

## **Minutes of meeting of Supporters' Board, August 6, 2022**

Present: James Errington, Derek Daniels, Martin O'Hara, Paul Mayfield, Mellony Shepherd, Lizzie Robinson, Dan Pearson, Gill Shepherd

Club representatives: Gavin Baldwin, Shaun Lockwood, Liam Hoden,

Apologies: Patrick Queen, Matty Davies, Len South

Absent: Lee Rourke

1. Minutes from the previous meeting (June 23, 2022)
  - a. The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.
  
2. Standing item: Health & safety, safeguarding and equality, diversity & inclusion updates from SL
  - a. Health and safety
    - i. SL confirmed the appointment of Mike Allott as the club's safety officer, stepping up from the position of deputy, with his name now on the safety certificate. The club's H&S policy has been updated.
    - ii. SL confirmed a vacancy for a safety officer position, to take the team from two to three.
    - iii. SL gave details of an update from the EFL on management of crowd behaviour, including the following advice and campaigns:
      1. Love Football, Protect The Game
      2. The handling of flares and pyrotechnics
    - iv. As part of the campaign, home clubs are urged to issue statements following matches where crowd behaviour issues or use of pyrotechnics have arisen
  - b. Safeguarding
    - i. SL confirms the training of further safeguarding officers to assist and back up the work of current lead officer Kirsty Cavanagh. Training will be given to existing members of staff
  - c. Equality, diversity & inclusion
    - i. A number of home matches for this season have been earmarked for activities around EDI. The August 6 fixture with Sutton United celebrated Pride.
    - ii. The Women's Supporters Group have agreed to highlight male mental health charity Andy's Man Club as part of International Men's Day
    - iii. A tweet which had been published and deleted by account @theNETTOFC on July 31, 2022 at 11.33 (Following the Bradford fixture), read: "I can't believe we're justifying a point to them p\*\*i lovers."

1. The tweet was raised as an example of why individuals associated with the account and so called group cannot be asked to represent the Shadow Board or club.
- d. Paul Mayfield raised the issue of safeguarding in regards to travelling on the supporters' coaches. The current policy is that U18s require parental permission to travel. PM said this was based on advice received from the club several years earlier and queried why the club's policy was for U14s rather than U18s. SL said he would follow up the question with Kirsty Cavanagh and report back.

### 3. Shadow Board update

- a. A review of other club's methods of transitioning to a Shadow Board.
  - i. SL spoke with representatives from Cambridge United and took part in a podcast with fan engagement expert Kevin Rye. There is no template on forming Shadow Boards so those going ahead of government legislation are finding their own way, which means differences between each club doing so. SL had a 'good conversation' with Cambridge
    1. Cambridge have maintained their supporters' board as a separate entity called the fans' parliament. Details of plans for election of members were disclosed off the record but DD said during a meeting between he, SL and JE it was suggested that the Rovers Shadow Board would not follow the Cambridge template.
    2. DD said examining methods of other clubs would continue and results would be presented back to the supporters' board.
    3. SL said Cambridge's reasoning for keeping supporters' and Shadow boards separate was due to the supporters' board following a similar path as supporter liaison officers.
    4. MO said the Fan Led Review should lay out a framework of how Shadow Boards should operate but does not yet. MO feels Rovers are on the right path. He is confident Rovers can lead on Shadow Boards due to past history with the implementation of SLOs.
    5. SL said he feels Rovers should drive their own path on transitioning to a Shadow Board
  - ii. SL reflected on members of the Supporters' Board being targeted on social media due to their membership, plus the manner in which some members were reacting. SL said he hopes to separate individual board personalities from board roles

1. This has included the creation of email addresses for both the chair and vice chair positions which have been de-personalised. An official Twitter handle will also be set up.
  2. SL offered advice on how requests and questions to the board should be directed - namely through official Shadow Board channels.
  3. SL said members should be mindful of how they respond on social media but reminded that members are not bound by guidelines of club employees and should feel free to air their views.
  4. GS highlighted the need for responses to be representative of the supporters' board as a whole, even if messages are sent to individual members.
  5. LH suggested that any queries received via personal accounts be directed to supporters' board accounts, with the responses coming from them.
  6. LH said he would work with DD to set up the Twitter account
- iii. SL said he is minded to introduce a non-disclosure agreement to be signed by all Shadow Board members to ensure sensitive information is kept within minutes.
  - iv. DD said he, JE and SL have been examining different methods for the election of board members.
  - v. DD confirmed member Lee Rourke has resigned from the board with immediate effect
  - vi. DD expects there to be two or three vacancies on the Shadow Board heading into elections in 2023.
  - vii. GS questioned whether there should be an odd number of members, to prevent ties in voting. DD said the chair gets the casting vote in such circumstances.
  - viii. Proposals for dates and agenda items were shared with members to agree upon

#### 4. Proposed Shadow Board objectives

- a. A list of objectives for the Shadow Board which had been drafted by the chair and vice chair along with SL was shared with all members. DD said they believe the objectives would allow the Shadow Board to challenge the club and hold it to account.
  - i. SL said it was the intention to create objectives that would challenge the club but still be achievable.
  - ii. A discussion was held on the 'asset of community value' on the stadium, which has previously been held by the Viking

Supporters Cooperative and requires renewal. The AOCV gives the holder first refusal should the stadium be put up for sale. MO confirmed he would ask VSC chair Rob Clark on the status of the AOCV.

1. GB said the AOCV would be of particular importance should the club be sold as there is a possibility any new owner would see to take on the freehold of the stadium rather than the leasehold on which use is currently based.
  2. GB suggested the VSC attend a Shadow Board meeting to feed back on the AOCV and Memorandum of Understanding, along with providing explanation of the relationship between the club and the VSC.
  3. MO said the prominence of supporters' trusts such as the VSC will grow as the recommendations of the Fan Led Review are implemented. Supporters' trusts are set to hold the 'golden share' from the EFL.
  4. GS questioned whether there is anything in legislation which limits the use of the land on which the stadium stands. GB said that was a question for the council but the terms of the current lease ensure change of use cannot be made.
  5. A question from DD on whether a AOCV could be taken out on the Cantley Park training facility. MO said it was complicated as it would require multiple AOCVs to cover the area. GB said the training ground had been added to the agreement with the council over the lease of the stadium and feels that gives adequate protection for the training ground site.
- iii. GB questioned the meaning of 'football activities' within one of the objectives. DD said the objective was to encourage the club to put savings elsewhere towards football activities. GB suggested it is changed to savings be brought to the Shadow Board for consideration as to how those funds can best be utilised.
- iv. GS questions how the objectives will be measured to judge success and who determined what is 'significant'. SL said there will be documented evidence, or judgement via methods such as the Fan Insights Index etc. Examples given included:
1. In regards to an increase in face-to-face forums with key stakeholders was the kit launch event prior to the start of the season. New newsletters are also in the planning stages

2. In regards to fan engagement, SL said he would report back with documented evidence of methods, plus the club's rating on various engagement measures
  3. Reports on promotions
  4. A pledge to report back on sustainability measures. For example, the playing squad moving to the use of refillable drinks bottles rather than single use plastics.
- v. MO pointed to an absence of mentions of In Rovers We Trust in the objectives on fan engagement. He suggested some of the objectives don't mean anything and questioned whether supporting a community activity was in the Supporters' Board's remit. SL said he felt it should be documented as previous attempts to support community schemes had not been supported strongly. SL said he was happy for the objectives to be redrafted if anyone believed they were not worded correctly.

#### 5. AOB

- a. DD asked for an update on the James Coppinger mural and documentary. SL confirmed discussions are ongoing with a potential co-investor in the documentary.
- b. MO raised the idea of an online club museum which would allow supporters to submit memorabilia for inclusion. SL says he is looking for funding options, potentially with tech firms. SL believes the biggest costing will be for staffing, such as photographers etc, as well as compiling. SL says to do it properly and professionally, he does not believe it could be absorbed by existing staffing.
- c. MO asked for an update on the matchday fan park. SL said the Football Foundation has asked for a detailed plan before releasing any further funding. It is something which should happen.
- d. MO raised the issue of NFTs and crypto projects within football and asked if any discussions had taken place with companies over getting the club involved. SL confirmed that discussions have taken place with Unagi in regards of handling NFTs.
- e. MS asked for an update on the Bulbshare project. SL said sign-up had been good, with more still needed.
- f. MS highlighted fans away at Bradford had been denied entry with flags without a safety certificate. SL promised to publicise the need for flags, with the assistance of the SLO.
- g. PM asked about like for like pricing for away and home fans. SL said he was awaiting information from the EFL on pricing. Like for like pricing is based on whether the seating in stands is the same (e.g. seating, standing, under cover etc).

- h. PM raised the issues of some player sponsors not receiving matchworn shirts from last season.
- i. SL offered an update on season ticket sales. SL described the current volume of sales as 'incredible.' Compared with the last time the club was in League Two, the season ticket base is now two per cent higher.

The date of the next meeting was to be decided, with a provisional date of September 17, 2022 set.