



## **Bath City FC Supporters Society**

### **2022 Interim General Meeting**

**7.30pm on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**Via Zoom**

### **Confirmed minutes**

**Present:** Christopher Flanagan (in the Chair) and 31 members

**Apologies received from:** Jon Blain, Michael Clayton, Al Lord & John Moore

#### **1. General Club update**

CF welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Club's Chair Nick Blofeld then gave an update on recent activity at the Club. He began by thanking all who had helped the Club in various ways in these recent difficult times. In particular he wanted to thank the Club's Football and Finance chair Paul Williams for his continuing role in chairing the football side of the Club and Jim Rollo who has stepped down as Assistant Manager for family reasons having spent some 20 years at Bath City. His great contribution will be recognised more fully in due course. NB noted the challenges of Covid on and off the pitch, and thanked first team manager Jerry Gill for steering the squad through these difficult times. He thanked all who have contributed to keep the Club going and especially Commercial Manager Bob Chester for his success in continuing to bring in substantial commercial revenue during the pandemic. Overall, it has been a very disruptive couple of years and it is now a time for rebuilding.

NB felt that the Club Board is in a good place and that the relationship between the Supporters Society and the Club Board is now very positive. He thanked those Society members who had contributed to this. He also reported that Matt Falk had stepped down as Commercial Director and that Peter Headington had been appointed by the Society to fill the casual vacancy.

#### **2. Redevelopment**

NB then reported that following the refusal of planning permission for the Greenacre scheme (and the fact that it is very unlikely that a scheme of that type and size would be acceptable) the Redevelopment Working Group has reviewed the position and has invited expressions of interest in developing a new, smaller and community-driven scheme that would redevelop the stadium and be more in keeping with community needs. The closing date was this weekend and NB was optimistic that if there isn't one single developer to deliver a scheme in full there is potential for a collaborative approach between a number of different organisations to deliver the result we want.

CF thanked NB for his reports and thanked all who are working hard on the redevelopment despite challenging circumstances. He stressed the importance of Society members getting behind the Club's redevelopment work and, while hopeful of a satisfactory conclusion, he pointed out that the Society as majority shareholder has a duty to make sure that all eventualities are considered and prepared for should the need arise. It was imperative to pay off the debt of over £1 million and 2022 may be the last chance saloon. Therefore



options such as selling the Club or selling Twerton Park may need to be considered by Society members if the redevelopment doesn't succeed – the Society needs to hope for the best but prepare for the worst. Having said that, he was optimistic that a solution would be found.

In reply to a question from Les Bingham about the decision not to appeal against the planning decision, NB and the Club's Sales and Marketing Director Jon Bickley said that the Club was dependent on development partners to fund the appeal process and that they had decided that the likelihood of success was low. This was because of the size of the scheme and the fact that the planning officers had recommended that it be turned down. There was also limited mileage in a community-owned club pursuing something which some local people were clearly against.

### **3. Club Strategy**

CF introduced the Club strategy which had been jointly developed and agreed between the Club Board and the Society Committee and thanked Oliver Holtaway in particular for his work on this. It gives a clearer picture of what the Club wants to achieve and how it intends to achieve it, and thus improves the transparency of our community-owned club. The strategy follows preliminary work last year and a members' resolution passed at the 2021 Society AGM. The Club strategy is available on the Society website and it highlights seven key objectives for 2021-24:

- Football - Achieve promotion to the National League Premier for the Men's First Team and re-establish a competitive Women's First Team
- Complete a redevelopment that delivers for Club and community
- Finance - Continue to grow revenue and profitability to achieve long-term financial sustainability
- Sales & Marketing: Reach and bring new audiences to the Club (for both our matches and other events) whilst keeping our current supporters engaged and happy
- Community: Play a central role in community life
- Operations and Facilities: Maintain the ground, operations and Health & Safety standards to a consistently high level
- Culture: Create a truly welcoming, open, diverse and inclusive Club.

Progress with the Club strategy will be monitored in joint meetings between the Club Board and the Society Committee and the strategy will evolve over time.

Answering a question from Alan Finney, NB agreed that the football objective had changed from competing in the play-offs to gaining promotion – this reflected the ambition in the Club. The recent alcohol sales survey was also discussed and 80% of respondents had supported the possible change to allow sales within the ground. Any changes would be trialled and would ensure that some parts of the ground would remain 'alcohol-free'. Shane Morgan, the Club's Operations Director and Safety Officer, responded to a question by saying that rules do not currently allow sale of alcohol in view of the pitch at National League Premier level, meaning that as it stands Bath City would have to cease alcohol sales within the ground if we were promoted, but that the FA was looking at possible changes to this.



#### **4. Community/ Foundation**

CF stated that he continues to be impressed with the work carried out by the Foundation, which now has an operational base within Twerton Park which helps joint working with the Club. It now has three Government-funded 'Kick Start' apprentices and some examples of the Foundations' work include the 'football for all' initiative, football camps, reconnecting Twerton scheme, women's and girl's football, Man v Fat, and walking football. More details can be found on the Foundation's new website (<https://www.bathcityfoundation.org>).

Society Vice-Chair Oliver Holtaway reported that Joy Saunders, Community Director, is looking for two or three volunteers to get involved in the community side of the Club. This would include building up a more diverse fanbase, being more pro-active in preventing racism and homophobia at the ground, and increasing partnership links with local third sector organisations. Anyone interested should get in touch with the Club or the Society.

#### **5. Bath City FC Accounts 2020/21 Summary**

OH and JB gave a brief outline of the Club's 2020/21 accounts, which have now been published on the Society's website alongside breakdown and commentary in "layman's terms" to help members understand the Club's trading position.

OH reported that the latest accounts show that the Club made a profit of almost £30k in 2020/21, a season in which Bath City had played behind closed doors. This follows years of loss-making but the situation had been steadily improving following community ownership. There had been increased activity throughout the Club including on the commercial side, marketing, crowdfunding and matchday attendances. The 2020/21 position reflected the important support given to the Club through various Covid-related grants from National Lottery, football authorities and BANES Council, but also the fantastic support from fans, many of whom contributed to crowdfunding or donated their season tickets for the closed-door season, as well as sponsors who stood by the Club even when facing their own business uncertainties. The Club is truly grateful for all the support provided during this time.

In answer to a question, Jon Bickley felt optimistic that the Club can continue to maintain a break-even position post-Covid, citing the increased attendances which are continuing in 2021/22 and the work that the Club's General Manager Carole Banwell has done in gaining income from the facilities at Twerton Park.

#### **6. Society update**

CF reported that this was his first General Meeting since becoming Chair of the Society and thanked everyone who has played a role in recent months. As well as the Club Strategy and redevelopment work mentioned earlier, recent improvements had included agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Society and the Club, starting twice-yearly joint meetings between the Club Board and the Society Committee, developing a Society membership strategy and improving communications including a monthly email newsletter to all Society members.

CF also welcomed the appointment of the Society's new Treasurer Alistair Lord, who will bring important accountancy expertise to the Committee, and Peter Headington the new Commercial Director on the Club Board.

CF noted with regret the racist incidents which had taken place at Twerton Park and re-



affirmed that racism has no place at Bath City. He hoped that supporters will challenge any future incidents should they occur.

JB added that the Club is setting up a system soon whereby anyone can send a text direct to Club Stewards if they witness any anti-social behaviour and that will enable action to be taken more quickly.

## **7. AOB/Questions**

Chris Read asked if the Club had business interruption insurance that could help with the Covid situation. JB replied that the Club wasn't covered with this, but that Paul Williams had ensured that the Club had got all possible financial support during the Covid crisis.

There was further question about the sale of alcohol at the ground. JB and SM responded, saying that it was about giving people more choice rather than promoting a drinking culture and that the situation will be managed carefully within whatever licensing arrangements are brought into effect.

In reply to a question about increased attendances at Twerton Park, JB reported that the age profile of fans had shifted slightly, with more younger people and fewer older people attending. He felt that improved communications (including social media), the community-owned nature of the Club and reaching the play-offs in two consecutive seasons had all played a key role.

## **8. Close**

CF thanked everyone for attending and contributing and then closed the meeting.