



**Board Meeting (virtual)**

**MINUTES**

**7:30pm – 7 November 2023**

**Present:** Ian Bennett (IB), Paul Smith (PS), Peter Bradbury (PB), Richard Marsh (RM), David Lee (DL), Phiroze Mackenzie (PM)

**Apologies:** Neil Seepujak (NS), Tom Scott (TS)

**Guests in attendance:** 4 representatives of The 1867 Group: Jacob, Jim, Rob, Sam

Minute		Action
1.0	<p><b>Session with The 1867 Group</b></p> <p>Jim provided some background to the formation of The 1867 Group in September, stating that the group felt that other groups were not doing anything and, as such, didn't want to sit back and watch the Club die. Jim stated that The 1867 Group tried to grow too quickly and initially the group comprised of some people that didn't previously know each other, which caused some problems with their X / Twitter account as too many people had access and then the account was deleted without the knowledge of some of the group.</p> <p>On the re-instatement of the X / Twitter account, Jim stated that the intention was to be more professional and to include people in the group that has specific skills and were known to himself and Rob. Jim also stated that the intention is for The 1867 Group to lose its cloak of anonymity so that they can be held accountable. Jim stated that the group is in contact with previous SWFC players, Fair Game and Reading FC's protest group, amongst others.</p> <p>PS stated that the Trust has been through a re-building phase from mid-2022, when some Directors left and new individuals were elected, plus resources have been limited. IB described the position of the Trust regarding the Club's Engagement Panel and stated that the Trust has been more active recently (e.g. arranging mural artwork; liaison with other fan groups; contact with the FSA and EFL). IB stated that the Trust isn't a protest group and is required to consult with members on any major changes to the Trust's aims and activities.</p> <p>Some discussion took place regarding the formation of an umbrella group and unifying the voice of the fanbase. It was noted that the fanbase appears to be divided and, as such, given the recent statements from the Chairman, it is now time for fans to come together and agree some common ground, including ideas on how to bring about positive change at the Club. IB stated that the Trust is awaiting guidance from the FSA on how fan groups can be brought together, and that the identity of each fan group shouldn't be lost as part of the umbrella group. PS stated that the Trust is collating a list of fan groups and IB stated that no fan group should be excluded from the umbrella group.</p>	

Sam stated that the last few weeks have focussed on a re-brand and that The 1867 Group's manifesto had been published following contact with the Reading FC protest group ('Sell before we Dai'). Sam also stated that only the Trust, the Women's Supporters Group and the WTID podcast had responded to email contact from The 1867 Group a couple of weeks ago. It was noted that The 1867 Group is likely to need more support before any protests are arranged; IB stated that his sense is that fans are more likely to support protests outside of the ground which do not affect the players / matches, or cost the Club points / fines. Jim agreed that disruptive protests (e.g. tennis balls) are no longer required and that it is demonstrations (done respectfully) that are needed going forward.

It was noted that a Football Governance Bill, including the introduction of an independent regulator, was announced in the King's Speech earlier in the day; it was agreed that this was a very positive announcement.

PS stated that the Trust is looking to form a financial planning committee and has taken guidance from the FSA using experience from what happened at Portsmouth FC; the purpose of the committee is to plan for the scenario where the Club gets into serious financial trouble and / or the Chairman 'switches the lights off'.

RM stated that it is likely that many fan groups probably have a similar view i.e. wanting a football club without the present Chairman and one which follows the principles of the Fan Led Review; RM stated that this is a discussion for the umbrella group when it is formed.

It was noted that The 1867 Group is planning to publish an Open Letter and that the Trust would be willing to consider the contents of the letter before deciding whether to support it or not. PS stated that The 1867 Group's manifesto had included reference to the Trust alongside some other fan groups, and that it could be interpreted that The 1867 Group had got the support of those groups; PS stated that, as a result, the Trust sent an email to the Club to clarify that the Trust is *not* in support of protests.

IB reiterated the importance of having an umbrella group that is formed under the auspices of the FSA and which is then able to put forward, and take collective responsibility for, the views that all participants agree on. PM stated that the Trust is keen to get the umbrella group formed, but it has to be done fairly sensitively so that divisions between groups are not created early on in the group's formation. Jim stated that The 1867 Group would be keen to be invited to an initial meeting of the umbrella group.

It was noted that The 1867 Group won't be arranging any protests for the home match v Millwall on 11 November 2023, due to it being Armistice Day, but that the intention is for a protest to take place at the next home match at the end of November. It was noted that various permissions are required (e.g. Police, Council) to carry out a protest.

It was agreed that it had been a good discussion and for the Trust and The 1867 Group to keep communication channels open.

*The representatives of The 1867 Group left the meeting*

2.0	<p><b>Minutes of previous meetings</b></p> <p>The Minutes from the Board meetings held on 10 October 2023 and 31 October 2023 were approved, subject to a few changes to the Minutes of the 31 October 2023 meeting received from James Thomas (Office of Clive Betts MP). PS is to update the Minutes and send the Minutes to TS for loading to the website.</p>	PS
3.0	<p><b>Action log – Part 1</b></p> <p>The following items were considered:</p> <p><i>Contact the University students to provide feedback:</i> PS confirmed that TS has done this.</p> <p><i>'Thank you' gifts for Miranda Clark and Victoria Shin:</i> IB has bought hats as gifts; PS is to contact Nick Hopewell to request an appropriate address to send the hats to.</p> <p><i>Incorporating the ladies' section into the Club:</i> RM will circulate a note on this (e.g. how much it costs to run a women's team in the Championship).</p> <p><i>Returning Board members:</i> it was noted that James Silverwood will be chairing the financing planning sub-committee, but that Jenni Smith does not want to get involved for now.</p> <p><i>Note regarding diversity and inclusion for sending to Clive Betts MP:</i> a short discussion took place and it was agreed that consideration is required regarding the principles of being an inclusive football club and how this environment can be created; this should be done with guidance from the FSA. RM is to liaise with DL directly after the meeting regarding an approach to take this forward. In addition, PS is to forward a copy of the letter to David Blunkett that was drafted earlier in the year to DL.</p> <p><i>Bank account:</i> PB stated that he still not the named administrator on the Virgin Money bank account and, as such, the 'signing responsibility' and 'debit card' items cannot be progressed at the moment.</p> <p><i>Members helping with match day stalls:</i> DL stated that he has been successful in contacting 12 of the 13 members and that there are some logistics to sort out before the stalls begin to operate. IB and DL are to liaise on the logistics.</p>	PS  RM    RM / DL PS    IB / DL
4.0	<p><b>Members / Associates</b></p> <p>PM referred to his proposal regarding membership options and reported that a free 'Associate' option is now available. It was agreed that the option now needs to be advertised and for a tweet to be done in this respect; PS is to contact TS / NS.</p> <p>It was noted that an additional member option could be introduced at a later stage, possibly to tie in with the launch of the new website and member log-in facility.</p>	PS

<p><b>5.0</b></p>	<p><b>Chair's update</b></p> <p>It was noted that IB had appeared on the Martin Sagggers Talk TV Sunday Night Club show alongside Andrew Mills (a former Brentford Executive) on 5 November 2023 and had answered questions about the Club's financial issues and related concerns from the fanbase, particularly regarding statements from the Chairman.</p> <p>Link as reference: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJTDFSMkN-g">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJTDFSMkN-g</a>  IB's slot is timed at 1:51:30 to 2:00:00</p> <p><i>PM left the meeting</i></p>	
<p><b>6.0</b></p>	<p><b>Action log – Part 2</b></p> <p><i>'Evening With...'</i> event: IB stated that there are two options, as follows: (1) hold a smaller event at The Railway or (2) hold a larger event at the Victoria Hotel. It was agreed for IB to cost up the smaller event at The Railway in January 2024 and to bring this to the Board for approval.</p> <p>All other 'in progress' and 'outstanding' items were noted.</p>	<p>IB</p>
<p><b>7.0</b></p>	<p><b>Secretary's update</b></p> <p>The Conflicts of Interest Questionnaire was noted. PS is to circulate this to all Directors for completion.</p> <p>The Director Training Log was noted. PB confirmed that he had attended sessions on 19 Oct, 26 Oct and 2 Nov, with the last session on 9 Nov. IB confirmed that he had attended the Part 1 session on 2 Nov. PS is to re-send the links for booking on the FSA training sessions to DL and IB.</p>	<p>PS</p> <p>PS</p>
<p><b>8.0</b></p>	<p><b>FSA update</b></p> <p>PS stated that he had received an offer of help from a few people regarding the umbrella group idea. It was agreed for PS to speak with these individuals with a view to getting them involved with the formation / facilitation of the umbrella group.</p> <p>A draft list of fan groups was considered. PB offered to review the list and add any missing information from what is publicly available. It was agreed that PS is to contact the FSA to get a steer on how to collate / share the contact list, noting that the guidance [on the framework for setting up an umbrella group] is still awaited from Kevin Miles (Chief Executive, FSA). IB is to get in touch with his contact at London Owls to give a 'heads up' regarding the formation of the umbrella group.</p> <p>It was noted that PS had attended a call with Ashley Brown (Head of Supporter Engagement, FSA), together with James Silverwood, to discuss the proposed financial planning committee and Ashley's experience of dealing with football clubs that have been in financial distress. The notes of that meeting were briefly considered and noted.</p>	<p>PS</p> <p>PB</p> <p>PS</p> <p>IB</p>

	<p>RM is to draft an email for sending to the Women's Supporters Group, the Armed Forces Supporters Club and Rainbow Owls to seek input for the upcoming Safety Advisory Group meeting on 5 December 2023. In addition, RM is to draft a few questions for sending to the Trust's members.</p>	<p>RM</p> <p>RM</p>
<b>9.0</b>	<p><b>Treasurer's update</b></p> <p>PB provided the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During October, income was £414 and costs of £412, which included donations of £125 to each of the Bradley Lowery Foundation and Solving Kids Cancer charity.</li> <li>• The deficit for the YTD stands at £541.</li> <li>• Cash balance stands at £10,502 at 31 October 2023.</li> <li>• There were 26 new members in October and 4 new members in November to date.</li> </ul> <p>A short discussion took place regarding budgeting; it was agreed for PB to draft a budget for the Apr 2024 to Mar 25 year for consideration at the February 2024 Board meeting; this is to include membership targets, other sources of income (e.g. grants) and any planned expenditure.</p> <p>PS is to draft a compliment slip and provide this to DL for sending with pin badges to new members.</p>	<p>PB</p> <p>PS</p>
<b>10.0</b>	<p><b>Communications update</b></p> <p>It was noted that TS had provided a draft update for sending to members. PS is to review this and ensure that the update asks members to approve the formation of an umbrella group and a financial planning sub-committee.</p>	<p>PS</p>
<b>11.0</b>	<p><b>Community update</b></p> <p>Regarding stalls at home match days, a costings proposal from PB was considered. Following a brief discussion, the Board approved costs of up to £1,000 to fund one stall. IB is to find out whether there are any permissions (e.g. from the Council) / insurance required for the stall.</p>	<p>IB</p>
<b>12.0</b>	<p><b>Next meeting</b></p> <p>It was agreed to hold the next meeting via Zoom on Tuesday 28 November 2023 at 7:30pm.  <i>Post meeting note: it was subsequently agreed to hold the meeting on Monday 27 November 2023 at 7:30pm.</i></p> <p>The meeting closed at 9:45pm.</p>	