

# Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum

## Ewood Park Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2019 – 7.00pm

### Present – Fans' Forum

Tris Stock  
Mike Graham

### Present from BRFC

Lynsey Talbot  
Steve Waggott

John Wareing  
Peter Ridehalgh  
Savio Mathias  
Mark Hitchen  
Neil Duckworth  
Jim Holden  
Ray Williamson  
Jennifer Lewis  
Annette Birkbeck  
Alan Birkbeck

TS stated that Ben Sumner had resigned from the Forum and he thanked him for his service over a number of years. He also introduced Mike Graham as a new member.

### 1. Apologies for absence

Bharat Parmar  
Terry Crawford  
Steve Birtwell  
Jen Bellamy

### 2. Matters Arising from the Minutes dated 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019

- **Riverside Seat Row Markings**

LT confirmed that the markings had now been replaced.

- **New Catering Offer**

SW asked for any feedback on the recent early bird catering offers. Sales had not been great but those that had bought the offer had enjoyed it.

SW had met a group of fans about the new food pricing. Whilst drink prices had gradually increased over the last few years food prices had been held so the new prices with Sodexo had seen a comparatively big increase.

Contactless sales were now up to between 30% of total sales, which was very encouraging given the relatively recent introduction.

There had been some very positive feedback about the new corporate food offerings.

### **3. 2019-20 Season Ticket & Matchday Ticket Sales**

TS asked about ticket sales for the Sheffield Wednesday game given that it was an A+ category game. SW responded that around 600 of the 3 game ticket deals (Sheff Wed, Barnsley and Brentford) had been sold and that there were a further 1,012 walk-up ticket purchases.

There was some discussion about discounting prices for future games. SW stated that the club was planning to discount the home game with Wigan now that it had been moved to Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> December for live Sky TV coverage and there would be a particular focus on attracting families for this pre-Xmas fixture.

JW asked whether the club would consider also discounting a more popular game and suggested that the home game with Preston in mid-January could be a good candidate to attract a big crowd with cheaper ticket pricing. SW stated that the club would like to consider discounting a higher profile game but that the Commercial team also had a sales target to hit so that would have to be taken in to account.

SW stated that an extremely successful and sold out Diwali event had been held at Ewood at the weekend and those attending had been targeted with discounted family tickets for a future game.

There was some discussion about the inviting of community groups to the Next Generation stand. The club were keen to continue with this initiative although it was noted that there was a lot of work involved in organising these days. In response to a question from JW SW confirmed that the club would also welcome applications from other community groups on a one-off basis.

JW asked about when a half-season ticket offer would be launched. SW replied that the offer was ready to be publicised and that it would be launched very soon and during the International November break. Forum members encouraged the club to issue the offer as soon as possible.

### **4. Away Fans in Darwen End**

ND raised the placing of away fans in the top tier of the Darwen End and the effect he thought it had on the general matchday atmosphere in the ground. He and other Forum members believed that bringing away fans into the lower tier would create more noise from the home fans as well. SW agreed to raise the issue with Tony Mowbray at an appropriate time.

## **5. Matchday Atmosphere**

MG asked for the club's view on the issue of safe standing areas in grounds. SW stated that the club would consider an appropriate area in the stadium should the law change. There was difficulty in all grounds with fans standing in current all seater stadia and a safe standing area would both allow those who wanted to stand and also not frustrate those who wished to remain seated but were often forced to stand to see the game.

RW raised the current TV camera position in the Riverside, which was lower than the old position in the Jack Walker Stand and gave a poorer angle to watch games on TV, although he did understand the reason why the position had been moved.

LT asked for any feedback about the recent extension of the smoking area behind the Blackburn End and also available to those in the Riverside. Unfortunately, there were no smokers amongst the Fans Forum membership. LT also noted that drinks were available from the Fan Zone at half time and that it was currently easier to get served there rather than from the kiosks in the ground.

## **6. Fans Survey**

SW stated that 7,500 fans had been emailed with a survey, 2,900 of those emails had been opened and about 750 had been completed. MG asked whether the results of the survey would be circulated to the wider fanbase. SW has since confirmed that the results of the survey will be published on our website over the coming week.

## **7. Team Matters**

JH stated that he felt that a lot of player injuries were being picked up in training rather than matches. SW replied that he did not feel that was true – for example Greg Cunningham and Darragh Lenihan had both picked up serious injuries in the QPR game.

SM asked whether the club intended to strengthen the defence in the January transfer window. SW replied that Tony Mowbray is always looking at recruitment but it depended on who was available and on what terms.

PR asked about what happened re the recruitment of goalkeepers in the Summer transfer window. SW replied that there had been two good options but in the end neither were available due to salary expectations.

SM asked under what terms the club could recall any of the players that had sent out on loan. SW said that this was only possible during a transfer window other than an emergency goalkeeper.

## **8. Club Shop**

SM asked whether there were any plans to make any retro style jumpers and polo shirts available to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Premier League win and also whether there were still stocks of old player postcards. SW encouraged SM to speak to the club shop manager about any request for retail items but that it could not be for small amounts.

SW noted that the shop had had an excellent season in 2018-19, increasing turnover to almost £1m and that so far sales had been as good this season.

## **9. Disabled Fans Issues**

LT confirmed that, following the issue having been raised at the last fans Forum meeting, a disabled carer's ticket could be upgraded in advance of a game should the disabled fan not be attending. However, if this was the case the carer's ticket would automatically become void.

JL asked whether there are any plans to provide covered accommodation for disabled fans – she felt that there would be about 50 fans interested in alternative locations. SW suggested that Box 22 might be an option for a small number for league games, as it was possible to open the windows there. LT stated that Christine Rennard was always on hand to offer access to spare boxes on days when the weather was particularly bad. It was accepted that proper provision could be made in any future redevelopment plan for the Riverside stand.

SM asked whether the issue stopping online ordering of disabled fan tickets had been sorted yet. SW replied that it was an issue with Ticketmaster that required a system upgrade.

## **10. Any Other Business**

- TS noted that the previous day had marked LT having completed 23 years' service at the club.
- ND asked whether the car park close to the club shop could be resurfaced as its condition was currently very poor.
- MH asked whether the club could consider a pop-up outdoor stall to offer seasonal items such as hats and gloves on cold days – the queues in the shop mitigated against such impulse purchases.
- JL congratulated the club on the production of the club remembrance badges. SW noted that sales of the badges had been very strong.
- AB asked whether it would be possible to have free tickets for season ticket holders for the upcoming Under-23 game away at Tottenham, as it would be held in the new stadium. LT undertook to enquire.
- Prompted by a question from JW, SW stated that the recent home game for the Ladies team had been very successful with a crowd of

almost 1,000 fans and takings of around £1,000 in the club shop. The team had also been delighted with the opportunity to play at the ground.

- LT stated that the next Supporters' Consultation meeting would be held in either January or February 2020.

## 10. Dates of Next Meetings

Pre -meet	Main meeting
6/1/20	13/1/20
2/3/20	9/3/20
4/5/20	11/5/20
6/7/20	13/7/20
7/9/20	14/9/20
2/11/20	9/11/20

All dates are Mondays.

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](mailto: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.