

# **Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015 – 7.15pm**

## **Present – Fans' Forum**

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

## **Present from BRFC**

Stuart Caley (Items 1-5 only)  
Lynsey Talbot  
Alan Myers  
Derek Shaw

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

Ste Birtwell  
Rob Parker  
Gordon Ormerod  
Ray Williamson

### **2. Burnley Away Game Ticket Allocation**

AB asked whether the rumours that Rovers' ticket allocation for the away game with Burnley would be restricted to 2,700 were true. SC replied that, whilst he had also heard the rumours, he was not aware that any decision had yet been made. Certainly the planning meetings between the two clubs, the police and fan representatives would not begin until the New Year. He was aware that Burnley had been selling some home tickets in the "away" stand this season but he was not aware under what rules these had been sold.

### **3. Fan Behaviour Burnley Home Game**

SC reported that on the whole the operation for the game had gone very well. There had been very little damage, with about 50 seats and a couple of toilet seats broken across the ground. There had been some challenging moments, particularly in the Riverside Stand and to a lesser degree the Jack walker Stand. There had only been one arrest and six fans ejected. JL and TS noted that there had been more instances of smoking and drinking in the stands than was usual at home games.

### **4. Burnley Youth Game**

TS asked why the Under 21 Premier League Cup tie with Burnley had been played behind closed doors that afternoon. SC stated that Burnley had wanted to hold the game behind closed doors, although Rovers' first reaction was that it was not necessary. The decision to hold the match behind closed doors was a Burnley one.

The police were consulted and they, in turn, spoke with the Chair of the Burnley Safety Advisory Group. Whilst we were aware of these discussions we did not support the decision but had to accept the outcome.

Given that the draw had been made on the day that the last meeting between the clubs, police and fans representatives, JW expressed disappointment that the matter could not have been discussed at that time. This might have provided a solution that all could have accepted.

## **5. Smoking Areas**

TS asked for a progress report on the introduction of smoking areas. SC replied that there had been a minor hiccup in the Riverside at the Burnley game as one of the two areas had been closed, but otherwise everything was going very well.

## **6. Matters Arising from the Minutes 20<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

### **a) Trading Places**

LT stated that she had checked the rules of the Trading Places scheme. The package for businesses had been an attempt to up the numbers in the scheme, but there was no reason why groups of fans could also do the same.

### **b) Parking on Livesey Branch Road**

LT reported that there had been more parking officers out at the Brentford game. JW stated that this would not solve the particular issue of vehicles parking along Livesey Branch Road between the Fox & Hounds and Albion St, as there were no parking restrictions on the northern side of that stretch of road. He accepted that it was not something the club could fix but he was conscious that the danger was that a fan could be knocked down in the traffic after the game.

### **c) £4 Transport Levy at Brighton**

AB asked whether Brighton had been asked about the levy of £4 that Brighton charged on match tickets for public transport, even when they travelled to the game by coach. LT stated that she had been told that it was applicable to all who attended games. She agreed to raise it at a meeting of Supporter Liaison Officers in the New Year.

### **d) Road Works Trial**

ND asked for an update on the completion of the Ewood Gyratory roadworks. LT stated that road resurfacing was planned for week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> November and that a trial of the new layout should start shortly afterwards.

## **7. Season Ticket Analysis**

AM presented an analysis of season ticket sales to the meeting. A total of 10,059 had been sold before half season tickets went on sale. 60% of these were to adults, 15% to seniors, 19% to Juniors, 3.4% to young adults and 2.14% to under 8s.

AM expressed concern at the low numbers of free under 8s sales. He would consider extending the offer to other parts of the ground next season. JW pointed

out that it was difficult to interest very young children at football games and it might make more sense to increase the age range to 9 or 10.

85% of sales had been renewals with 15% new customers. Of these 3% had been returners having lapsed in the last two seasons, whilst 11% were completely new.

## **8. Player Attendance**

BP asked whether it would be possible for a player to attend a meeting of the Forum. AM said that he was certainly open to asking the question. JW suggested that the May or July meetings might be most appropriate as they fell in the close season.

## **9. New manager Rumours**

TS asked whether the club could comment on the recent rumour in newspapers that Gary Bowyer was due to be sacked and replaced with Slavisa Jokanovic. AM replied there is always speculation at every club about the Manager's position. DS stated that ultimately the owners would make any decision on the Manager's future but that currently there was no suggestion of any change at that time.

AM raised the concern of some fans at comments that Gary Bowyer had made after the Burnley game. He wanted to emphasise that the comments had been made about a couple of journalists in the press conference and were not directed at fans.

## **10. Anti-Social Fixture Changes**

TS wished to record fans' frustration at the frequent changes in fixture dates and times as a result of TV coverage. The recent decision to move the home game from Tuesday to Monday night and the subsequent need to change the game at home to Rotherham from Saturday to Friday night was a particular example. He realised that the club was committed to honouring the contract with Sky TV and that the club needed the revenue that this contract brought to the club.

## **11. Fan Zone**

AM had asked whether the problems of queues in the Fan Zone could be ameliorated. He stated that the number of pumps had not been changed when moving from two bars to one and that there were now faster pumps. AB stated that some fans were being excluded from the Fan Zone because of the queues. AM agreed to look at the situation again.

## **12. Flag Design**

TS stated that it had been suggested that the design of a new flag could be the subject of a competition for fans, perhaps for children. AM thought that this would be an excellent idea and agreed to give it some thought.

## **13. Programme Quality**

AB stated that he did not like this year's programme design – he thought it was

lacking on content and he did not like the cover sketches. He suggested that there could be a column about local amateur football and maybe about away trips for fans. AM agreed to consider the matter.

#### **14. Any Other Business**

- a) AM stated that the Ex-Players Association were planning to organise an annual dinner to induct former players into a Hall of Fame. He said that he had asked the Association to make sure that some tickets were available for fans at these dinners. He also stated that the those inducted into the Hall of Fame would have this marked in some way at the ground, probably by plaques in a suitable location.
- b) AM stated that he was planning to re-introduce an Awards night at the end of each season. He hoped that the first one would be in the last week of the 2015-16 season.
- c) AM informed the meeting that Alan Shearer had agreed to come and name a new section of road as Alan Shearer Way. He had been delighted to receive this honour and there would be a small ceremony on the afternoon of 14<sup>th</sup> December ahead of the game with Nottingham Forest, which he would also be attending.
- d) JH asked when the Shareholders meeting would be held. AM stated that it was being planned as soon as the accounts were finalised.
- e) ND stated that a couple of TV screens had recently disappeared from the back of the Riverside Stand. LT agreed to check.
- f) LT stated that the Disabled Supporters Christmas Party would be held on 8<sup>th</sup> December and that tickets were already on sale.

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

Pre -meet	Main meeting
11/1/16	18/1/16
7/3/16	14/3/16
3/5/16 (Tuesday)	9/5/16
4/7/16	11/7/16
5/9/16	12/9/16
7/11/16	14/11/16

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](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.