



We Own Our Football Club

Exeter City AFC Supporters Society Ltd

Trust Board Meeting Minutes Part A

Meeting held via Zoom

Date: 6 January 2021

Trustees present: Nick Hawker, Will Barrett, Jon Beer, Mark Cordell, Elaine Davis, Doug Gillard, Clive Harrison, Pete Holding, Richard Knight, Neil Le Milliere, Kayleigh Jade West, Yasmin Western.

Apologies: None

Officers present: Steve Chudley (Finance Officer), Phil Burden (Secretary), Alice Cooke (Press and Media Officer), Pete Cordwell (Minutes Taker) Celia Lowman (Membership Secretary)

Approval of Part A and Part B minutes from December Meeting

Approval of Part A and Part B minutes proposed by Neil Le Milliere, seconded by Kayleigh Jade West

Approved unanimously

Part A Matters Arising

Income from books. Steve Chudley has emailed Lynn – no feedback yet.

Bequest. No more details.

AGM. There were 85 views.

Part B Summary

Under Part B of the Trust Board Meeting, the Trust Board

1. Received a statement from the Chair about the ejection of a supporter from the stadium at the Harrogate Town game.

2. Voted to re-elect two club directors, Richard Pym and Julian Tagg.

Any Other Part A business

ACV

Nick Hawker opened a discussion on the club's recent application for an ACV. Trustees had already received some of the background, going back to 2013, by email and further information was provided in the meeting pack.

Summary of Nick's thoughts and concerns

ACV gives the Club protection if the ground is to be sold. If the owner, Exeter City Council, announces its intention to sell, the Trust could initiate the ACV, which would trigger a 6 month moratorium. This would give the Trust the time to raise money to buy or, more realistically to create a "real hullabaloo"

More realistic protection is offered by our 25 year lease which has 3 clauses

1. We can leave at any time, with 12 months notice.
2. If we became an amateur club, the Council could ask us to leave
3. We could be ejected if we failed to pay our rent (around £40,000)

Nick said he keeps hearing about our good relationship with the Council, but he would like to know more about this relationship and whether it's with the Club, the Trust, individuals at the Club, or CCT.

One of Nick's main concerns is that if the current plans for a new stadium fall through, which is likely, the issue of the selling the Club could be raised again. Would an ACV then be useful?

He'd also like to find out why the Council have such strong objections.

He's looking forward to meeting with Karime and wants to be sure he's taking with him the Trust Board's views.

Comments or Questions for Nick

Neil. 1. concerned about compulsory purchase order of ground
 2. how did Oxford win their case, when there seems to be no right to appeal.

Action Nick will look into that

 3. difficult to advise Nick until we've heard what the council has to say or offer.

Doug. Asked why Julian has to be there?

Pete. Thinks it's a pointless exercise to proceed and we could lose one of our major strategic partners. It would be a struggle to understand circumstances in which an ACV would give us any real protection if the ground were to be sold. As planning decisions come up, we're going to need to be on good terms with the Council. It's madness to pursue it.

Richard. Agree that a good relationship with the council is needed with planning for future projects coming up. Where does Richard Pym stand on this?

Nick. He would love us to withdraw it for the same reason. It damages relationship with a major partner. Planning permission – there's no legislation that prevents Council applying for planning permission on SJP, but there would be a public outcry, especially if there was an ACV. Very few precedents. Haven't been able to find an example of an ACV that had worked. Shocked to discover that where an ACV has been activated, a landowner could claim compensation for delaying the sale.

Pete. Most leases give landlord obligation to inform of change of landlord. Council would probably have to notify us.

Kayleigh. Very few benefits. Could bring problems, so not in favour of pursuing this.

Clive. We'll need council support with a number of planning projects. 25 year lease should give us enough protection.

Neil. Should remember it's the Trust applying, not the Club. An ACV brings things into the public domain. For last 2 to 4 years Council has been trying (sometimes secretly) to oust us and get us into a new stadium. Want to know what Karime's objection to ACV is.

Jon. Agree with Pete and others. No real benefits.

Nick. General consensus is that, at the meeting, I don't need to push for the ACV. I can listen to their objections and we can go from there.

Elaine. We don't want to appear to be caving into them, though.

Mark. Need to remember that our members are aware of this application. If there were a withdrawal, the council would need to explain.

Nick. The council would need to say something like, "We have asked the Supporters' Trust to withdraw their application....."

Club Long Term Loan Repayment

Pete Holding. The recommendations for approval are in the paper (meeting pack p.19)

It provides more structure and certainty than we've had before. Repayment of the loan will not take that much (hardly any) working capital out of the club. It will just make the club think harder about what it spends its money on and how it spends it.

Nick. This is a big moment for the Trust. Shows what a benefit our ownership model is.

Phil Burden. We need to decide how we're going to announce this.

Pete. Will is setting up a PR project.

Proposer Pete Holding

Seconder Yasmin Western

Passed unanimously.

Working groups working together

Nick asked Richard to convene a meeting pushing membership this year. The idea is for all the working groups to work together on a single project. Also "One City, One Shirt." Volunteers to convene meeting, decide who's going to lead and say what is needed. Important to spread the workload.

Trust Membership Drive

Nick has shared a spreadsheet with Richard and Celia.

Nick's research over Christmas shows (rather disappointingly) that the thing which drives membership is winning football matches.

Update. 3876 members beginning of Jan

583 Junior Grecians. 24 increase

39 Corporate members increase of 3

Overall, gained 39 members between December and January. Very pleasing.

A lot of conversions from Junior Grecians, quite a few lapsed members rejoining. A couple of donations. Still phone calls coming in.

Nick. Next work is around season tickets.

Mark. Could corporate members pay monthly by direct debit? Lots of members are small business owners. They might be persuaded to upgrade to corporate members.

Elaine. Good idea if Celia can manage it. Maybe an article on website (**Action**. Will)

Trustees Register

Nick compiled this over Christmas. He's added to the register the expiry date of DBS checks/. Nicky Perryman has diarised these dates. Phil will remind each of the Trustees when their DBS expires.

DBS for officers and volunteers. Comms, OWG, Community groups need a DBS. **Action**. Group leaders to organise these. Trust to cover cost.

Trust Office and Match Day Reception.

Work due to start mid Jan. Available by March. £10,000 being spent on this.

Approval of Working Group membership

Corrections. Richard Knight added to Ownership group

Trust board approves membership of these groups.

Action. Each lead of working group to ask members to sign conduct and confidential policy documents.

Working Group Updates

Finance and Governance Group

Nothing to report except we have a lot of money in the bank!

Meeting tomorrow.

Steve. More money than we've ever had. Figures are in the pack.

Nick. Not sure when the £8,000 to club monthly ends. Waiting (tax advice). Maybe value in continuing to pay.

Neil. 2 questions for Steve.

1. Receipts and Expenditure. Zoom. Is it a fixed amount or dependent on numbers?

A. Both. Trust shares Zoom with others in the club. It is a fixed price.

2. Is telephone £27.72 for three month rental the membership phone? Does it need upgrading?

A. Is old, needs charging but is serviceable.

Phil Burden. Was a decision made about distribution of Premier League money?

Nick. Decision made in a hurry. We wanted money distributed in a fair way. So we helped the clubs with low gates. In total we'll get £300,000.

Ownership and Membership Group

Dave Treharne looking at DAB+ in Exeter area. Would be good for publicity

Elaine. Advent calendar went well (hindered by Covid). People who received stuff were really pleased.

Neil. Director of Day has brought a lot of good comments.

Richard. A reminder that all groups this year will be looking at how to increase membership retain existing members and increase subscriptions. If you want to join us, please email.

Community Working Group

Doug. Secret Santa a great success. Will say thanks to ECI, speak to Jamie Vittles after speaking to Elaine.

Idea. World Cancer Day, with other DevonTrusts. Elaine suggested trying to help a charity in Exeter. Will try to arrange a meeting this month.

Plymouth are hosting their Devon Supporters' Trust meeting. Hereford are coming. Bristol City and Bath City also invited. Nick has invited Yeovil Town. .

Neil suggested inviting someone from FSA to this meeting.

Nick. Letter has gone off to Germany

Communication and Engagement Group

Will. The comms team met in December ahead of Christmas to discuss the theme of 'what next for 2020'

Currently going through the notes and agreed action points from that discussion and will meet in the coming weeks with Alice, and those responsible for the website, social media, and podcast to create a content plan for the next six-months.

Our main aim, as always, is to build on our work of implementing the communications and engagement element of the Trust strategy (2020-25), and while we will continue with our focus on the aims, activities, and achievements of the Trust and all associated bodies, we will also be placing increased emphasis in collaborating with the other working groups to promote the brand, identity, and values of the Trust, and to maintain our membership, attract new members, and increase donations.

Thanks to all trustees and officers for their contributions over last few months.

A reminder that updated Profiles for Trustees and Officers are due in on Saturday.

Questions

Elaine. Did we manage to send eChristmas cards?

A. No but we did Christmas features online.

Will. We'll do it next year, collaborate with OWG.

Any Other Business

Phil. Election. One reply so far from request for feedback from candidates. There will be a discussion and evaluation with Will and John Street so we can do it even better next year.

Doug. Could Neil set up a group gmail for Community Working group please?

Elaine. Corporate members sponsoring an Academy team. Now is a really good time to build on the success of the Academy teams. Supporters are really starting to acknowledge how well these teams are doing and what they are achieving. I think supporters would appreciate the chance to be involved as there is so little football at the moment.

Mark. Can individual youngsters get financial help in these hard times?

Richard. There is a hardship fund

Elaine. Worth keeping in mind.

Elaine. Let's go individually to the Groups to seek sponsorship for the Academy teams. Agreed.

Nick wanted to remind everyone that the Vice Chair is gradually becoming involved.

Date of next meeting:

Monday 8th February 2021 at 18.00