

# **Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2012 – 7.00pm**

## **Present – Fans' Forum**

Ben Pirraglia  
Julie Wilkinson  
Gordon Ormerod  
John Billouin  
Neil Duckworth  
John Wareing  
Andy Neill  
Jennifer Lewis  
Alan Birkbeck  
Mark Hitchen  
Terry Crawford  
Ste Birtwell  
Ben Sumner  
Ray Williamson  
Tris Stock  
Martin Haworth

## **Present from BRFC**

Shebby Singh  
Greg Coar  
Lynsey Talbot  
Christine Peacock

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

Annette Birkbeck  
Rob Parker  
Glenn Pegden

### **2. Matters arising from the Minutes 4<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

#### **a)Season Ticket Sales**

GC reported that sales were now at 10,000 after an increase over the last couple of weeks. Season tickets would remain on sale until 19<sup>th</sup> October and were still good value with the equivalent of 6 free games, dependent on seat. The half season ticket was planned to be available for purchase from mid November with commencement expected with the Brighton game on 22<sup>nd</sup> December – that would give 12 home games.

#### **b)Rovers Website**

ND asked for an update on the recent meeting of Football League clubs concerning the new website. All other clubs had similar issues and the League had accepted responsibility and planned to work with the new provider to improve the offering over time.

#### **c)Half-time Entertainment**

Following a request for entertainment at half-time at the last meeting GC reported that there had been a penalty shoot-out at the Wolves game and other longer-term initiatives were planned with the Community Trust.

#### **d)Photocall**

This had been delayed yet again by firstly bad weather, then the departure of the manager and the International break.

#### **e)Bruno Ribeiro Merchandise**

Following the request at the last meeting the Roverstore had produced a t-shirt which had sold well, along with one for Nuno Gomes.

#### **f)Fans Forum Promotion**

GC stated that the club was happy to do another promotion for the Fans Forum at a future home game and he would wait for content from the Forum.

#### **g)Joint Representation**

MarkH asked whether it would not be more efficient for SS and the management team to meet with all groups jointly rather than at separate meetings. SS replied that he would prefer a joint approach and he hoped to have some form of joint council set up by Christmas. He recognised that there were some current issues but hoped that these could be resolved soon so that we can get to a joint approach for both fans and the club.

### **3. Disabled Supporters Minibus**

CP joined the meeting to discuss plans to replace the disabled supporters' ageing minibus. Plans for a replacement had been on the agenda for the last two years, as the bus was 13 years old and nearing the end of its useful life. Things had come to a head when the bus had to be taken off the road and could not travel to the Charlton game, meaning that some disabled fans had to miss the game.

She was now pleased to announce that the club had reached an agreement with the disabled supporters club committee representatives to trial the hire of a fully accessible executive coach that could be used by both disabled and non-disabled fans. This would be reviewed after

three months in January 2013.

RW expressed some concerns about issues at away grounds, where coaches were often parked some distance from the ground. CP expected that the accessible coach would be able to park near the ground.

There was some discussion about practicalities and it was assumed that as there was already one coach load of fans who had away travel season tickets there would now always be at least two coaches travelling.

There was a discussion around comfort breaks on route. CP has confirmed that on longer trips a break of up to 45 minutes each way will be factored in but on shorter journeys as MartinH identified the coach will go straight to the ground as happened with the minibus. However should anyone need a comfort break, the coach will stop.

#### **4. New Manager Situation**

SS reported that the club had drawn up a shortlist from those who had expressed an interest in the role of manager. The shortlist was now very short and SS hoped to be able to announce an appointment soon. He had two targets and he fully expected to appoint one of them.

MartinH asked whether the fact that Burnley and Bolton were also looking for a new manager was putting added pressure on the process. SS stated that he thought that the reverse was the case, in that the other vacancies had taken some media pressure off the club. He also confirmed that the owners understood the need to make the right appointment as part of the process of rebuilding trust of fans. The owners were now engaging more frequently with the club and had been to 4 of the 10 games so far this season.

In response to a question from SB, SS confirmed that the new manager would be made available to meet fans at an early opportunity and he would definitely be attending the disabled supporters group Christmas party on 4<sup>th</sup> December.

MarkH asked whether the club had a Plan B should promotion not be achieved this season, to which SS confirmed that like all responsible business, such a scenario had been planned.

#### **5. Burnley & Blackpool Away Games**

GC stated that Burnley had originally allocated Rovers 3,400 tickets but the police had currently restricted that figure to 3,000 because of

concerns about the logistics of getting fans from coaches into the ground in time. Further planning may release more seats. As it stands currently travel arrangements would be similar to the last game at Turf Moor, but coaches would leave from 10.30 and there would be an alternative start point at the business park next to junction 7 of the M65, near the Dunkenhalth Hotel.

In response to a question from AB, GC hoped that independent fan group coaches would be allowed to join the coach convoy, subject to police approval.

Tickets would be priced at £30, with £17 for seniors and £13 for juniors, with a further £6.50 per person for travel to cover costs.

Tickets would be sold firstly to season ticket holders who had attended at least one away game this season, which currently covered about 1,500 fans. The second round would be for other season ticket holders and this may well account for the ticket allocation. Letters would be sent to all those who qualified for the first category towards the end of October.

There would be a maximum of 2,200 tickets for the Blackpool game two weeks later, so the same allocation process would be used. Again fans eligible for the first category would receive a letter at the same time as for the Burnley game.

## **6. Shirt Sponsorship**

GC reported that there had been more interest of late but there was some hesitation until a new manager was appointed. One particular company was close to a deal but there were others interested as well.

More generally it had been a difficult summer for corporate sales but the situation now was considerably better.

## **7. Venkys London Ltd Dissolution**

This item was withdrawn as a commitment had now been given to produce accounts, which was the reason for concern.

## **8. Electronic Cigarettes**

ND asked whether the club had a policy on the use of electronic cigarettes in the ground. GC replied that the club was working towards a policy, in common with most other football clubs and there was currently no Football League guidance.

There was a local producer, based in Blackburn, who were in negotiations with the club about producing a Rovers branded blue

cigarette, which would be easy for stewards to spot in the ground and to distinguish from traditional cigarettes. No decision had been made on these as yet.

## **9. Any Other Business**

- a) JL stated that the Disabled Supporters Christmas Party would be held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> December. Tickets £7.50 each would be available from committee members shortly.

## **10. Date of Next Meetings**

Pre -meet	Main meeting
Tuesday 20/11/12	Tuesday 27/11/12
Monday 7/1/13	Monday 14/1/13
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.