

# **Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum**

## **Ewood Park, Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017 – 6.00pm**

### **Present – Fans' Forum**

Tris Stock  
Neil Duckworth

John Wareing  
Bharat Parmar  
Jim Holden  
Savio Mathias  
Jennifer Lewis  
Alan Birkbeck  
Annette Birkbeck  
Gordon Ormerod  
Ray Williamson  
Ben Sumner

### **Present from BRFC**

Lynsey Talbot  
Mike Cheston

Stuart Caley (item 2 only)

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Anthony Corry  
Steve Birtwell  
Mark Hitchen  
Rob Parker  
Terry Crawford

### **2. Burnley Game – Pitch Invasion**

SC joined the meeting to update members on the events at the recent Carabao Cup game with Burnley.

For recent meetings between the two clubs there had been several months available for detailed planning but for this game there had been less than two weeks available. The police had insisted on operating the coaching system as at recent previous games, which was easier to manage at Ewood because of the parking space available.

The club had had to bring in a lot of additional resources. Many of the usual stewards were away on holiday.

The game proved to be one of the most challenging to steward for many years. The behaviour of a small number of fans of both sides had been totally unacceptable. The fan who had run on to the pitch was a Riverside Stand season ticket holder, whose birthday it was and who had been challenged to run on to the pitch for a £50 bet. The second fan to run on was his brother. Both had been arrested and charged and have

been banned indefinitely from Ewood Park.

In addition there had been attacks on stewards from other fans in the Riverside. One female senior steward had been punched in the face and had fallen across a number of seats. There was some of the worst behaviour some stewards had seen at a football game and a number had voiced concerns about their future in the role.

The throwing of flares by the Burnley fans exacerbated the response to the pitch incursion. A marine flare had been ignited. These are very dangerous weapons in this circumstance as they burn at a temperature of 1,500 degrees. The person who lit this flare was detained by stewards and handed to the police. The flare itself, which had been dropped, was picked up by a second supporter and was thrown indiscriminately into the Burnley crowd injuring a nine year old boy. This second person was also identified and arrested. Both have also received indefinite bans issued by Burnley FC.

The club had brought in a pyrotechnic detection dog to try and prevent flares being brought in but it was extremely difficult to detect everything because of the mix of chemicals involved.

The club had provided a full response to both the FA and the Football League and a response from the FA was awaited.

RW asked what the role of a steward entailed. SC replied that they were there to spot issues in the crowd but are not trained in nor have the equipment to deal with the level of public disorder seen on the night. Similarly their training would not mean they could always prevent pitch incursions by determined grown adults.

MC wished to commend all the stewards for the work they had done in what were very difficult circumstances.

### **3. Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

None.

### **4. KPMG / Deloitte Audits**

MC stated that the club had reviewed its operations following the KPMG and Deloitte audits and some changes had been made and that the process was still ongoing. Ten staff had left the club through normal process and five had opted to take a voluntary redundancy package. The overall approach was to keep an infrastructure ready to operate in the Championship. He wished to put on record his thanks for the attitude of the staff during the last few difficult months, which had been never less than fully professional.

The Academy in particular had been under a lot of scrutiny given the cost for a League 1 club. The decision had been taken to keep the operation at its current level given that category 1 status had been awarded for the next two years.

## **5. Radio Rovers**

TS expressed concern about the abrupt closure of Radio Rovers and in particular the effect it had had on visually impaired fans.

LT responded that the operation to run Radio Rovers had incurred a considerable cost and that the service was now somewhat outdated, having been overtaken by other methods.

Unfortunately it had not been possible to provide an alternative service for visually impaired fans in time for the start of the season. The club had now developed some options to provide a match commentary but the solution required the granting of a new licence, which was now in the hands of Ofcom. The club were aware of 8 or 9 fans that needed the service but it was possible that there were others who preferred to remain anonymous.

GO raised issues with the operation of iFollow, which had promised full recordings of club matches but was currently only offering 10 minutes highlight packages. MC replied that there were technical issues and they were affecting most Football League clubs, not just Rovers.

It was agreed that both radio Rovers and iFollow would be items for the next meeting in November.

## **6. 2017/18 Season Tickets**

MC reported that the club were pleased with the current level of season ticket sales. The total was within a very few of the total sales for 2016-17, including half season ticket sales. Full season tickets would remain on sale until 18<sup>th</sup> September.

## **7. Online Ticket Purchasing**

TS reported that the online season ticket system powered by Ticketmaster would not allow the purchase of more than one ticket at a time and it was therefore difficult to guarantee getting two seats together. BS also commented that the mobile version only allowed you to choose a block of seats and then always allocated to row 1. LT agreed to look

into these issues.

## 8. Any Other Business

- ND stated that the ticket office was not operating a holding pattern for sales as before but was just ringing out until someone answered. LT agreed to check this
- ND noted that he had been unable to take a relative on a ground tour on a match day. LT stated that she was sure that this could be offered given prior notice.
- ND asked whether it would be possible to sell tickets for away games separately to those who wished to sit and to those who wanted to stand. LT replied that this was impossible with most clubs as generally tickets were sold in blocks in strict rotation so that staffing could be efficiently arranged.

## 12. Dates of Next Meetings

Pre -meet	Main meeting
6/11/17	13/11/17
8/1/18	15/1/18
5/3/18	12/3/18
14/5/18	21/5/18
2/7/18	9/7/18
3/9/18	10/9/18
5/1/18	12/11/18

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.