

Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum

Ewood Park, Monday 12th November 2018 – 6.00pm

Present – Fans' Forum

Tris Stock
Neil Duckworth

Present from BRFC

Lynsey Talbot
Mike Cheston

John Wareing

Jim Holden
Savio Mathias
Annette Birkbeck
Jennifer Lewis
Alan Birkbeck
Ray Williamson
Bharat Parmar
Steve Birtwell
Jen Bellamy

1. Apologies for absence

Anthony Corry
Gordon Ormerod
Mark Hitchen
Terry Crawford
Ben Sumner
Steve Waggott

TS welcomed Jen Bellamy to the Fans Forum, nominated by the new admin team at brfcs.com to represent their organisation. The Rovers Trust board had also been contacted but were believed to be still discussing RT representation on the Fans Forum.

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes dated 17th September 2018

• Match Day Programme

SM asked whether the print size could be increased for those with sight issues. LT replied that this was one of the areas that were being discussed as part of the club's new Inclusion Strategy. As part of this consideration would be given to publishing some club literature in different formats i.e. online, braille, large font, different languages etc.

• Shelving in Jack Walker Upper Stand Concourse

JH asked whether the requested shelving was still planned. LT

replied that the maintenance team were concentrating on work on the outside areas of the stadium whilst the weather was fine but that it would be done during the winter.

3. Attendances

MC stated that half season tickets had recently gone on sale and that sales had started well. The club was still hopeful that its target of a total 10,500 season ticket sales could be reached.

TS asked what the situation was with all non Saturday 3pm games now being available live via the Sky red button to subscribers. MC replied that this was a hot topic for Football League clubs and that discussions were ongoing, although there were no decisions to report yet.

TS asked whether there were still plans to discount a home game this season. MC replied that the club may well still discount some games but preferred to leave a decision to nearer the end of the season where a large crowd might be of significant advantage to the team.

TS stated that a lot of fans were frustrated by the £3 late surcharge on individual match tickets before kick-off. MC said that the club wanted fans to buy tickets in advance for two reasons – to reduce congestion at the ticket office immediately before the game and to capture details of fans purchasing tickets for the database so that club offers could be sent to them. This season the club had been selling around 2,000 individual tickets for each home game and 40% of those i.e. 800 had been bought with the surcharge.

JW stated that there had been a suggestion at the last meeting around the club running supporter coaches to the ground from surrounding areas, which Steve Waggott had planned to consider. MC stated that Steve was very keen to look at transport options for fans on matchdays and would likely be considered further over the coming weeks.

TS raised an issue for home fans currently travelling by bus to the ground from Darwen. Home buses were now parking behind the Blackburn End and the Darwen bus was now stuck in congestion for up to an hour after the game. It was ironic that away fans coaches were given priority departure but not home ones. LT agreed to look at this with the matchday safety team.

Related to this RW raised the continuing problems exiting the car park behind the Blackburn End after games. It was often taking an hour to be able to get out. LT agreed to look into the possibility of the bus lane exemption being extended further to help the situation.

JL asked about the recent decision to put away fans in the upper tier of

the Darwen End first. It was a shame that away disabled fans, who needed to be in the lower tier, were now segregated. MC stated that the change had been made to give advantage to the team by putting away fans away from the pitch. The club would from now be putting away fans in the top tier first and only opening the lower tier if sales made it necessary. The only exceptions would be when it was clear that the away club would bring more than the capacity of the top tier.

4. Direct Debits

AB stated that a fan who wanted to buy a season ticket had been denied credit by Zebra Finance. LT stated that Zebra made all credit decisions and not the club but she agreed to raise the particular individual case.

5. Leeds United Away Ticket Pricing

AB asked whether the club could make representations to Leeds United about the price of tickets for the Boxing Day game. They were expected to be over £40 when Rovers had only charged them £27. MC replied that it was possible for two clubs to make reciprocal deals on ticket pricing but nothing could be done if the other club was not interested. He confirmed that the ticket price would be the same as Leeds fans pay in the equivalent home fans area.

TS asked the club if they could ask Leeds to consider a reduction on behalf of fans.

6. Free Sanitary Products

JB asked whether the club would be willing to support the “On The Ball” campaign to provide free sanitary products for female fans at matches. She stated that the end cost would be minimal and the campaign was more about raising awareness of period poverty and inclusion.

LT replied that the club was supporting the Secret Santa charity who had period poverty as one of their campaigns. They were focusing more on the Blackburn community rather than at games but she agreed to consider JB’s point about inclusion and awareness.

7. Cask Ales in Blues Bar

TS relayed a number of fans concerns about the variable availability and quality of cask ales in Blues Bar. LT replied that the bar staff had difficulty because the challenge of serving “live” beers and the time between games – spare beer would not last from one home game to another. The club ordered two barrels for each home game but was unable to guarantee to be able to sell three. She confirmed that there was an alternative supply of beer in bottles.

8. Contactless Payments

TS asked when the technology for contactless payments would be available at Ewood.. MC replied that the project was scheduled for the current international break and it was expected to go live for credit and debit cards at the game against Sheffield Wednesday on 1st December. At this time it may not be possible to load cash on to season ticket cards from the beginning– in which case that feature would be introduced in the New Year. The project would involve the installation of 95 new tills.

LT asked what fans' feelings were about pre-pouring of beer at half time to further speed up sales. TS and SB stated that their preference would be to have beer freshly poured but accepted that pre-pouring was sensible at half time when there was limited time for serving and consumption.

9. Kidder Street / Bolton Road Car Park Surface

ND stated that the surface of the car park on the corner of Kidder Street and Bolton Road was currently very poor. LT said that there had been some infilling of potholes last week and further work would be done shortly.

10. Club Sponsorships

JL expressed concern about the club being ever more dependent on gaming and vaping companies for sponsorship. Whilst understanding her concern MC stated that there were limited options for sponsorship for a club like Rovers and management were focused on finding opportunities and maximizing revenues with any companies that operated within all the relevant legislation.

11. Firework Display 3/11/18

LT stated that the firework display after the QPR game had been well received by fans that had stayed behind to watch it. It had been a challenge to arrange as the decision was quite late and it had been difficult to find a supplier.

JW states that it was not possible to see all the fireworks from most of the Jack Walker Upper Stand and it would be wise to tell fans this before any future displays.

12. Any Other Business

- ND asked whether there would be another Winter Wonderland this year. LT replied that there would not, as the club were concentrating on a series of smaller events, such as the fireworks display, a Junior

- Rovers Christmas Party and a Santa Dash.
- ND noted that Ryan Grant the club's Media Officer was about to leave the club. And asked for confirmation that his role would be replaced. MC confirmed that it would, albeit maybe not on a like for like basis. TS put on record the Forum's thanks for Ryan's work, as the club's social media content had greatly improved.
- JL noted that some clubs had marketed a badge with a red poppy attached and wondered if Rovers would consider this. LT stated that the club had not been able to obtain stocks this year but planned to do so for next year.
- TS put on record his irritation that the stills photographer at the Remembrance commemoration had spent the minute's silence moving around taking photos in the same way as the video camerawoman in 2017. He asked if photographers could be asked to stay still during the silence.
- JW congratulated the ladies' team on their terrific start to the season. He has seen a suggestion that the ladies should have a chance to play at Ewood and wondered whether it was practical to have a double header with the mens' team one Saturday. MC replied that it was unlikely that the pitch would be OK to play two games one after the other but he hoped the club would be able to move a home game for the ladies' team to Ewood later in the season.

13. Dates of Next Meetings

Pre -meet	Main meeting
7/1/19	15/1/19 (Tuesday)
11/3/19	18/3/19
13/5/19	20/5/19
1/7/19	8/7/19
2/9/19	9/9/19
4/11/19	11/11/19

All dates are Mondays unless otherwise indicated

Pre-meets are held one week before the main meetings. The pre-meet is open to all interested fans to attend, providing they request to do so in advance by contacting John Wareing by email or phone as below.

Members should contact John Wareing at roversfansforum@hotmail.com or 07984 085474 to give their apologies if they cannot attend a meeting.

Fans can also contact John regarding the Forum using the contact details above.

