

Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Tuesday 27th November 2012 – 7.15pm

Present – Fans' Forum

Martin Haworth
Julie Wilkinson
Gordon Ormerod
Neil Duckworth
Glen Pegden
Andy Neill
Terry Crawford
Ray Williamson
Mark Hitchen
Jennifer Lewis
Alan Birkbeck
Annette Birkbeck

Present from BRFC

Shebby Singh
Greg Coar
Lynsey Talbot

1. Apologies for absence

John Billouin
Tristan Stock
Ben Pirraglia
John Wareing
Steve Birtwell
Ben Sumner
Mark Hitchen

1a. Pre Agenda Item

MartinH asked to put on record, on behalf of the Forum, a warm welcome to Henning Berg.

2. Matters arising From the Minutes 15th October 2012

a) Disabled Supporters Minibus

LT reported that the new arrangements for disabled supporters travel were proceeding to plan but would be reviewed in a couple of months.

b) Photocall

GO noted that the Team photocall had taken place and had been published in the Millwall program.

c) Sponsorship

GC reported the following

- i. 'RFS' was to be unveiled as the Riverside Stand sponsor.
- ii. Finding a shirt sponsor was ongoing, but the club have no

- desire to undersell the product.
- iii. The commercial side had become more buoyant recently.

d)Electronic Cigarettes

GC reported that discussions with a local electronic cigarette producer were still on-going with regards to the proposal to sell easily identifiable cigarettes for use within Ewood.

The club was also looking into the possibility of setting up a controlled area behind a stand that could be used for smoking conventional cigarettes at half time.

3. Joint Representation

This item was concerned with the possible rationalization of disparate supporter groups that the club currently deal with. A discussion ensued in which the following points were made:-

- i) John Williams had originally set up the Fans Forum because he found it easier to address supporters concerns via a collective approach rather than ad-hoc discussions with individuals.
- ii) The forum strived to have representation from ALL strands of the support base, and as such had 'left the door open' for representatives of the Action Group to attend.

SS acknowledged the role of the forum but was currently happy to keep the status quo and meet the Action Group as a separate entity. He did not think it was worth pursuing the joint representation approach at the current time.

4. Half Season Tickets

GC stated that at the club were happy with the sales of half season tickets with the total sold after 10 days nearly half of the record figure. The tickets would be valid from the Nottingham Forrest fixture. The club had considered including the Brighton game but decided against it as with this fixture being before Christmas it might spoil it for people who had bought the ticket as a present. Anybody who had not renewed a full season ticket had been identified and targeted with promotional material for half season tickets.

AN raised concerns that some fans felt that the pricing for JW stand half season tickets was unfair with regards to percentage increase of cost per game compared with full season tickets. GC responded that the club had only received two complaints over the matter. He denied that the JW had been singled out for disproportionately high pricing but asserted that the prices reflect premium seating in the best appointed stand with the best views of the pitch. The half season prices, whether expressed as a percentage of the full season price or indeed last season's half season price, were consistent throughout the stadium. The forum agreed that

the ticket offer was more than fair.

There was frustration at the continued low attendance figures especially now that there was a better atmosphere around the club since the new manager had been appointed but GC said the club understood winning fans back was a gradual process. It was agreed that fans had a role to play to get this message out there to lapsed supporters.

5. Burnley & Blackpool Away Games – Supporters' Arrangements.

GC informed the forum that all tickets for the Burnley fixture had now been sold and that a beam back to Blues Bar was being considered. (Note: since the meeting this has been confirmed). Apart from those leaving from GEC, GC also confirmed that ALL coaches would be leaving from Ewood even those organized independently.

Tickets for the Blackpool fixture were still on sale and any further phases of sale would be considered after the Burnley game.

6. Club Shop

MartinH expressed concern at the paucity of stock lines in the Rovers stores. GC had sympathy with this but responded that the fan 'boycott' of club merchandise had led to a sustained period of low sales. The club, therefore, generally needed to clear some stock before introducing new lines. This was always a balancing act however and some new lines had been introduced and a real focus on the retail business is underway.

ND stated that the previous weekend Ewood had hosted a Christmas Fair/Market which had been well attended but that the Rover Store was not open and the club had therefore missed out on potential passing trade. GC responded that this was the first time Northcote had hosted such an event, and, having seen how it had gone, would consider having at least a stall at any repeat event.

AB asked if anything was happening with the Rovers loyalty card which had been issued to fans several years ago. He was still getting his swiped. GC responded that the scheme had never been fully instigated but had recently been made aware that some (though very few) fans still 'swiped' their cards. He stated that the club would look into this and attempt to contact anybody who still used them in this way to inform them of the situation

7. Forum Promotion

MartinH asked if the club could help promote the Forum as he still encountered people who did not know of its existence. GC agreed to provide a slide to be shown on the big screen on match days, giving details of future Fans Forum public pre-meets.

8. Closed Kiosks

AN stated that during a recent game which had been promoted as 'Kids for a Quid' refreshment kiosks in the Family stand had remained closed resulting in long queues. GC stated that the club was rationalizing the number of open kiosks around the ground commensurate with the number of tickets sold in a particular area. GC hoped that in general the club were getting the balance about right between cost control & service levels – in fact only one official complaint had been received on this issue all season – but it was under constant review.

GP pointed out that it was no longer possible to buy match day programs inside Ewood. GC acknowledged the situation and said they used to be available from refreshment kiosks but sales had been very low so it was discontinued. GC promised to look into it.

9. Community Trust Future Funding

MartinH sought clarification of how the Community Trust was funded. LT confirmed that a large proportion of funding for the Trust had previously been provided by the Premier League. Relegation had obviously had a detrimental effect on this funding and that difficult decisions had to be made. This had resulted in some job losses.

10. Charity Collections

MartinH wanted to know the club's position regarding charity collections outside Ewood on match days. GC stated that the club had no responsibility for these collections. It was the council who issued licenses and usually on the basis of one charity per game.

11. Family Stand Tannoy problems

AN reported that he had had complaints from fans in the Family Stand about the inaudible nature of the tannoy system. GC stated that the system was checked prior to every game and that no problems had been reported but would ensure this area was particularly looked at.

12. Remembrance Day

A fan at the pre-meet had asked for this agenda item to be included. He wanted to know why the club had decided to have a minute's applause rather than a minute's silence to recognize Remembrance Day prior to the Birmingham game. GC stated that in view of the fact that the club had representatives of the armed forces in attendance, who had very recently been involved in active duty in Afghanistan and Iraq, a minute's applause seemed more fitting.

This was the procedure at Huddersfield on the previous Tuesday and

had worked well. The representative from the British Legion was very happy with the decision also.

13. BRIC – Rubbish Problems

AB expressed concern about the amount of littering occurring outside the BRIC during the week. This littering was not due to football supporters, but the footballers who used the BRIC facilities. He stated that he had to regularly sweep-up the litter himself. GC agreed to look into it.

14. Any Other Business

- a)GO passed on concerns he had received regarding the state of the Walker Fame bricks. GC stated that they had recently been cleaned.
- b)MartinH stated that now that the Forum had a waiting list of potential new members it was more important than ever that full members should attend the pre-meets.
- c)GC stated that Derek Shaw would like to attend the next Forum meeting.

15. Dates of Next Meetings

Pre-meet	Main Meeting
Monday 7 th January	Monday 14 th January
Monday 18 th February	Monday 25 th February
Tuesday 2 nd April	Monday 8 th April

Members should contact John Wareing at roversfansforum@hotmail.com or on 07984 085474 with any queries about the Forum or to give their apologies if they cannot attend a meeting.