

BLUES TRUST

Vision : To be an independent, representative and influential voice for all supporters of Birmingham City Football Club.

Minutes of the meeting of the Blues Trust Board held at 7.00pm on Wednesday 23 May 2024 via Zoom video conference.

In attendance: Neil Cottrell (NC) (Chair), Pete Bull (PB), Fred Greaves (FG), Jez Hemming (JH), Cliff Horrocks (CH) (joined 20.25), Bruce Kyte (BK), Linda Magner (LM), and Richard Stanley (RS).

Agenda Items

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Richard Docker (RD), Karim Adab (KA)

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 March 2024 were noted and approved. There were no matters arising.

The Agreed Actions list was reviewed. Completion or progress was noted against all items except Podcasts. JH explained that regarding the Media Strategy focus was initially being given to the website and that podcasts would be a later addition. FG explained that regarding Team Shirt Donations, the club had shown no real interest and that it would be better to progress this through the Trust.

4. Chair's Report

NC updated the meeting on his attendance at the Open House meeting. He identified the following points during a conversation with Garry Cook concerning relegation contingency plans :-

1. Relegation wouldn't affect Knighthead's plans. It would cost Knighthead more but the work on such projects as the fan areas would continue to move ahead;
2. Regarding ticket prices, it is possible that there will be a menu of prices, with a basic Season Ticket price with the possibility of paying extra in order to add additional benefits;

3. The club is agnostic regarding recommendations which arose from the Fan Led Review but will abide by any changes required either through legislation or the football authorities.

NC advised that he had spoken to Andy Roberts, chairman of Northampton Town FC Supporters Trust, the first supporters trust to be created in the UK. In an email to various Trusts, Andy had raised the issue of the role of Trusts in fan engagement and the omission of any mention of this in the new football Governance Bill. NC confirmed to Andy that the Blues Trust would support efforts to ensure that the role of Supporters Trusts is recognised in the Bill.

5. Meeting with [REDACTED]

NC explained various discussions that had taken place with [REDACTED] and that he had agreed that he ([REDACTED]) and NC would meet face to face so that NC could explain the Trust position. In outline, this is that the Trust wish to remain as an independent supporters' group and that there is a place for such a group outside the OSC structure. In any event the club would not be enthusiastic about the Trust becoming an OSC as the OSC structure is principally geographic. The OSC rules would probably make it impractical for us. JH pointed out that when he tried to set up a North Wales OSC it was a very onerous process.

Another point which NC explained is that the Trust is a point of contact for key players in the media world including TV (BBC, ITV), Newspapers (Times, Mirror, Guardian, Birmingham Mail etc), Football Media and Organisations (The Athletic, FSA etc). The Club and the Trust therefore need to find a way to interact.

[REDACTED] talk a lot about Blues history. Another key point to be communicated to [REDACTED] is that the Trust are an important part of Blues history.

6. Media Activities and Plan

JH reported back on a positive first meeting of the Social Media Sub-Group. Many ideas and suggestions were contained in a comprehensive report circulated to the Board prior to the meeting. JH pointed out that resource constraints would prevent the Trust from implementing many of the ideas immediately, and that we should focus initially on one thing and that should be the website.

7. WhatsApp Community Group

LM confirmed that she had set up a WhatsApp 'Blues Trust Community' Group. This would enable the addition of different WhatsApp groups into the community. A Broadcast Channel could be set up to enable access to group messages, but LM confirmed that the Trust Board WhatsApp group would remain private.

8. Club Updates

(i) Blues Matters

LM (Heritage) reported that the group had applied for £30k to create a museum at St Andrews @ Knighthood Park. One idea is to convert a corridor which would be used to house Blues memorabilia although she had raised concerns that this would not be available to view by the majority of fans who would not have access to the museum area.

The commissioning of a statue of Trevor Francis had been discussed by the Heritage Group. NC asked LM if a sculptor had been selected and that he would try to find previous correspondence with the person who had created the WBA '3 degrees' sculpture.

CH (South Asian Engagement) advised that this group have made it clear that they regard themselves as advisors and that the actions the group calls for will need to be carried out by the club (albeit probably with help from the Group). CH reported that the club representative on the group is Jeremy Dale. Jake Malbasa is responsible for the work and administration of all groups.

(ii) Official Supporter Clubs

BK reported he had joined Sutton Coldfield OSC. Events had mainly been social at this point. FG reported that he had joined the London OSC. He had the sense that they were intending to 'plough their own furrow' rather be limited by the constraints imposed by the club. They intend to run coaches to games.

It was thought that Jeremy Dale along with other Blues executives had visited Manchester City to gain a greater understanding of how Fan Engagement was run by them.

(iii) Open House

NC attended the most recent Open House. The Chairman's Report contains further details.

9. Financial Report

PB introduced the report with reference to the paper he had circulated prior to the meeting. The operating surplus (£724.59) and general reserves (£3556.00) figures were noted. There had been no major items since the last meeting.

PB confirmed that as at 19 May the Trust had 387 members and 1043 followers. He explained that the website is operating smoothly, although a member has mentioned that they have a blank page when logging on to the website and JH mentioned a problem when he is logged in. PB will investigate.

PB pointed out that we are holding a reserve of £310 for the purchase of shares in Birmingham City Ltd (BCL). He raised several questions in connection with the reserve and our existing shareholding. Firstly, is the Trust intending to purchase any further shares in BCL and should we make an appeal to minority shareholders to acquire more shares. It was agreed that it was unlikely that we would purchase further shares because this would not give us any additional rights that our existing shareholding confers on us, and that at the moment our funds could be better used for other purposes. Secondly, he raised the question of the financial valuation of the shares. CH mentioned that there is no market in these shares and as such it is almost impossible to know their value. PB advised that the shares were fully provided against in the Balance Sheet. Thirdly, PB asked whether we should try to establish the owners' intentions regarding the minority shareholders. It was decided that for the time being we would not pursue the question with the club. It was agreed that we would maintain the status quo in the accounting treatment of the shares in our books.

PB undertook to complete a list of OSC's to put on our website.

10. Any Other Business

- (i) Westminster Media Forum. NC advised this event was taking place and may be worth attending;
- (ii) NC advised he had approached Colin Tattum as the second person in our 'An evening with' series. Despite being glad to be asked he

has been silent on available dates. JH mentioned he had a journalist contact who may be prepared to participate. CH to approach [REDACTED] to see if he would be willing to participate;

- (iii) BK reported that, despite the Trust not being allowed to do so, Sutton Coldfield OSC were allowed to present their Player of the Season Trophy;
- (iv) RS reported that the Confirmation Statement for Blues Fan Rescue Limited had been submitted and accepted by Companies House. RS had circulated an analysis of members by age bands and geographical region. He asked that if anyone had suggestions of further parameters for analysing membership, could Board members please let him know;
- (v) CH reported that he had spoken to Kirk McAtear reference using the Connect Church as a meeting point for Trust members prior to matches. He confirmed that Kirk was keen to do a drop-in, and was also keen to explore the idea of parking with their potential loss of revenue should the Club terminate the agreement whereby executives can park their cars in the church car park;
- (vi) NC/CH will contact Shabana Mahmood MP

11. Date of Next Meeting

- The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 25 July 2024 at 7.00pm via zoom video conference call.

The meeting finished at 9.15pm.