Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum
Ewood Park, Monday 11th July 2016 – 7.00pm

Present – Fans' Forum
Tris Stock
Neil Duckworth
John Wareing
Bharat Parmar
Alan Birkbeck
Annette Birkbeck
Gordon Ormerod
Ray Williamson
Anthony Corry
Savio Mathias
Jim Holden
Terry Crawford
Ben Sumner

Present from BRFC
Mike Cheston
Lynsey Talbot

1. Apologies for absence

Rob Parker
Jennifer Lewis
Mark Hitchin
Ste Birtwell

2. Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting 16th May 2016

a) **Arrests at Preston North End v Rovers game**
JW reported that he had had a reply from Chief Inspector Phil Hutchinson from Lancashire police regarding the away game at Preston. There had been a number of "at risk" fans from both clubs who, despite the best efforts of the police, did fight in the streets, but no one was arrested.

b) **Reserve Games**
MC was asked if a venue had been fixed for Rovers' under 21 games for the coming season. MC replied that the venue should be announced very shortly.

c) **Grade 1 Academy Status**
MC stated that it was unfortunately not yet possible to announce the confirmed status of the club's Academy. He hoped that an announcement could be made shortly.

d) **Communications Role**
ND asked whether the senior communications role recently advertised had yet been filled. MC stated that the role had been

advertised and interviews had been held but the process was not yet complete.

e) **Relocation of TV Gantry**
In response to a question from GO as to whether the club still planned to relocate the TV gantry to the Riverside stand MC confirmed that this would be the case by the beginning of the season.

f) **Relocation of Family Stand**
LT advised the meeting that the relocation of the Family Stand from the Blackburn End Upper to the Jack Walker Lower had been on the whole well received, although a few existing season ticket holders in the new area had been disappointed.

RW stated that he was of the fans affected and that he was not happy with the new seats currently offered and the lack of priority. MC replied that he would ensure that those fans displaced would receive priority in the transfer process. He stated that the plan to move the Family Stand had been the correct one, although he accepted that the communications could have been handled better.

LT stated that Game had agreed to sponsor a new gaming room in the concourse for children in the Family Stand, which will be open by the beginning of the season. She commented that sales for the Family Stand have so far been better than anticipated.

g) **Smoking Area in Jack Walker Stand**
LT stated that a new smoking area would be available for the new season for the Darwen end area of the Jack Walker Lower stand.

3. Supporter Consultative Meetings

LT outlined a new plan for the club to communicate with fans. The plan was to hold two supporter consultative meetings each year. LT has written to all current supporter groups and invited representatives from each group to attend a meeting on 13th July to discuss how these meetings will work. The new plan recognised that it was not practical for MC to meet separately with every fan group and the meetings would also be in line with EFL advice. These meetings would also help provide a consistency of message.

It was intended that the Fans Forum would continue in its present form as the club recognised its value as a sounding board for future plans. LT would be the main contact for the Forum and other management representatives would be invited to the meeting depending on the agenda.

4. New Manager

TS expressed surprise at the outcome of the selection process for the new manager appointment.

The club had received around 30 serious applications for the vacancy, which had been refined with the invaluable help of Alan Irvine and Rob Kelly, who had played or worked with almost all of them. Three candidates had been interviewed and an appointment was due to be made when the club were made aware of the availability of Owen Coyle. It was decided to add Owen to the interview list and he had been duly appointed. Owen met all the criteria for the role, including an ability to develop young players, having Championship experience, having achieved promotion on a modest budget, good media experience and he understood the particular situation at Rovers.

It was pleasing to have the full management team in place and five new signings completed in time for pre-season. Owen had also been instrumental in persuading Danny Graham to sign for the club in the face of many other offers. It had been disappointing to lose Alan Irvine but he had received an attractive alternative offer and it was mutually agreed that it was better both for him and Rovers that he left.

5. 2016/17 Season Tickets

MC reported that despite a rather grim outlook in May, when the club had no manager, no strikers and eight players out of contract, season ticket sales had been going well and compared levels on a like for like number of trading days basis. He was also pleased with hospitality sales so far to date.

6. 2016/17 Team Kits

TS reported that the feedback he had regarding the new home strip had been positive.

AB stated that there had been problems with the issue of discount vouchers for some season ticket holders. LT would speak to the marketing department/retail store regarding this matter but was confident that a contingency had been put in place in order for supporters to have their details verified at the point of sale. MC expected a further push for sales now that players were back from Austria and available for personal appearances.

Release date for the away strip was scheduled for 4th August but it was possible that this could be moved forward a week.

7. Match Day Programmes 2016/17

TS expressed the concern of many fans that the standard of content in the match day programme had deteriorated in recent seasons. MC replied that the club also had concerns about the level of sales and had been considering some radical changes. He asked for the Forums opinion on a suggestion to reduce the size of the programme from 72/74 pages to 44 and to reduce the price from £3 to £2. The current programme took the media team five man days to prepare. A smaller programme would cut down on this and allow the team to spend more time on other tasks. He also floated the idea of meal deals including food, drink and a programme.

The Forum gave some feedback on the suggestion, which was broadly positive.

8. BRIC Building Work

TS asked for an update on the planned building work. MC replied that there was not even a submitted planning application for the building yet, as they would wait until the new pitch was completed and work on that would not start until after the end of the 2016/17 season.

9. Town Centre Shop

MC confirmed that the town centre shop would close at the end of the lease on 5th August. The shop had been losing money and had an onerous lease. The club would concentrate its retail resources on the store at Ewood Park. A couple of part time casual employees had been made redundant but all the other staff had been offered other roles. He still expected that there would be pop-up shops in the town centre from time to time, such as before Christmas.

10. Any Other Business

a) BS asked whether it would be possible to have two rather than one stands open for the pre-season friendly with Girona – perhaps the lower tiers of the Jack Walker and the Blackburn End rather than the whole of the Jack Walker stand? MC agreed to discuss the matter with Stuart Caley.
b) SM asked whether it was possible for the store to sell Rovers umbrellas – LT agreed to check with the buyers.
c) JW suggested that, if the new Supporter Consultative meetings were to take place in September and March then it might make sense to move the calendar of Forum meetings by a month so that they did not clash. It was agreed that this would make sense.
d) MC advised the meeting that the club had been looking at music at games and plans were being made for fans to vote online for the

songs they would prefer.

e) BS stated that several external areas around the ground were looking quite scruffy and asked whether there were any plans for a cleaning programme. MC replied that he had been looking at the issue and had indeed recently been on the roof – a cleaning programme was planned.

10. Dates of Next Meetings

Pre -meet	Main meeting
5/9/16	12/9/16
7/11/16	14/11/16

* Note – as item 10c on the agenda above explains, these meetings may be moved to October and December.

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 give their apologies if they cannot attend a meeting.

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