

Minutes of meeting of Supporters' Board, June 23, 2022

Present: Matty Davies, James Errington, Derek Daniels, Len South, Martin O'Hara, Paul Mayfield, Mellony Shepherd,

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

Apologies: Lizzie Robinson, Patrick Queen, Gill Shepherd, Dan Pearson

Absent: Lee Rourke

1. Minutes from the previous meeting (May 5, 2022)
 - a. The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

2. Update on club accounts from head of finance Richard Poole
 - a. Accounts for the financial year to June 2021 are to be presented to Companies House on June 29, 2022. This period covered the season where every match was played behind-closed-doors due to Covid-19.
 - b. RP read the statement that was to be published on the official Rovers website regarding the accounts
 - c. RP confirmed the full accounts had been shown to Supporters Board chair Derek Daniels and Martin O'Hara as the representative of the Viking Supporters Cooperative. The accounts published by Companies House will be abbreviated, as per club policy
 - d. RP detailed the headline figures from the accounts in detail. Including specifics on income and expenditure relating to match day and non match day activities.
 - e. RP said: "It was an exceptionally tough year. We went into the year in self-preservation mode. We took advantage of everything offered to us and it seemed to have stood us in good stead."
 - f. Question to RP from Martin O'Hara - did you learn any financial lessons that could be utilised in future from operating without supporter income? RP said the situation was difficult because no supporters meant no matchday costs but also considerably reduced matchday income. That changed immediately with the return of fans. Shaun Lockwood said the landscape had changed among supporters in regards to streaming, with more becoming aware and comfortable with streaming matches and considering that as an option over travelling to matches. A discussion was sparked on the positives and negatives of streaming. Gavin Baldwin discussed the future of broadcast rights and the challenges to come for the EFL at the end of the current contracts in 2024.
 - g. Discussion of the Fan Led Review, with a warning from RP that this would not come into play for several years.

- h. Question from MO on whether the money owed to the EFL is taken automatically. RP confirms it is taken in October and February.
 - i. A question from Derek Daniels on business interruption insurance. RP and GB discuss the pros and cons and suggest it is not viable due to premium costs.
3. Update on discussions over crowd management in the South Stand
- a. SL states a virtual meeting was held with Matty and Jack from the Black Bank, safety officer Mike Allott, box office manager Tracy Bawden and marketing manager Mark Hughesman.
 - b. The meeting was to discuss the Black Bank which 'did not operate efficiently last season in regards to the fans in the area at the centre of the back of the stand' and how this could be rectified.
 - c. It was stated that one of the reasons for this was due to the leadership of the Black Bank organisation being absent at games for much of the season, with younger supporters taking control and not demonstrating the required behaviour during matches. Other reasons included the use of third party stewarding due to lack of availability. There were complaints from supporters about crowding in certain areas which restricted access. The issues led to the area of the South Stand being more heavily stewarded than in previous years.
 - d. One of the suggested options from the virtual meeting was a segregating off part of the stand to become a members-only area for Black Bank members, with ID cards. SL said he had taken feedback within the club since the meeting and many believed the idea would receive complaints, and be more divisive than uniting.
 - e. SL wanted to bring the idea to the Supporters Board ahead of a wider scale of consultation over a period of time, featuring relevant supporters, club staff and officials, plus taking guidance from external sources.
 - f. MD said a further detail to the idea was for the segregated area to be over 16s only due to the majority of issues in the area coming from school-aged individuals.
 - g. MD said there is a desire within the Black Bank committee for an organised support group, similar to that of Crystal Palace or Rangers.
 - h. SL said he has no plans to return to allocated seating within the South Stand.
 - i. Len South detailed the policy for travelling on supporters coaches for under 18s to have parental permission and under 16s requiring the presence of a responsible adult. SL said the club's current safeguarding cut-off was 14 and believes raising that age limit would cause division. MD said there would be nothing to guarantee young

supporters would sit with accompanying adults due to the unreserved seating in the South Stand, so the issues would not be addressed.

- j. SL said advice from the Football Supporters Association suggested holding a period of engagement with 14 to 24-year-olds in the South Stand.
 - k. SL said the club is determined to avoid the closure of the section without consultation, as was the case with the former singing section in the West Stand.
 - l. GB suggested consulting with Crystal Palace over how their similar section operates. SL takes an action point to speak with Crystal Palace and make contact with their supporters' group.
4. Update on the formation of the Shadow Board from Derek Daniels
- a. DD discussed a meeting held between himself, vice-chair James Errington and SL about the election of members in 12 months
 - b. DD stated he had met with Tony Smith, the chair of the Lincoln City supporters' board. That board has taken on a consultant to advise on the process of migrating to a Shadow Board because there was no precedent on how it should be done.
 - c. DD suggested observing the decisions made by the Lincoln counterparts in order to inform the process of forming the Rovers Shadow Board.
 - d. SL stated he believes it is right to observe what others do but also believes Rovers will be considered leaders on the process due to the progress that has already been made.
 - e. MO said there is no template for a Shadow Board - something which the Fan Led Review acknowledges. He stated the options are to wait for a template to be created or proceed in a manner that best suits the Rovers Supporters' Board. MO suggests doing both. SL agrees.
5. Social media abuse
- a. DD raises the issues of members of the Supporters' Board being targeted for abuse on social media.
 - b. DD asks for anyone receiving abuse to report it to him.
6. Bulbshare market research
- a. SL gives detail on the work of Bulbshare and says they are keen to work in football. Bulbshare has asked DRFC to pilot a scheme which will feature surveys throughout the year. SL believes it would be beneficial.
 - b. SL is keen on two projects - engagement with the younger elements of the supporter base, and reasons for match attendance. SL believes accepting the project would demonstrate major fan engagement

- c. SL will email out to members greater details on Bulbshare and the specific project for members to consider

7. AOB

- a. Liam Hoden suggested the creation of more detailed profiles of members for the Supporters' Board website. The issue would be followed up at a later date
- b. SL would consult the newly-released fixtures in order to identify the best dates for future Supporters' Board meetings
- c. Paul Mayfield asked whether the DNA Card scheme would be continuing. SL said the format would be changing but full details were to be decided.
- d. GB said discussions needed to take place to formalise the objectives of the Supporters'/Shadow Board in the initial 12 months.

The date of the next meeting was to be decided