

## **Minutes of meeting of Supporters' Board, May 5, 2022**

Present: Matty Davis, James Errington, Derek Daniels, Gill Shepherd, Len South, Martin O'Hara, Paul Mayfield, Mellony Shepherd, Dan Pearson

Club representatives: Gavin Baldwin, Shaun Lockwood, Liam Hoden

Apologies: Lizzie Robinson, Lee Rourke

Absent: Patrick Queen

1. Minutes from the previous meeting (March 26, 2022)
  - a. The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.
  
2. Financial update from Gavin Baldwin
  - a. The vast majority of the debts which arose during the Covid-19 pandemic have been paid. This includes £1.2m of debt due to HMRC and wage deferrals, which has been paid back in full. A further £120,000 is due to be paid in two staggered instalments over the next two years.
  - b. The budget for the year was due to be signed off within the next week. The indicative playing budget had been shared with James Coppinger and Gary McSheffrey who 'appeared more than happy with it.' They have already begun speaking with potential signings.
  - c. It was confirmed there will be no redundancies due to relegation from League One.
  - d. The next financial year will result in a small loss which has been funded by the previous year's reserves.
  - e. The funds to be distributed by the EFL for the year will be learned by the end of May. It is expected that various means of funding will be cut, including the EFL Futures payments. GB said the club 'can take those cuts on the chin because of the reserves that have been generated.'
  - f. The club is currently generating funds through the Play on the Pitch programme, which is set to make approximately £60,000. The two upcoming concerts (The Killers, Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott) could result in revenue of up to £250,000.
  - g. Following relegation to League Two, income is predicted to fall by circa £700,000. The majority of the drop is down to the reduction in money from the EFL due to the drop to the lower level. Costs have been cut by £200,000 largely due to National Insurance and PAYE reductions, plus having very little debt remaining from the Covid pandemic. Overhead costs have increased by £200,000 due to rising utilities and increased costs of operations.
  - h. The club is looking to go into the new season with a squad of approximately 25 players based on the guidance of James Coppinger

and Gary McSheffrey. GB said 'they have identified the positions where they want to recruit and believe they have the funds available to do that.'

- i. The details of the club's retained and released list were repeated.
  - j. The summary of the financial situation was 'we are pushing it as far as we can to make the playing budget as big as possible but without putting the health of the company at risk. James Coppinger and Gary McSheffrey have been part of the process and they are more than happy at this stage.'
  - k. A question from Gill Shepherd on whether any players have relegation release clauses in their contracts. GB confirms there are and says there is no financial pressure to sell any players.
  - l. A question from Paul Mayfield on whether the fee received for Ben Blythe from Swansea City has been added to the budget. GB confirms it has.
  - m. A question from Dan Pearson on where money is best spent by supporters to benefit the club. GB provided a breakdown of percentages of revenue per pound for products and services including catering, merchandise etc. GB confirmed Rovers receive 100 per cent of the revenue percentages and that there is no breakdown between the Club Doncaster clubs.
  - n. A question from Matty Davies on how the fixture list will be impacted by the Rugby League World Cup. GB said the RLWC have liaised with the EFL over fixtures while the club have requested to avoid a run of away fixtures. SL added that last season's fixtures were arranged with the RLWC in mind for the original staging and there was little disruption to a regular calendar.
  - o. A question from Dan Pearson on worries on the impact on the pitch of the Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott concert. GB said one of the main reasons the concert was allowed was that it provided revenue to fund the pitch renovation. The stage will also be set closer to the North Stand than the Killers and the ground isn't as covered for as long so there is less impact on the grass. GB said the ground staff are consulted before any decision on events are made and if they say no, the events will not be allowed.
3. An update on the fan-led review into football governance by Martin O'Hara
- a. MO provided a potted history of the fan-led review and the Football Supporters Association's involvement. He confirmed he spoke in the review about Rovers and the club's fan engagement successes.
  - b. The key recommendation of the fan-led review was an independent regulator for football.
  - c. The FSA have been canvassing for the recommendations of the review to be adopted. MO and GB have met with Doncaster MP Dame Rosie

Winterton to gain her support and MO confirmed Dame Rosie has met with Tracey Crouch to discuss the issue. MO says other fan groups across the country have been urged to contact their local MPs.

- d. MO said the process of creating the independent regulator has gone out to tender. The department is expected to have 140 staff.
- e. MO said one of the main concerns for clubs such as Rovers is the distribution of TV revenues. The FSA are hopeful the distribution would be decided upon by the independent regulator.
- f. MO said it was expected the fan-led review would be part of the Queen's Speech with a bill set to go through Parliament to create the independent regulator. This was confirmed on May 10.

#### 4. Backroom staff update from GB

- a. The new additional physio is set to start on June 16, 2022.
- b. The new analyst is set to start on June 1, 2022
- c. New U16 coach Paul Green and new U18 coach Chad Gribble have both started in their roles. GB said Gribble ran the Exeter City Academy which has one of the highest productivity level in the country.
- d. The new club secretary will start in September in the worst case scenario but negotiations are on-going to attempt to accelerate the departure from the current employers. GB confirmed Mary Lally will continue on as club secretary until the new appointment is finalised.
- e. Frank Sinclair has left his role as assistant manager and will return to Academy coaching, with Steve Eyre stepping up to assistant manager.
- f. A question from Paul Mayfield on whether the club will change medical consultants. GB said the consultants are organised through the Premier League with which the medical insurance/care policy is held. The club pays £80,000 per year for the medical insurance/care. The club will hold a meeting with the Premier League over whether there can be a greater say on which consultants players visit. Only Manchester United operate outside the Premier League medical insurance set up.

#### 5. Season ticket sales update from Shaun Lockwood

- a. The club was really pleased with the sales to the initial early bird deadline.
- b. SL gave figures in comparison with the previous year's sales and the last 'regular' season ticket period prior to Covid-19 which was ahead of the 2019/20 campaign.
- c. Adult sales are 223 down on the previous year and 136 down on the 19/20 season. Senior sales are 100 down on the previous year and 32 down on 19/20. Young people (18-24) are 236 down on the previous year and 77 up on 19/20.

- d. At least 100 new season tickets have been sold (not renewals). There have been around 660 non-renewals but this figure is set to reduce due to upcoming deadlines and the start of the season
- e. SL expects season ticket sales will not be considerably lower than last season. Cash levels will be lower due to the reduced prices and the club budgeted for that.
- f. Question from Derek Daniels on whether season ticket sales will impact on the playing budget. SL confirmed it would not.
- g. Question from Martin O'Hara on whether using PayPal has made a positive impact. SL confirmed more than 150 season tickets have been sold with PayPal.

#### 6. Update on club bans from Shaun Lockwood

- a. Members of the Supporters' Board had requested the update following supporters being vocal on social media regarding their bans.
- b. SL explained the timelines of banning procedures and reviews, including the use of independent parties to give judgements.
- c. SL explained reasons for delays in procedures such as high volumes of incidents and staff absences. There was also a pledge to review procedures in a bid to speed up the processes.
- d. SL detailed discussions with representatives from the Football Supporters Association in regards to banning procedures.
- e. SL discussed why the club will not make public the reason for bans or engage in public discussion over specific bans.

#### 7. Formation of the Shadow Board

- a. Due to the length of the meeting it was decided that Derek Daniels and James Errington would work on the formation of the Shadow Board and report back to the rest of the members.

#### 8. AOB

- a. Question from James Errington on whether it would be possible to have a singing section within the South Stand. Matty Davies said a similar proposal had already been made to the club through the Black Bank. That pitch involved having a core area in the south west corner of the stadium, comprising over 16s, which would then draw in younger supporters.
- b. Question from James Errington on friendlies. SL said the pre-season schedule is set to be made public before the end of May. GB said there will be two home friendlies this summer.
- c. Question from Len South on whether next season's kit will be hooped. SL said the kit will be launched in mid-June.
- d. Question from Paul Mayfield on whether the all-ticket policy for away matches will continue into next season. SL said it was brought in due to

reported incidents with fan behaviour at and en route to away matches. He said there had been no complaints from supporters over the policy and he did not believe anyone had been penalised by it.

- e. Question from Len South on how the problem of flares at matches is being handled. SL said it is impossible to entirely prevent flares being brought into the stadium. He said 19 were used in the stadium this season. SL confirmed those using flares are ejected from the stadium.
- f. Question from Mellony Shepherd on whether refreshment kiosks will go cashless next season. SL said he does not believe the demographic of supporters will welcome such a move. The use of contactless payment has not increased significantly in the post-pandemic era.
- g. Question from Mellony Shepherd on whether the half time draw will return. SL confirms it will, alongside changes to matchday programme sales.
- h. Shaun Lockwood said the club will be looking for a new catering partner to start in the summer of 2023. The process has commenced. SL said the Shadow Board will be consulted over the catering options to determine the best outcome. No option is off the table at the moment.
- i. SL said the focus is for the club off the field is family excellence, supporting more than 100 charities, progressing with fan consultation and engagement via the creation of the Shadow Board and other initiatives while themed matchdays will support community activities
- j. Question from Matty Davies on whether there was any impact on the club from Shrewsbury Town's female ticket offer. SL said there was none. He explained the club needed to promote the ticket offer as it was Shrewsbury's home game and they had been assured it was positive action rather than positive discrimination. Shrewsbury reported no negative reaction to the offer.
- k. Matty Davies said the club had agreed to part-fund the proposed section banner for the South Stand. The plan is to have the banner ready for the start of the new season.

The date of the next meeting was to be decided