

Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum

Ewood Park, Tuesday 16th January 2018 – 7.00pm

Present – Fans' Forum

Tris Stock
Neil Duckworth

John Wareing
Bharat Parmar
Jim Holden
Savio Mathias
Mark Hitchen
Terry Crawford
Annette Birkbeck
Anthony Corry
Ray Williamson

Present from BRFC

Steve Waggott
Mike Cheston

Lynsey Talbot

1. Apologies for absence

Jennifer Lewis
Alan Birkbeck
Steve Birtwell
Rob Parker
Gordon Ormerod
Ben Sumner

2. Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting 13th November 2017

a) **Winter Wonderland Event** LT asked for feedback from anyone who had attended this event before Christmas. ND replied that he and his family had enjoyed the event. LT stated that almost 4,000 had attended, many as part of school choirs.

3. Steve Waggott – Chief Executive

TS welcomed SW to the meeting and for his information outlined a brief history of the Forum and its place within the club.

SW stated that this role would be with his fifth football club. He had a lot of experience of communicating with fans' groups, most notably at Charlton and Coventry, where there were issues between the fans and the clubs' owners. He had also worked well with Tony Mowbray and Mark Venus at Coventry.

JW asked him what contact he had had with the owners. SW replied that he had been out to meet the owners in India and that this meeting had very much been a two-way communication, with both sides wishing to establish that the role would be a good fit. He had been impressed at how supportive the owners had been of the club and its plans.

JW asked whether his appointment changed the role of Suhail Pasha at the club. SW replied that Suhail's role had not changed although he also had regular contact with the owners.

RW asked where SW's role fitted into the management structure at the club. SW stated that the owners had felt that the management team needed strengthening and he saw his role as leading a team of very capable people at the club. He had been particularly surprised and encouraged that in talking to staff he had seen how many staff had long service, often 20 years or more, which was unusual in his experience. MC added that he was also very encouraged by SW's appointment and the new structure. LT noted that MC had dealt with a lot of hostility from some fans but inside the club it was recognised that he had played a key role in stabilizing things.

ND asked what plans SW had for interviews in local media to communicate with the general fan base. SW replied that his focus in the first few weeks had been on strengthening the playing squad in the January transfer window. Meetings with local media were being planned for the near future.

RW and MH asked about the position of the owners coming to Blackburn. There was a general discussion about the pros and cons of the owners being more visible to fans. SW stated that it was intended that he would be the voice of the owners in the UK but he did not rule out more involvement in the future.

4. Half Season Tickets

LT reported that sales had been much better than last season. Whilst tickets were still on sale, the current total of over 400 was well in excess of the 235 in 2016/17. It was expected that they would be on sale until the end of January. The club would also refund the price of a match ticket for anyone wishing to convert to a half season ticket.

MH noted that there were still a number of fans boycotting home games and wondered what the club would do to entice them back. There was a general discussion on what could be done. SW stated that the best method was for the team to keep winning games but that personalised letters from Tony Mowbray or a senior player might also help.

TC expressed concern that a number of fans who were regulars at away games had not been able to get tickets for the game at Fleetwood because of the method of allocation. The tickets had been sold out in the first phase when fans had to be season ticket holders, 1875 club members and had attended at least three away games – clearly this group of fans had been greater than the number of tickets available. Whilst it appeared it might have been better to have had a higher threshold for the first phase, it was agreed that the Club would investigate this issue in order to mitigate future incidences of this.

TS asked whether it would be possible, when half-season tickets had gone off sale, to offer discounted match tickets to some home games to help build atmosphere for the promotion push and to engage new and returning fans. SW replied that whilst it was necessary not to devalue season tickets and to keep within EFL rules, the club would be looking at a number of imaginative ways to incentivize ticket sales.

TS asked whether clubcash for 1875 Club members was time limited or would be carried over to next season. LT replied that it would not be rolled over - she understood the deadline date was 31st May. Forum members urged the club to publicise this date to supporters well in advance.

5. Jack Walker Stand Upper Seating

ND said that a season ticket holder in the Jack Walker Upper Central Stand had approached him, who had noticed that a number of supporters from the seats in the wings of the stand, whose season tickets were cheaper, were moving into the central area at home games. He had stated that if it were not stopped he saw no point in paying extra for a central seat next season.

SW stated that this was not acceptable and that he would ensure that this area was stewarded properly starting from the Northampton game.

6. Supporter Consultative Meeting

There was a general discussion on the format of the first three Supporter Consultative meetings and what changes could be introduced to improve their effectiveness in the future.

In response to a question from MC it was agreed that the radio broadcast was worthwhile in allowing access to all supporters. In order to remove any suspicion about the editing of the broadcast from 90 minutes to 60 minutes it was suggested that the club could also issue an unedited version online.

TS suggested that a pre-recorded interview with the owners, rather than a statement, could be a way to build trust with fans. TC suggested that

SW could consider meeting with some of the more vocal protesters before the meeting to avoid some of the issues.

It was agreed that the appointment of SW might help to allow a fresh start with fans at the consultative meetings.

7. Any Other Business

- JH asked what the capacity of Car Park F was. Several times in recent weeks it has been full not long after 2pm. He had a season ticket for the car park but had only just got in. What arrangements were there to guarantee places for those like him? LT agreed that this would be sorted for the next home game.
- TC stated that the most recent Fans Forum minutes had not been uploaded to the club's website. LT agreed to check this and get them updated.
- RW asked whether more shelves could be fitted in the concourse in the Jack Walker Upper to make it easier for those buying drinks and food. TS stated that this would be useful in the Blackburn End as well.
- JW asked whether a team photo had been taken this season as it did not appear to be available for sale. MC and LT stated that they were sure that a photocall had happened and agreed to check why the photo was not on sale. SM asked whether signed photos for some of the newer players could also be made available.

12. Dates of Next Meetings

Pre -meet	Main meeting
5/3/18	13/3/18
14/5/18	22/5/18
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 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.

