

# Sheffield Wednesday Supporters Trust

## Minutes of Inaugural Open Meeting

### Crookes WMC

7:00pm - March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Present: Steve Walmsley (SW) Chair, Ian Brandwood (IB), James Silverwood (JS), Tom Scott (TS), Jenni Smith (JS), Tom Hocking (TH)

Deborah Dilworth and Ashley Brown. (FSA)

7 members of the public (circa 3,800 online views)

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction</b>  SW welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that due to the Government restrictions on social gatherings announced this evening, people had been encouraged not to attend the meeting, but the Trust were doing their best to stream the meeting live.  All members of the Trust Steering Group were introduced.  There would be opportunities throughout the evening for people to use social media to ask questions and those questions would be responded to during the course of the meeting.	
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Proposed Trust – Vision and Objectives</b>  JS explained that the meeting tonight is to try and give the Trust a mandate in the future. The steering group have a desire to see things changed for the better. Their job is to create an organisation. The trust will engage the club in a positive way and strengthen communication between club and fans.  The objective is to create an organisation that enhances the collective voice of Sheffield Wednesday supporters, so that issues of concern to supporters can be raised and heard. The Trust will engage with the football club in an ongoing positive and constructive dialogue, strengthening communication between club and fans and addressing key strategic issues facing the club. It does not seek to demonise anyone, but contribute to success both on and off the pitch.	

	<p>JS concluded by saying that now is not the time to be timid. Now is the time for us to be brave and courageous. Now is the time for us to create some positive and constructive.</p>	
<b>3.0</b>	<p><b>The Football Supporters Association</b></p> <p>Deborah Dilworth, the EFL Network Manager, addressed the meeting and explained that there are over 200 Supporters' Trusts in the country. Nottingham Forest, Fulham and Leeds are examples of clubs that have benefited from having Trusts and where it has improved communication between the clubs and supporters.</p> <p>She explained that the FSA had over half a million members.</p> <p>She explained the steps that needed to be followed in order to form a trust which, if approved would become a Community Benefit Society. This would be a legal vehicle, required to submit annual accounts.</p>	
<b>4.0</b>	<p><b>The Portsmouth Experience</b></p> <p>Ashley Brown, the Head of Supporter Engagement and Governance at the Football Supporters Association, addressed the meeting and described his experience as a member of the Portsmouth Trust, helping the club through difficult times.</p> <p>He described how the FSA have helped to encourage some positive relationships between clubs and fans. They have worked with clubs where there have been problems and where the club and supporters are not talking to each other.</p> <p>Other work with which he is involved, included providing grants to support community developments, casework to support clubs in difficulties, and assistance to supporters mistreated by clubs. They also work to influence the FFP rules.</p>	
<b>5.0</b>	<p><b>Questions</b></p> <p>The meeting was opened up to questions from the floor and from people engaging through social media.</p> <p>Amongst the key questions were:</p>	

***Would the Trust look to buy shares in the club?***

JS explained that it is not the objective of this Trust to try and get shares in the club. It is not something we aspire to or be involved in. We want to enter into a process with positive dialogue with the club. Fan ownership is not a part of that.

***What is the difference between this and previous trusts?***

IB explained that the difference with this trust is that it would be a formal legal entity. It would act as a business and would be regulated by the FCA. The Trust will be led by the fans. They will elect the directors who will reflect their views. The steering group is working just to set up the legal vehicle. It is trying to improve things for the fans. It will work with the issues you raise. It will take direction from the fans.

***What is the role of the Trust?***

IB explained that it would be part of Trust Board's role to try and engage with SWFC. It wants to feel a part of what is going on and understand what is going on, but at the moment it doesn't feel like that. The Trust role is to engage between the membership and club.

***Would Dejphon Chansiri have an obligation to listen to the fans?***

JS explained that the last interaction we had with the chairman was at the fans' forum in 2018. There are no guarantees. We are reaching out to the club and we want to be constructive. We are not here to destroy things. We are looking to engage with you in that manner. We have to try and there is no other option.

***What issues would the Trust address?***

IB suggested that the key issues are:

- the future financial sustainability of the club,
- the strategy,
- the transfer policy and youth policy
- improving the matchday experience and atmosphere at Hillsborough.

It is about having a strong connection between the club and the supporters.

	<p><b><i>How do you spread the word about the Trust?</i></b></p> <p>JS explained that there are some plans to broaden out on social media in terms of getting the message out. We will try to be as active as possible. We will do our best to make sure our message is as loud and as clear as possible.</p> <p><b><i>How many board members does a Trust typically have?</i></b></p> <p>Deborah Dilworth responded by saying that she would expect somewhere between six and 12. If you have any more than 12, it can be very difficult to get things done.</p> <p><b><i>If a mandate is approved, how quickly would you be able to establish a relationship with the club?</i></b></p> <p>JS explained that it is incredibly difficult to put a timescale on it in the current climate but the Trust would work as quickly as possible to get established.</p> <p><b><i>What are the short-term objectives?</i></b></p> <p>SW explained that we want to get ourselves established. Should a mandate be approved by the FSA, we will have to appoint a board, approve a business plan, set up a bank account and website before the formal launch.</p> <p><b><i>Have you engaged with the club?</i></b></p> <p>IB explained that the Trust has not formally engaged with the club yet because they have no mandate to do so. Once engagement starts, the Trust would be committed to sharing information to its members. The Trust principal will be 100 per cent transparency.</p>	
6.0	<p><b>The Mandate</b></p> <p>SW asked the room and the online viewers if they would support the formation of a Trust. There was a significant consensus in favour.</p> <p><b><i>Decision</i></b></p> <p>The mandate was approved</p>	
7.0	<p><b>Summary and next steps</b></p>	

	<p>SW thanked everyone for their support. He explained that next steps would be that model rules have to be registered with the FSA and it will take a couple of weeks. The Trust would then officially be launched at a party, building towards an AGM and an election.</p> <p>Because of the emerging restrictions, it may be that arrangements for the launch may need to be modified but everyone would be kept informed.</p>	
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