



**BLACKBURN ROVERS FSA AFFILIATED  
SUPPORTERS TRUST**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**WE ARE THE ROVERS**

**MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM**

**ON TUESDAY 23rd JANUARY 2024**

**Present:**

Peter Ridehalgh PR, Duncan Miller DM, Mike Graham MG, Peter Bolton PB, Linda Chelton LC, Steve Williams SW, Andy Young AY

**1. Apologies:**

Marc O'Neill MON, Peter Dickinson PD and Janet Rutter JR.

**2. Actions**

Actions from previous meeting in November:

MG – Compose a newsletter to include a report on the first MoU meeting – Complete.

MON – Complete work on new website for imminent launch – Complete.

PD – Prepare accounts for audit/filing – Ongoing.

**3. Feedback from the fan's takeover of the Watford match**

Very positive feedback from fans and from Rovers CEO Steve Waggott. It was reported that the match had attracted some new fans who had never visited Ewood before. Feedback from Watford fans was also positive and it was the opinion of many that the atmosphere was much improved on previous home matches this season. The general feeling among Trust board members was that the event triggered memories of more successful times when Ewood was regularly buzzing and it re-ignited some hope for the future. The 'We Are The Rovers' merchandise was well

received and Trust board members distributing leaflets received some very positive comments.

A follow up meeting was held with Rovers' staff and, although it was acknowledged that the day went well, it was pointed out that the gate receipts were less than would have been 'expected' based on estimates for a standard size crowd paying standard prices on the weekend before Christmas. The Trust's ambition to increase crowd size and improve atmosphere was definitely achieved but general feeling from the meeting was that the club are slightly reluctant to try new initiatives particularly if it affects income. Trust members who attended the meeting felt a little deflated at the outcome and felt there was a lack of gratitude from some quarters. It should be noted that Steve Waggott was very supportive and appreciative. The perceived culture within the club of wanting to preserve the status quo rather than be pro-active will be mentioned at the next MoU meeting between the Trust and BRFC board members.

#### **4. Preparation for the next MoU meeting focusing on financial matters at the club**

A number of topics were discussed with respect to possible inclusion in the agenda for the next MoU meeting. It was decided to concentrate on the financial situation of the club and the 'communications void' from both the club and the owners - particularly with respect to finances and the court hearings in India that currently determine whether the owners can provide funds or not. It was noted that the owners have not yet acknowledged the emails sent by the Trust in an attempt to open meaningful discussions.

A list of detailed questions were drafted for the MoU meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February. It is intended that the questions and answers will be minuted and made public soon after the meeting. The Trust are extremely worried about the club's ability to plan for the future given that the financial situation remains unknown just a few weeks down the line. It is believed that the club has funding until the end of March but due to the previously mentioned lack of communication, this cannot be confirmed.

The investigations into Venky's overseas activities are described, in court documents, as being in a 'nascent stage' so the uncertain situation could continue for many months if not years. This situation is impractical and will impact the club's ability to be competitive.

Season ticket pricing and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the club will also be on the agenda for the MoU meeting along with the culture within the club mentioned in the previous topic. The importance of progressing the 'shadow board' as advised in the government white paper will also be discussed.

**ACTION – MG** to draft a newsletter and canvas members for any questions they would like to be included in the MoU meeting. Any responses will be considered by the Trust board.

#### **5. Other, informal meetings with the club**

A discussion was held regarding informal meetings held between Trust board members and the club. It was the general opinion that these meetings were usually beneficial and often necessary to push the club into action from time to time.

All meetings will be discussed between board members in advance and the outcomes reported at all board members after the event.

## 6. Heritage

SW has held a meeting with the club but had little progress to report on the proposed celebrations for the club's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025 or the museum project which seems to have stalled. There does not seem to be a dedicated team within the club for either of these projects. SW has many ideas and propositions for the club, but it seems that the Trust will need to be the pro-active lead in order to achieve any progress.

PB suggested that local school children should be engaged as part of both projects in order to generate an interest among young people and encourage fans of the future.

SW reminded the meeting that he is giving an illustrated talk entitled 'Rovers Heroes & Legends' at Blackburn Library on the 8th February starting at 7.00 p.m. and admission is free. We are also looking to repeat the event in the spring at a venue in Chorley as part of our outreach work to supporters outside of Blackburn with Darwen.

SW is continuing with his research for the 'Rovers in Uniform' project and a request for contributions will be included in the January newsletter

He can be contacted via e-mail [heritage@roverstrust.co.uk](mailto:heritage@roverstrust.co.uk).

## 7. Trust Financial situation

The Trust currently has £9,935.91 in the bank and £187.67 in Paypal

**ACTION – PD** to complete yearly accounts for filing with FCA

## 8. 2024 AGM

'We Are The Rovers' AGM

The Supporters Trust Annual General Meeting will take place on the evening of 26th June 2024.

The event was very successful last year but the cost of holding the meeting in the Red Rose suite at Ewood was considered too high despite some discount. We are presently sourcing a cost-effective venue. **ACTION MG** - to contact a number of venues with respect to this. Members will be advised in advance. A signed and framed Rovers 2023/24 shirt has been donated by a Trust Board member as a raffle prize. If any members would like to donate raffle prizes please let the Trust know. We will also look at the possibility of live streaming the event.

## 9. AOB

It was hoped to discuss the new membership system and make sure that all paid up members receive all correspondence via email distribution list.

**ACTION DM** to contact MON and try and ensure that the January newsletter reaches all members

