

# **Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Monday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2013 – 7.15pm**

## **Present – Fans' Forum**

Andy Neill  
Ste Birtwell  
Gordon Ormerod  
Neil Duckworth  
John Wareing  
Jennifer Lewis  
Alan Birkbeck  
Mark Hitchen  
Ben Sumner  
Ray Williamson  
Rob Parker  
Glenn Pegden

## **Present from BRFC**

Derek Shaw  
Greg Coar  
Lynsey Talbot

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

Annette Birkbeck  
John Billouin  
Terry Crawford  
Tris Stock

At the start the meeting recorded its thanks to the service that Martin Howarth had given both as a member from the instigation of the Forum and for many years as its Chairman. JW undertook to write to both Martin and Julie to thank them for their service. LT wished to record the thanks of the club as well.

It was also noted that Ben Pirraglia had resigned due to pressure of work and he was also thanked for his service.

### **2. Matters arising from the Minutes 27<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

#### **a) Electronic Cigarettes**

GC reported that there were no developments since last time but the club were still hoping to set up a supply of Rovers branded electronic cigarettes and were investigating the practicality of a site outside the ground that could be used for the smoking of conventional cigarettes at half time.

## **b)Half Season Tickets**

There had been just under 500 half season ticket sales. Sales had started very strongly but had been hit by a decline in the team's form on the pitch. GC reminded the meeting that the home game with Brighton, which was postponed before Christmas, would not be included in the half season ticket deal when it was played on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, as the original date was prior to the onset of the half season ticket package.

## **c) FA Cup Ticket Prices**

GO asked why there had not been a flat price scheme for the FA Cup game with Bristol City. GC explained that the club wanted to provide differential pricing between the home stands. Tickets had been available in the Riverside stand for £10 for any adult season ticket holders. He also pointed out that, for example, a £20 ticket provided only around £6-7 for the home club once VAT, FA fees and the share to the away side had been made.

## **d)Fans Forum Promotion**

AN noted that there had been a promotion of the Fans Forum on the big screen at recent home games.

## **e)Disabled Minibus**

LT stated that there was a meeting planned with the disabled supporters committee on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> to review the three month trial with the new coach with disabled access.

## **3. Management Appointment Process**

AN asked for information regarding the process for the selection of a new manager. DS stated that the club had received a large number of CVs from potential managers for the process originally, prior to Henning Berg's appointment. A few new CVs had been received for the second process. Michael Appleton had been one of about 10 CVs sent to the owners in Pune originally. The final decision on this appointment had been made in India. GO asked whether the club should have continued with Gary Bowyer as had originally been announced. DS stated that there had been some mixed messages coming from the club and he was trying to work with the owners to improve the co-ordination of communication.

## **4. AGM**

GO expressed concern that the only Board members at the AGM had

been Rob Coar and Karen Silk and that there had been no one available to respond to football questions.

DS replied that he had been planning to chair the AGM but had been asked to go out to Pune at very short notice with Paul Agnew.

JW asked whether the request of shareholders for another meeting at which football issues could be raised would be arranged as promised at the AGM. LT replied that she still planned to arrange this but getting a suitable date had been difficult over the Christmas period.

AN asked what was behind the recently announced decision to employ a new PR company. DS responded that the company had worked with Michael Appleton before and he had requested their involvement. They were planning a press conference for Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>. There had been no contract between the club and PAPR for 6 months and currently press releases were dealt with in house.

SB asked whether the owners would be coming to a home game in the near future. DS stated that they had attended 5 games already in the current season and they tried to co-ordinate visits with their European business trips. GC also stated that 1 satellite TV station in India with a reach to 75 million households was now showing a weekly 3 hour programme on Rovers.

## **5. Burnley Home Game**

AN asked what arrangements had been made for the home game with Burnley in March. GC stated that one meeting had taken place with safety officers and the police but no firm decisions had been taken. JW stated that he and AN had attended meetings before and after the away game at Turf Moor along with fans representatives from Burnley and he recommended that fans were involved in the planning for the home game.

There was some discussion about the number of tickets that would be given to Burnley fans. No decision has yet been made.

## **6. Steward Briefing at Away Games**

AN had received a report from a fan that stewards at the Middlesborough away game had been briefed to expect possible trouble between Rovers fans, LT replied that there had been no special instructions issued for this game. It is standard policy throughout football for police intelligence and ground safety officers to report any incidents at previous games. There had been occasional trouble between fans and this may have been picked up on but no special measures were in place.

## **7. Shirt Sponsorship**

GC reported that the agreement with Probiz had initially been for sponsorship for the back of the shirts. This had then been extended to the front of shirts for two games and then for the whole of January. He was now pleased to announce that an agreement had been reached for front of shirt sponsorship for the remainder of the season. The sponsor had been delighted with the deal and was keen to work further with the club.

GC would also very shortly be announcing a new shirt deal and a new brewing partnership with Heineken UK from the Charlton game.

## **8. Safe Standing Campaign**

BS advised the meeting of the Safe Standing Campaign currently being run by the Football Supporters Federation. They were campaigning with some MPs for a change in the law to allow safe standing areas to be introduced. A large number of clubs were supporting the campaign and a few had already committed to running a trial if approved. He asked whether the club were willing to lend their support. DS replied that he was in favour of the campaign in principle, although he doubted whether the club would be able to afford to make the necessary changes to existing stands.

## **9. Concession Ticket Verification**

RW stated that he had almost not been allowed into the away game at Barnsley at a concessionary rate when paying on the gate as he was not aware that he needed ID. On further inspection this was not always made clear in match publicity that ID was needed for all concessionary rates at all games. LT replied that wording had been changed to make this more clear.

## **10. Blues Bar Promotions**

AN asked whether more promotional work would increase potential sales at the Blues Bar on non-match days. GC stated that it was extremely difficult to attract trade during the week as there was no main road presence to attract passing trade. He noted that Heineken UK, as new brewing partners, were keen to do promotional work with the club and this might lead to some opportunities.

## **11. Team Rovers Christmas Cards**

ND noted that the club had not sent Christmas cards to Team Rovers members for a couple of years. GC replied that this was a simple cost issue, as there were around 10,000 Team Rovers members, which meant a mailing would cost c£5,000. Emails were now sent, although he recognized that this was not ideal as email lists can quickly get out of date.

## **12. Any Other Business**

- a) MH stated that the Big Screen at Ewood was often very difficult to read, particularly when a dark background was used. GC recognized that the screen was at its best when a small amount of text was used.
- b) MH asked what had happened to the idea of a marquee for away fans at the Darwen End, now that the Fernhurst was no longer available for away fans. GC replied that the cost of the marquee, including stewarding and policing costs made the idea uneconomic. In any event the concourses in the Darwen End had large capacity anyway.
- c) GO offered some praise for Rovers Player, both for the package as a whole and the commentaries for away games. He asked whether it was possible to have the full 90 minutes of games available to view as well as a highlights package, as some other Championship sides did. GC agreed to check. In response to other requests GC also agreed to check the current number of subscribers to Rovers Player and to ascertain the status of the Rovers app.
- d) RW asked why Rovers did not play in their home shirts in away games when there was no colour clash with the home team. DS replied that some fans wanted the away shirts to be worn, having bought them and there were sometimes commercial reasons from shirt suppliers.
- e) MH asked whether the Forum would be able to have input into future shirt designs under the new kit supply contract. GC replied that the designs for 2013/14 had already been agreed at short notice but that he assumed that it would be possible for future seasons. He was planning that next season's home shirts would be available in May and the away ones in July.

## **13. Date of Next Meetings**

Pre -meet	Main meeting
Monday 18/2/13	Monday 25/2/13
Tuesday 2/4/13	Monday 8/4/13

Pre-meets are held at Ewood 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 give their apologies if they cannot attend a meeting.

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