

Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Monday 13th March 2017 – 7.00pm

Present – Fans' Forum

Tris Stock
Neil Duckworth
John Wareing
Bharat Parmar
Jim Holden
Jennifer Lewis
Savio Mathias
Anthony Corry
Ray Williamson
Mark Hitchen

Present from BRFC

Lynsey Talbot

1. Apologies for absence

Alan Birkbeck
Annette Birkbeck
Terry Crawford
Gordon Ormerod
Ben Sumner
Steve Birtwell
Mike Cheston

2. Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting 16th January 2017

a) Replacement Club Flag

LT stated that she has spoken to Gary Robinson at the Community Trust and he had agreed to look at the possibility of assistance in funding for a new flag. Although there could be no guarantees this may be possible.

b) Community Trust Grant Application

JW asked for an update on the grant application that the Community Trust had discussed at the previous meeting and had requested support from the Forum for. LT replied that the application was not yet ready but that the Trust would be in contact as and when they needed a letter of support from the Forum.

c) Car Parking Issues

LT stated that the club had met with Blackburn with Darwen Council to discuss the problems with exiting the car park behind the Blackburn End after games following the introduction of the new road layout. In particular the club asked whether there could be a brief lifting of the bus lane restrictions to allow traffic to turn right on Bolton Road. There was particular concern about the upcoming Elton John concert, when most attendees would not be familiar with the road layout. There was an exchange of ideas but there had been no definitive progress.

3. Future Club Budget

LT reported that Mike Cheston had intended to be at the meeting but had to be called away at the last minute.

TS asked for any clarification on the article that Mike had given to the Lancashire Telegraph about the need for continued cost cutting at the club. LT replied that now that parachute payments had ended it was important that the club got itself into a financially sustainable position. The owners continued to support the club financially and investment was still happening - for example there had been considerable investment at the Academy to retain Category 1 status. Nevertheless, the club would continue to look at ways of saving costs wherever practical across all its operations as a matter of good housekeeping.

4. Academy Category 1 Status

AC stated that there had been rumours that support for the Academy might be in danger and that the club had only been given a renewal of category 1 status for one year rather than three. LT replied that the club had been given renewed Category 1 status for one year whilst a number of caveats were addressed. There were several other clubs in the same situation. In the last few days a report had been submitted addressing these issues and the club fully expected that category 1 status would be extended by a further two years in due course.

5. 2017/18 Season Tickets / Shirt Sponsorship

TS asked for any updates on plans for season tickets and shirt sponsorship for next season.

LT responded that the sponsorship deal with Dafabet had a further season to run and that therefore the new shirts should be available slightly earlier than has been the case in the last few years.

Regarding season tickets LT said that the offer for the last 6 games had been very popular and that the new offer for the last 4 games was also going very well.

Plans were already in place for the 2017/18 season ticket offer and the club were expecting to have them on sale earlier than last year.

6. Match Day Programme

Forum members had expressed concern about the declining quality of the match day programme over recent seasons. In addition Rovers fan Rob Hardman had written a short paper suggesting improvements, which was presented to the meeting.

There was a discussion on how fans could be involved in developing changes to the programme and a suggestion of some form of digital offering.

LT mentioned that the programme was a huge resource issue for the club, especially when there was more than one game in a week, and agreed to speak to Rob Gill and come back with a suggestion of a way to involve fan representatives in discussing changes before the next Fans Forum meeting.

7. Preston Game Kick-off Time

JW reported that he had been asked to contact the Police regarding the change to the kick-off time of the upcoming home game with Preston. The person responsible for liaison with the club had changed and he had not been able to make contact.

LT stated that the kick-off time had been moved at the beginning of the season based on police intelligence.

9. Any Other Business

- a) JH expressed concern about an advertisement from the club before the Manchester United game suggesting that fans bring a friend to the game. This could have been seen as an invite for fans to bring away fans into home areas. JL also raised the issue of smoking areas not being available for the game. LT replied that there had been trouble in home areas in both the Blackburn End and the Jack Walker Stand and that some stewards had been injured. The smoking areas had been removed to avoid the possibility of United fans without tickets jumping over the barriers. TS stated that it would probably be sensible to publicise any plans to not open smoking areas in the future.
- b) MH asked whether the club would be appointing a new goalkeeping coach and replacing David Lowe and David Dunn at the Academy. LT responded that the football management were happy with the current arrangements and this area would be reviewed in the close season.
- c) JW stated that there were a lot of rumours on social media about the status of Suhail Pasha and his work permit. LT stated that Suhail had a permit to work in the UK and was continuing to perform his role at the club successfully.
- d) LT reminded the Forum that the second Supporters Meeting would be held on Thursday 30th March and that she would be inviting items for the agenda later in the week.

10. Dates of Next Meetings

Pre -meet	Main meeting
8/5/17	15/5/17
3/7/17	10/7/17
4/9/17	11/9/17
6/11/17	13/11/17

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 these contact details.