

BLUES TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of the Blues Trust Board held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 10 January 2024 via Zoom video conference.

In attendance: Neil Cottrell (NC) (Chair), Pete Bull (PB), Richard Docker (RD), Cliff Horrocks (CH), Bruce Kyte (BK), Linda Magner (LM) and Richard Stanley (RS) (Board members) and Fred Greaves (FG) (Guest).

Agenda Items

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and in particular Fred Greaves, Trust member, who had expressed an interest in becoming involved with the Board.

2. Apologies for Absence

Karim Adab (KA).

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 November 2023 were noted and approved. There were no matters arising.

4. Chair's Report

NC updated the meeting on recent developments. He began by noting that the members meeting with Garry Cook in November had been a success, although there had been issues with some members joining the meeting. PB explained what had happened and the likely reasons why. NC explained that it was unfortunate that someone had posted clips of the meeting on line immediately after the event, despite everyone present being asked not to do so. This had raised concern from the club, although the clip was removed very quickly once it had been noticed. [REDACTED] had requested a few changes to the minutes of the meeting which were agreed. [REDACTED] had also made it clear to NC that the Trust should not expect any repeat of the session in future because the club wants to use official supporter forums for discussion outlets. However, [REDACTED] confirmed that Blues Trust will be invited to send representatives to all future Open House meetings.

In response to a question from FG, NC explained what he understood [REDACTED] role to be at the club. LM added that [REDACTED] had attended the inaugural Open House meeting and had been given

responsibility for writing the rules for the operation of Blues supporters clubs. CH asked if there had been any information yet regarding the launch of the official supporters club? It was noted that nothing had so far been made public, although details were expected imminently. It was agreed that the Trust should monitor developments.

NC confirmed that he had received one press enquiry recently, from Free Radio, concerning the appointment of Tony Mowbray.

5. Fair Game - Possible Collaboration

RD introduced this item and explained that it was an organisation that had been launched recently and appeared to be growing at the moment. It appeared to be an independent organisation concerned with governance and financial distribution in football, with a particular current focus on the introduction of an independent regulator. Much of what it seems to be about chimes closely with the interests of the Trust. CH and LM commented that the organisation appears not to be linked to the FSA and is producing good content in its weekly newsletter. In discussion, it was agreed that Fair Game would seem to be an organisation that the Trust might wish to affiliate with and an approach should be made to start a dialogue about how this might be achieved. RD to action.

6. Blues Trust 2024 - Key Tasks

NC introduced this item and reminded everyone of the discussion held at the previous meeting in November concerning the Trust's future strategy. The focus of tonight's discussion was to consider how member benefits might be developed to increase the reach and appeal of the Trust.

In general discussion, a number of ideas were raised including:

- could the Trust offer a support service for Blues fans and/or host some of the branches that are now being formed as part of the club's emerging Official Supporters Club strategy?;
- the Trust should hold more evening on line discussions, similar to the Garry Cook event held in November, but without the club's endorsement or support. An independent guest, such as [REDACTED] for example, was considered appropriate;
- the Trust should engage more proactively with members, and even Blues supporters in general, and conduct polls on topical issues concerning the club making use of Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and other platforms;
- the Trust should re-publicise existing member benefits;

- the Trust should consider acting as a clearing house for the sale of memorabilia, old football shirts etc donated by members and with proceeds being used to fund Trust activities or donated to charity as decided. FG confirmed that he would be happy to donate a stock of shirts and CH confirmed that he would be prepared to run the shirt shop to get things started;
- the Trust should consider resurrecting the club museum idea previously identified, perhaps in cooperation with the club itself or other interested groups and individuals.

It was agreed that all ideas were worthy of further consideration with a view to them being introduced, and individual board members were tasked with moving some of them forward. The use of polls to canvass member opinions was identified as a priority. It was also agreed that the matter be kept under review.

7. Financial Report

PB introduced this report and made reference to the latest accounts circulated prior to the meeting. The accounts were noted. Turning to membership, PB confirmed the current figures and explained that the recent Blue Friday initiative had been productive with several new memberships secured. He outlined a further proposal which involved current members introducing someone and then receiving a years free membership themselves. The initiative was welcomed and agreed. PB to action.

With regard to the website, PB confirmed that performance had been disappointing of late with a number of issues having been identified with the host. One option to improve things would be the purchase of extra capacity. In discussion, it was agreed that all options should be explored before committing to extra expenditure. CH asked if now was the time to start afresh with a new provider? PB explained that he was reluctant to change hosts given the nature of the relationship that had been developed. A further option to create extra capacity could be to delete dated material. This idea was broadly welcomed and it was agreed to do a history "spring clean". CH suggested that an extensive archive be placed on a large memory stick for retention away from the data base. This was also welcomed as a good idea worth pursuing. PB and BK to lead actions.

Finally, PB explained that, to date, there had been no feedback and no commission from the recently introduced raileasy and match day car parking initiatives. It was agreed to keep matters under review.

8. Any Other Business

- (i) Action List - it was agreed that the action list summary detailing the key decisions taken at each board meeting should be reinstated. RD to action;
- (ii) Connect Church - PB asked if Connect Church was ready for opening yet and, if so, could the Trust have access to it on matchdays as had been discussed previously? CH agreed to contact the Pastor, [REDACTED] to establish the current position;
- (iii) CH confirmed that he was happy to continue contributing to the work of the Trust even though he was no longer Chair;
- (iv) Teams - BK explained that he was familiar with Microsoft Teams and suggested that it be used as an alternative (to Zoom) for board meetings, at least on a trial basis. This was agreed and BK was asked to organise;
- (v) Business Cards - PB asked if anymore business cards were required? It was decided not to order an additional supply because they were no longer particularly relevant;
- (vi) Other Trusts - LM confirmed that she had held a successful meeting with the Plymouth Argyle Supporters Trust prior to the away fixture in December. LM was asked to continue contact with other supporter Trust's.

9. Date of Next Meeting

- The previously identified date of the next meeting was noted as being problematic for a number of reasons, and RD was tasked with finding an alternative date. This was subsequently agreed as Wednesday 27 March 2024 at 7.00pm via Zoom (or Teams) video conference call.

The meeting finished at 9.28pm.