



**Bath City FC Supporters Society
Annual General Meeting
7.30pm on Tuesday 30 June 2015
Moore Stephens Lounge
Twerton Park**

MINUTES

The AGM was attended by 20 members including the committee, plus the committee's Bath City FC Youth rep and an invited representative from the Big Bath City Bid.

1) Apologies.

Ken Norris, Ken Loach, Maurice Ashman, Sebastian Buckley

2) Minutes of the AGM on 4 November 2014

Signed off. Martin Brush praised the quality of the minutes.

3) Minutes of the SGMs in April and May 2015

Signed off.

4) Chairman's Report

After the large turnover of committee members in the previous year, I am pleased to report that there has been a period of stability since the last Society AGM in November.

You may recall at that meeting that I made an urgent appeal for someone from the membership to take on the vital role of secretary. We are very fortunate that Oliver answered the call to arms and he has proved to be an excellent signing!

There has been just one change since then, with Michael Hammond replacing Simon Millar as the Bath City Youth rep on the committee. I would like to thank Simon for his efforts during his short time on the committee, which only ended due to his work commitments.

So at present the committee is composed of ten members – Shane Morgan (the Society's representative on the Bath City board), Ken Loach, Oliver Holtaway (secretary), Steve Skinner, Phil Weaver, Pete Sellwood (Foundation representative), Colin Voutt (treasurer), Pete McCormack, Michael Hammond and myself (chairman).

Part of Oliver's secretarial role now includes that of membership secretary – our thanks to Colin for fulfilling this role for the previous eight years.

Constitutionally, the committee should comprise between 9 and 12 members and so there is room for up to 2 more. We have received a nomination from one member to join the committee and with some of us standing again, there will be an election later in this meeting.

The committee continues to work hard in representing you and supporting the club in various ways, meeting as a group every month and occasionally in smaller sub committees. We also maintain close relations with the football club's board, the Community Sports Foundation and the Supporters Club. Shane continues as our representative on the board of Bath City, regularly attending its meetings and reporting back to us on matters which are not of a confidential nature. Some members of our committee are also trustees of the Foundation and sit on the Supporters Club committee.

Events

The board representative's report from Shane at the last AGM brought home to those present the perilous state of the club and there was discussion on how the Society, as the largest shareholder, should respond to the club's upcoming public statement. This followed just 3 days later and prompted the committee to issue the following...

The Society committee shares the concerns of all Bath City supporters at the contents of the recent board statement and the stark reality of the very severe financial problems the club is facing. While there are aspects of the statement we take issue with, this is not the time to debate them and we echo the request made by the directors for all supporters to get behind the club. In the coming weeks we hope to have dialogue with members of the board to explore ways in which we can safeguard the future of Bath City FC.

This dialogue with the board was duly held, with the Society stating that it wished to pursue its aim of community ownership for the club. We felt that there was no realistic option to this and a small action group, composed of several committee members, was formed to decide on the best way forward.

What was clear to us from the onset was that we did not have all of the necessary skills and experience to reach our goal and that it was imperative that we attracted people from outside the committee. Our first links were with people who had been behind the Bell purchase and over the following months more were recruited to what has become the Big Bath City Bid team. This is composed of a broad cross section from the local community, including those working in business, charity work and public relations.

The Bid team presently has around fifteen members, meeting on a weekly basis as a group and in smaller sub committees at other times. While it would be true to say that not all are avid Bath City supporters, they have made a vital contribution to the cause and have taken us much further down the path to community ownership than the small group who first met in November could have envisaged. I am sure all Society members will want to join me in thanking this group of recruits for the time, energy and commitment they have given to the cause.

We have also received much valuable advice and support from James Mathie of Supporters Direct.

Another person who deserves our grateful thanks is Oliver – although he has recently stepped down from the Bid team due to work commitments, he played a pivotal role right up to the Launch Night – whenever a supporter asked a difficult question about the process, I was always confident there was one person who would have the correct answer!

I must also emphasise that those of us from the Society committee continually speak up for the supporter base, an example being our insistence that the lowest share price should be halved from £500.

I am sure you are aware of the various public events which have taken place since Christmas. We kicked off with a very successful consultation evening for supporters in late January. This was followed by several weeks of negotiating with the board. Following the Bid's agreement to fund the raising of around £50k to pay off part of Manda Rigby's loan, we were given the go ahead. The share prospectus was developed by a small group and was presented at a memorable launch earlier this month at the Guildhall.

We are holding regular stalls around the city centre to engage with members of the public, encouraging them to come onboard, while other events which can be used to raise our profile and attract support for the Bid are being arranged.

We are also organising fundraising events at Twerton Park and around the city between now and September, details of which will soon be announced.

The present figure raised stands at just over £80 000, 11% of the minimum target of £750 000. We would like to thank those of you who have already committed to buying shares, but there is clearly a long way still to go and we would urge those of you who haven't to do so as soon as possible. We also need every Bath City supporter to spread the word amongst their family, friends and colleagues.

We are very grateful that Jon Bickley, chair of the Bid team, is present here tonight and there is an item later in the meeting's agenda when you can ask any questions you may have.

I hope you will appreciate that with the exception of the sponsoring of the Staines match in January, most of the committee's time since the last AGM has been taken up with community ownership issues.

In April and May two Special General Meetings were held to alter the Society's constitution in preparation for the community share offer and the issue of convertible loans, especially the asset lock which was confirmed at the second meeting.

The committee also discussed and unanimously passed the following four motions...

- The creation of a new Society account with the Bath Building Society which would be used as a secure account for holding monies related to the community share offer. This would be for the immediate cashing of cheques and the receiving of bank transfers.
- To fix the membership year from June 1 to May 31 and create a set process for reminding members of subscriptions due and removing them from the register when they are not paid.
- The creation of a PayPal account to collect subs and other payments.
- And finally a motion was passed that will see annual subscriptions 'deducted' from members' regular monthly contributions rather than collected separately.

Communication

One area where we have previously been lacking is in communication with members. I am delighted that the void has been ably filled by Oliver, who has created a Society website, in addition to Twitter and Facebook accounts. These enable us to get information out much more effectively.

If anyone received their AGM materials by post but in fact has an email address, we would appreciate it if we could use it. However, I am aware that there are members without email and we will continue to post correspondence to them.

Work in the community

We are very supportive of the excellent work Pete Sellwood has been carrying out in the community on behalf of the football club and were delighted that at the recent Vanarama National League AGM the Community Sports Foundation won the award for Best Schools Project 2015 and received £5000 from the Football Conference Trust for its work in local schools. Pete and his team are to be congratulated for another very successful year.

Membership

At present we have around 150 members and we are keen for this number to grow. While it is important that the committee is proactive in attracting new members, you can also play your part by encouraging friends, colleagues and family to join.

If you know anyone who may be interested in becoming a member, they can download a membership form from the Society's website. If that proves difficult, perhaps you could contact me on their behalf.

Finally, I feel it is important to stress how much we value the support of our existing members and we thank you for your attendance this evening.

No questions

5) Community Ownership update (Jon Bickley, Big Bath City Bid representative)

Members raised a number of practical suggestions and offered help regarding how the bid team can spread the word in Bath. The need to reach businesses was highlighted.

Members complained that press coverage from the Chronicle was poor. Steve Bradley is in charge of media relations for the bid and is making progress, but ultimately the onus is on the bid to generate news. There are plans for a story each week, and the bid team is in close contact with the editor. Jon pointed out that the media are subject to a "bandwagon effect" and will get behind the bid if it is seen to be doing well. He urged members to write letters to the Chronicle, and also to share any contacts with football celebrities e.g. ex-City player Bobby Zamora.

Members also recommended reaching the wider West Country papers e.g. Sunday Independent. It was noted that the Non-League Paper and When Saturday Comes have given decent coverage.

A member asked if there was any news on a bigger backer coming in, noting that most of the money coming in so far was from the rank and file. Creating momentum from individual investments gives a better impression to big backers, rather than making them think they are bailing the club out. Jon replied that there is a real mission for everyone to personally persuade people to back the bid – he has leant on 10 of his friends already and encouraged all to do the same.

A member said that the incentives for businesses seemed ungenerous. The bid team is trying to ensure some symmetry between individual and business incentives, and avoiding giving away too much future income in terms of free season tickets etc. Jon acknowledged that the business reaction has been less enthusiastic so far. In part, this is because the bid team has avoided talking too much with the existing sponsors so as not to cannibalise the club's commercial income. Now that the shirt sponsorship draw is completed, the bid team is more free to speak to these businesses. Also, Jon pointed out that businesses back a winner – we need more of a groundswell to attract them and bring them onboard.

A member asked when existing shareholders can commit to transferring their shares. A letter is being drafted asking shareholders to pledge their votes for conversion in the event that the bid team reaches the minimum target and a general meeting of the club is called.

There was some discussion of whether enough urgency is being communicated about the perilous state of the club – some people don't see it as a crisis situation, and that community ownership is a "nice-to-have". Jon replied that we should not play the crisis card lightly. Steve Bradley added that creating an artificial sense of crisis would scare suppliers and players – while the future of the club is not clear, there is no risk that it will die overnight. People are deadline-driven, as the deadline approaches it will focus minds.

Pete Sellwood, committee member and director of the Foundation, argued that we must sell the club as a community club rather than just focusing on football. This means a club that reaches out into the community and brings people into Twerton Park, including people who can't necessarily afford a ticket. We have to keep asking the question, what do we mean by a community club? Which organisations will we work with, e.g. Mencap, Gateway etc. Which activities do we provide, e.g. walking football, engagement with the disabled. There are ways in for every strata of the city - the Foundation shows the potential of what we can achieve.

With this in mind, Pete, Ken Loach and Jamie Luck from Mentoring Plus have been meeting with local community organisations.

Finally, Martin Powell reminded members that there is a bid street team with a city centre presence most weeks – let us know if there are events in your area we should target.

6) Board Representative's Report. (Shane Morgan)

An interesting season on the field, from the lows of a 7-1 defeat to East Thurrock to the highs of a FA Trophy semi-final. League form has been inconsistent. At times, the membership has not been enamoured of the management setup and direction.

The FA Trophy run means it has not been a bad year financially for the club – we have made a modest loss and paid all bills on time. Bob Chester did well on the commercial side, matchday revenues were good. The bars didn't do as well, but that is true across the licensed trade.

However the on-going structural debt problem continues, hence the Bid. Two pressing debt obligations have been put back a bit, but not paid off.

If the Bid fails tough decisions will have to be made. The obvious route is to realise the value of Twerton Park, but ideally you want to hold onto your main asset or at least sell it when it's a good time to sell, not as a distressed asset. Also, where would we play?

The other is a wealthy benefactor, but they bring their own problems.

We cannot continue with the status quo – fans are perhaps complacent because they've heard it all before. Also it's difficult to sell a crisis scenario because the threat is not immediate – but we are in a crisis.

Community ownership is the only route to long-term sustainability. The fan response has been great, but we need to spread the word and get business involved.

Shane then reassured questioners that the club will be able to fulfil its 2015/16 fixtures even if community ownership fails. Also, the club and bid team have agreed to postpone the AGM until the result of the bid is clear. The accounts have been signed off and are available.

7) Community Sports Foundation Report (Pete Sellwood)

The Foundation has a strong structure and team. It reaches around 300 kids in any week, year round. Steve Skinner has been the unsung hero as the Foundation's Treasurer and Welfare Officer. Charlie Griffin has been made Head Coach and has been inspiring – and it's made him much more organised! Jordan Guard, a coach, has broken into Yeovil Town Ladies and achieved success in futsal. Coaching has been great experience for a whole group of well-qualified university students, including City player Dan Bowman.

The Foundation was Community Club of the Year in 2014 and won the Best Schools Award this year – an impressive achievement among 76 other teams.

St Johns Hospital have given us a grant of £10,000 for girls football. We organise virtually every girls football team within the local authority. We are building up to a representative schoolgirls team this year.

Our work in primary schools involves both boys and girls – we run 8-a-side tournaments of mixed teams where a minimum of 4 girls must be playing at any given time. These have been incredibly successful.

We have also been working with Threeways and Gateway to develop programmes for kids with disabilities, and are looking to work with a children's hospice to give them a memorable day out.

All in all it's been a fantastic year.

Question: if the community bid is successful, how will the Foundation develop?

One aspect will be making more contact with groups where the aim is to bring them along to enjoy football rather than encouraging them to play football. We'd like to see a bit of investment in wheelchair access, and doing more things for the community that are not directly football-related.

Question: How far away are we from a League Women's team?

We expect a full schoolgirl team this year, which is supported by a meeting of local heads of schools departments. The Women's World Cup has been a spur. We need to get the girls playing more matches – the depts would like to see a girls league in Bath.

8) Financial Report (Colin Voutt)

(see separate document)

Noted that the loan to the Club has increased. We received a £5000 donation to help us defer the pressing loans. We also borrowed £10,000 from a bid team and Society member and lent it on to the club. We will be liable for £233 in interest on this each April.

(Secretary's note: We would expect to receive £233 from the Club in return, and repayment of this loan is linked to the onward loan we've made to the Society.)

So far the Society has paid the bulk of the costs of the Bid. We are still to pay Supporters Direct for their help. This is a £5000 fee, but much cheaper than if we went anywhere else.

We record our thanks to our auditors Blomfield.

Colin noted that he wishes to relinquish the Treasurer's role at the end of the year – he will complete the final set of accounts on 31 December before handing on to a successor. The committee expressed its thanks to Colin for his meticulous keeping of accounts for many years.

It was asked whether the Supporters Club were going to transfer their shares to the Society. In fact, the Supporters Club voted to support the Society's push for community ownership in the event of a Club general meeting motion to convert, but not to transfer its shares.

9) Election of committee members

James Carlin, Oliver Holtaway, Ken Loach, Martin Powell, Pete McCormack and Phil Weaver were elected by block vote, unanimously. All will serve a two-year term before facing mandatory re-election in 2017. Committee members Pete Sellwood, Shane Morgan, Colin Voutt and Steve Skinner will face re-election in 2016. One vacancy remains on the committee.

10) Appointment of auditors: Blomfield

The auditors were reappointed with no objections – with a note that they should be invited to buy community shares.

11) AOB

Pete Sellwood reminded members that Summer Soccer Schools for kids aged 7-16 will run on July 21-22, £15 for both days.