the initial meeting with the working group had been productive and work was all on track. The new draft constitution will be ready for presentation to members at the November SGM and a vote on it held when possible after. Dave Boyle will be asked to attend. There will be a finance presentation and speakers again to lead into the meeting.

The board thanked the Constitution Working Group for all of the work they had put into the project up to this point and their continued efforts going forwards.

- **Culture and Mission and Oversight**

This group has now disbanded as its work is covered in board meetings.

- **Youth Engagement**

George said that the turnout was a lot lower this time but was likely due to us not pushing the group enough in the interim due to other event priorities. There was still good feedback from those who came along and lessons learned on how to promote it.

15. Expectations on DTB members from trust members

James Le wanted to discuss the topic on how members contact board members. He felt it is important to set clear boundaries on how members can contact board members. It was agreed that James Le would look to develop a policy and present to the DTB at a future meeting.

16. Risk Register

George reminded the board about the risk register and to review to ensure it is up to date.

17. AOB

Alex confirmed that the guest for the Worldwide Wombles weekend was confirmed.

A discussion took place on the DT Rota.

Angus led a conversation about whether the DT should leave X (formerly Twitter). It was agreed to ask members during a future survey. It was noted that the Club social media engagement methods were a matter for them.

Alex has finished the Fair Game statement which should be published shortly.

Angus introduced the topic of how we manage the issue of potentially deceased members we do not know about. It was agreed the Secretary would seek advice.

Alex announced the European Union of Clubs have a meeting in October and with travel and accommodation covered. It was agreed it would be circulated. It was agreed that James Ledward would represent the DTB.