

## **Minutes of the meeting of the Doncaster Rovers Shadow Board**

**Tuesday 3 October 2023**

**Present:** Derek Daniels, Dan Pearson, Mellony Shepard, Len South, James Errington, Gill Shepherd, Martin O'Hara, Phil Winterman

**Club Representatives:** Gavin Baldwin, Shaun Lockwood, Adam Grice

**Apologies:**

### **1. Minutes from the last meeting held on 29 July 2023**

- i. DD asked for observations from members of the DRFC Shadow Board in respect of the minutes from the previous meeting which was held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023. They were passed as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

### **2. Matters arising from the previous meeting held on 29 July 2023**

- i. GB asked LS for an update on how the new procedures were working in respect of away travel to games. LS responded by confirming they had improved after a sticky start with some information which had been provided from South Yorkshire Police being inaccurate. However, the last couple of away fixtures had seen an improvement after more accurate information was now being circulated by the Club's Dedicated Football Officer (DFO) Owen Fisher. MS added that one of the most recent and bigger issues was the lack of accurate information which resulted in all of the supporters coaches travelling to the Wrexham fixture being held at Chester Services for longer than what they were expecting. LS confirmed that all supporters travelling on the coaches did manage to get to the stadium by 2:20pm which was sufficient. LS explained that there had also been minor issues on the coaches at Hull and Barrow but these had been dealt with respectively.
- ii. SL provided an update on the priority points regarding the upgrading for the ticket sales with the Club provider Seat Geek. All the points which are due to be allocated to the online profiles of supporters will be backdated to the start of the season (including the purchase of season tickets). LS and MS both suggested to SL that this needed doing as a priority given the FA Cup first round draw is in a couple of weeks and there could be a potential issue with priority for tickets should DRFC be drawn away at a non-league club who are only able to provide the Club with a small allocation of tickets. If this was not possible it was requested that this was done manually if needed for the FA Cup first round but it also needed to be done properly in time for ticket sales for Harrogate Town.
- iii. DD asked SL for an update on the individual who was asked by the Club to come in and sign a good behavior agreement prior to returning to watch fixtures. SL confirmed that this had not been done as the individual had not returned to the Club.
- iv. MO'H questioned what section four, titled Recognition of Official Supporters Groups, of the previous minutes referred to. SL stated that there was a discussion at

the previous meeting about which Supporters Groups were still active and should be recognised by the Football Club as members of the Shadow Board.

MO'H questioned why individual members were not going to have their memberships of the Shadow Board reviewed on a yearly basis but Supporter Club groups would be subject to this.

DD responded by confirming that the Shadow Board had previously met, agreed and voted on a process for individual members of the Shadow Board for them to be elected. This was decided upon for continuity and stability of the group. The Shadow Board agreed that this was the process outlined and this would not be reviewed part-way through the season, but were open to suggestions and a further review at the conclusion of this." .

SL added that some of our supporter groups were in their infancy and their long term existence and stability may needed an annual review. GB added that the Shadow Board should take on board the point raised regarding membership for

some Supporters Groups and the likes of the Official Supporters Club and the Viking Supporters Co-Operative should be classed as sacrosanct, however, given the recent admission by the Women's Supporters Club and other supporters groups that they were not fully active some would need to continue to be reviewed on an annual basis as per the agreed actions of the Shadow Board.

- v. MO'H suggested that the Shadow Board meetings were not long enough and that they should start earlier than they currently do to have in-depth discussions and come to reasonable conclusions without issues being rushed. JE referred back to a point MO'H raised at a previous Shadow Board he had said meetings were too frequent and they should take place less frequently which was a point the Board agreed with and appropriately actioned.
- vi. MO'H questioned DD on the process of how a decision by the Shadow Board was made to which DD confirmed that the rule of thumb is that there needs to be a two-thirds vote of the attendees at each said meeting to pass a vote.
- vii. DD explained that he also spoke regularly with the Chair's of four other Shadow Boards from other Clubs in the EFL to determine best practice.
- viii. LS suggested that the standard rules which apply to the Supporter Clubs should be looked to which MO'H instantly stated that he would share the VSC rules with LS.

### **3. Safeguarding**

- i. SL explained that the Club are in the process of preparing for an upcoming Barnardo's Safeguarding Audit. This is something which Clubs in the EFL are subject to do every two years. The Club have already done a mock audit on themselves so they are prepared for when the audit takes place.
- ii. GB added that it was seen as a best practice at the pre-audit and from DD speaking with other Shadow Board's that Safeguarding was an issue raised with the Shadow Board.

### **4. Health & Safety**

- i. On Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023, the Carabao Cup second round fixture against Everton, the Club were subjected to an inspection from the Sports Ground Safety

Authority (SGSA) and the local Safety Advisory Group (SAG). SL explained that there were only minor issues raised from these inspections and both organisations were extremely happy with the measures the Club have taken since these meetings to ensure health and safety is of paramount importance to the Club.

- ii. Both GB and SL explained that the Club have engaged with the SGSA regarding a consultation period regarding membership fees that Clubs are obliged to pay to these body. Currently the cost to the Club is £100 per annum and Government, who the SGSA is affiliated to, state that the funding should be solely from the Clubs and not Government. Therefore, the consultation period is currently taking place to discuss increases in membership fees. Both GB and SL stated that under the SGSA's current proposals DRFC's membership would raise from £100 per annum to £14,000 per annum as the proposals are based on the stadium capacity of each Club's stadia. Clubs have until 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to revert back to the SGSA with counter proposals and their views. GB requested that the Shadow Board give this issue the Club is facing some consideration and asked that if they have any issues with this they notify GB in writing. GB added that the Club would be preparing a response to the SGSA with their response and this would be shared with the Shadow Board for approval and support prior to it being sent off ahead of the deadline. As Chair of the Shadow Board, DD made a suggestion that the Board would wholeheartedly support the Club on this unless anyone had written to GB by 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023.
- iii. MO'H asked SL on whether he attends Safety Advisory Group meetings and whether there has ever been a mention of whether supporter board or elected fans would be appointed to the SAG. SL confirmed that he does not attend all SAG meetings and this is always attended by the Club's Safety Officer, however, SL will attend extraordinary SAG meetings for events at the stadium like concerts, Big Bang or other events where a request has been made for a meeting to take place.

## **5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

- i. GB confirmed that there is a current review taking place of EDI at the Club by the Interim Head of People and Culture Chris Wood. It was also confirmed that the Club Doncaster Foundation are also in the process of targeting specific areas for working with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion groups.

## **6. Ticketing Update**

- i. SL confirmed that ticket sales for the current season have been impressive compared to last season. He explained that the Club have sold 4,600 season tickets which is an uplift on last year both in numbers and a cash value to the Club.
- ii. SL added that individual match budgets had been hit on each occasion this season for home league games and the Crawley Town fixture (Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023) was likely to be the first home league game where the Club would miss the target. This was put down to a couple of factors; (a) the game could be streamed on iFollow; (b) the low away attended which was expected, and; (c) Saturday's result away at Barrow.

## **7. Catering Update**

- i.** SL confirmed that their working relationship with Venue Catering Partner (VCP), who took over from Sodexo in the summer, has been really good and the partnership between the Club and VCP has got off to an exciting start. Given the improvements that have been made across the Board the average takings from food and drink on a match day have increased each game and there has also been a higher spend per head compared with the last two seasons in respect of match day catering.
- ii.** One of the real benefits to the current partnership with VCP is that the Club have an input on the concourse and hospitality offerings which previously was not possible.
- iii.** SL stated that Carling have re-done their branding and on some of the catering kiosks following errors earlier in the season and the Club are seeking compensation for the delay.
- iv.** GB asked MO'H what conversations had taken place previously with the authorities regarding the relaxations of the rules which prevented spectators from drinking alcohol in view of the pitch. MO'H responded to GB's question by stating that this seemed to be a non-starter as discussions were supposed to take place to permit trials at National League and some League Two fixtures but this has never materialized. GB noted that Tracy Crouch referenced the relaxation of this in the Fan Led Review and DP also suggested that should this rule be relaxed it would reduced 'binge drinking' during a short time period on a match day.

## **8. A.O.B**

- i.** GB informed the Shadow Board that the Club's current Head of Finance Richard Poole would be leaving the business on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023 and he would be replaced by Matt Evans who starts on 23<sup>rd</sup> October for a handover period.
- ii.** MS advised SL and GB that some past winners of the DRFC Lottery were still waiting on the payments of their winnings and that they were threatening to withdraw from the lottery should they not receive their winnings. Both GB and SL stated this was the first they had heard of this and it would be dealt with.
- iii.** DD requested that both PW and MO'H submitted biographies to Liam Hoden at the Club for inclusion on the Shadow Board web page. DD also asked for a review of the same web page to be conducted and ensure that the web page was fully up-to-date with the correct names for the Shadow Board.
- iv.** LS asked SL to look at the lighting in the Belle Vue Bar near where the SIA Stewards locate themselves as he had been made aware of a lack of lighting from Paul Mayfield which was supposed to have been actioned by the Club Doncaster Maintenance Department.
- v.** Both DD and JE asked for support from SL with the setup of a DRFC Shadow Board group on Microsoft Teams to enable easier communication and confirmation of the meeting dates. GB said that the meeting dates are already in the diary for the full 2023/2024 season but if this is created it would enable meetings to be set up on the Microsoft Teams Calendar.
- vi.** LS asked about the remembrance fixture. SL said that a fixture will be confirmed following the FA Cup 1<sup>st</sup> Round draw.