

Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Monday 15th May 2017 – 7.00pm

Present – Fans' Forum

Tris Stock
Neil Duckworth
John Wareing
Bharat Parmar
Jim Holden
Jennifer Lewis
Savio Mathias
Anthony Corry
Ray Williamson
Alan Birkbeck
Annette Birkbeck
Terry Crawford
Gordon Ormerod
Ben Sumner

Present from BRFC

Lynsey Talbot
Mike Cheston

1. Apologies for absence

Steve Birtwell
Mark Hitchen
Rob Parker

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

a) Replacement Club Flag

LT stated that she has confirmed with Gary Robinson at the Community Trust and he was hopeful of assistance in funding for a new flag. She asked Forum members to obtain quotes and ideas for the design of the flag and forward to her for progression.

b) Community Trust Grant Application

In response to a request from JW for further information on progress of the grant application LT replied that there was no further news since the last meeting but that the Community Trust would contact the Forum when their support was needed.

c) Car Parking Issues

LT stated that there had been further meetings with the council about resolving car parking issues but that no definite proposals have yet been made.

d) Academy Category 1 Status

MC reported that the club still awaited official confirmation of the extension to Category 1 status for the Academy for a further two years. He did, however, state that the club did not expect any issues with this extension and he believed that the delay was because of delays at other clubs.

e) Match Day Programme

Given the amount of work at the club recently it had not been possible to make progress on this item but LT expected that this would be picked up during the close season.

f) Shirt Sponsorship

GP asked what effect relegation would have on the current shirt sponsorship deal with Dafabet. MC replied that the current deal had a further year to run but there was a clause in the contract that meant that the club would receive a smaller sum in League 1.

3. Paul Senior Resignation

MC stated that neither he nor the club had been expecting Paul Senior's resignation on 8th May. He had been told by Paul at 9am on the day and he not had any contact with him since that time.

4. Relegation Plans

LT stated that the whole club had been devastated by the relegation. However, everyone is now getting on with work as usual and the staff remain as committed to the club as ever.

TS asked what plans for relegation for both the footballing side and the club staff in general were in place. MC replied that a lot of work was taking place across the club and as soon as decisions had been made they would be made public both to the staff and to fans.

A meeting had been held with Tony Mowbray to discuss the implications for the footballing side. Tony was expected to meet the owners very soon to clarify his position and to make budgets and plans for the new season.

He had advised the owners of the budget implications of the relegation and the effect on Financial Fair Play regulations.

TS asked whether it was true that outside consultants were working with the club. MC confirmed that this was the case and that they were undertaking a thorough review of the whole business apart from the first team squad to identify possible savings and to indicate where any possible investment would be most productive. There was absolutely no intention to operate a "slash and burn" policy but the reality was that there may well be some cuts.

5. Club Rumours

TS stated that there were a number of rumours circulating amongst fans and he would be grateful for clarity from the club regarding them.

GO asked about the short-term loans that had been mentioned at the Supporters' Consultation Meeting in March. MC replied that he had been asked by the owners to arrange them as a short-term measure and that they had now been repaid in full.

TS asked whether the club's suppliers were being paid on time. MC replied that the club were paying suppliers bills in the usual way and that contrary to reports, there were no County Court Judgments against the club. There was also no truth in the rumour that the club's staff had not been paid on time.

Finally JL asked about rumours of the closure of the Riverside Stand for the upcoming season. MC stated that there was also no truth in this, as was evidenced by sales of season tickets in the stand.

6. Supporter Consultation Meeting – feedback

LT asked for feedback on the meetings, now that the first two had been held – was the format working and what could be done better?

There was a discussion about the involvement of the owners, both in not attending and in making statements. There were contrasting views with some fans feeling it was important they should attend and others thinking it would be counter-productive.

There was some discussion about the value of the presentations that MC has made and the general feeling was that these should either be dropped or time-limited to allow plenty of time for other topics to be discussed. However, as LT pointed out, it was important to let fans know about all the good work that the club was currently doing, such as the work which culminated in the Family Club of the Year award and the staff development plans that have been put in place. These comments would be taken on board when planning the next meeting.

TS asked whether a full transcript of the meeting could be made available rather than the one hour edited programme that Andy Bayes produced for his Radio Lancashire show. There was a feeling, no matter how unfounded, that controversial content was being edited out.

7. Accident after Barnsley Game

LT stated that there had been a serious accident after the game against Barnsley and five people had been injured, although all were now recovering. Whilst it was difficult to plan for the situation that occurred on that day there was a general safety issue with traffic coming down Livesey Branch Road after games. Whilst the stopping of traffic on Bolton Road after games had made that whole area safer there were no controls on traffic coming down the hill. Coupled with the fact that there were cars parked on the hill and the pavement at every game, which meant that many fans were walking in the road, there was an obvious safety risk.

LT stated that the traffic situation around the Ewood triangle was being looked at as part of the overall review of car parking and traffic flows.

8. Buying Disabled Season Tickets Online

JL asked whether it would be possible to buy season tickets for disabled fans online for the new season. LT replied that TicketMaster were working on a solution, as it was an issue at other clubs as well, but that online purchase would not be possible for the 2017/18 season.

Clarification was sought about whether and when season ticket renewal packs would be sent out by post. LT replied that the club were keen to drive as many renewals as possible online but that the club recognised that this was not appropriate for some fans, LT would provide an update on this.

9. Any Other Business

- a) GO asked what the future was for Rovers Player for next season. LT responded that a new contract had been awarded by the Football League for club websites, which would be providing much more flexibility for clubs compared to the old contract. The new site was expected to be up and running in mid-June. ND asked whether the One Rovers retail site would still exist or be subsumed into the new website. LT agreed to check. MC recognised that the changes needed to be communicated to fans as and when the new site was ready.
- b) AB asked whether there was any news on plans for pre-season games. MC replied that work had been done and that details would be published as soon as they could be.
- c) TS asked about launch dates for the 2017/18 new kits. MC replied that the plan was to launch the new home kit mid – end of June.
- d) JL asked whether there could be higher profile given to the womens' team given the success this season. LT replied that the new website should help in this regard.

10. Dates of Next Meetings

| Pre -meet | Main meeting |
|-----------|--------------|
| 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 the contact details above.