

# **Minutes of meeting of Doncaster Rovers Shadow Board**

## **June 27, 2023**

Present: James Errington, Derek Daniels, Mellony Shepard, Dan Pearson, Len South, Gill Shepherd

Club representatives: Gavin Baldwin, Shaun Lockwood, Liam Hoden

Apologies: Patrick Queen, Lizzie Robinson, Paul Mayfield

1. Minutes from the previous meeting (May 16, 2023)
  - a. The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.
  - b. No matters were arising from the minutes
  
2. Health & safety, EDI and safeguarding update
  - a. SL said the club had passed the latest LFE audit which allows the Academy to operate.
  - b. SL said a health and safety concern had been raised during his one-to-one meetings with staff, regarding access to the stadium roof and floodlights. Currently there was only one preventative measure in place, as a result, additional measures would be put in place to stop unauthorised access.
  - c. JE asked if there was any update regarding the operation of the lift in the West Stand at the stadium. SL said the lift is inspected twice a year as part of the safety certificate and the last inspection around the end of the season had recommended remedial works on the autodialler to allow users to make a call during an emergency such as a complete power failure. The lift company are custom building parts to complete the remedial works in time for the new season. Signs have been put up to inform users that the emergency call button currently does not work. For events at the stadium, an attendant has been used to ensure supporters/visitors are not using the lift alone. With those measures in place, the lift passed the SAG inspection. However, the work will take place to fix the issue before the start of the season. DD asked if the lift is 100 per cent safe - SL said it has to pass an inspection twice per year. LS asked about the numbers using the lift and SL said as per previous discussions in this meeting/Supporters Board it was the club's choice to restrict usage to two people per trip in order to preserve the lifespan of the lift.
  - d. SL confirmed there were no updates to be given on EDI and safeguarding.
  
3. Update from Gavin Baldwin
  - a. GB gave an update on recruitment to include

- i. Ins
  - ii. Outs
  - iii. Budget available
- b. Addressing a submitted question from DP, GB gave details of the number of players that would be contracted for the 24/25 season based on existing deals and any options that could be triggered. GB said the commitment for next season ensures a strong base budget.
- c. GB gave an update on cash flow. New EFL regulations mean TB must frontload the funding required for the season by the first working day of July. That funding amount is based on worst case scenarios such as lack of cup progression, low attendances etc. GB gave details of the funding amounts that TB would be putting into the club across the rest of the season. GB said TB had signed a letter to the EFL committing for the funds to come into the club.
- d. GB reiterated that the playing budget is ring fenced and will be funded separately by TB which he has committed to with the EFL, as per regulations for League One and League Two clubs.
- e. GB offered a commercial update. There has been a 100 per cent renewal of partnership agreements so far. The expectation is that two thirds of the commercial budget will have been reached inside the first two or three months. There have been new commercial opportunities created through social media, digital signage and sleeve sponsorships. GB said: "From a financial perspective, we have made a really good start."
- f. GB said season ticket sales have 'fully recovered' from last season.
- g. GB said the new catering contract had made an 'unbelievable start.' The expectation is that feedback on the range available will be very good. GB conferencing bookings are currently at rates not experienced before at the stadium.
- h. GB said players would return for pre-season on June 28 for testing, with training to begin in earnest the following day. The training ground has received lots of work during the offseason.
- i. GB said works would be carried out at the stadium ahead of the new season. A group of 20 supporters have volunteered to assist refurbishments following the appeal for help and the club were genuinely grateful.
- j. GB said the football structure had been confirmed with James Coppinger as head of recruitment, Lee Glover as first team coach.
- k. MS asked when the club's open day would be taking place. SL said July 27. MS also asked if there would be further friendly matches announced. SL said no.

#### 4. Update on Shadow Board elections

- a. A discussion was had among members regarding the candidates that had been put forward for election to the Shadow Board.
5. The composition of the Shadow Board
  - a. DD said there was a desire from the Shadow Board to demonstrate that those members representing the various supporters' groups (Supporters Club Main Branch, Retford Branch, VSC, Women's Supporters Group etc) had been elected by fellow members of their groups.
  - b. SL said there was a need to determine which supporter groups were officially recognised and suggested members voted on which groups that applied to.
  - c. LS confirmed the North Branch of the Supporters Club remains in existence.
  - d. LS said he would ask members of the Main Branch at their AGM on July 19 if they are happy for him and MS to continue to represent them on the Shadow Board.
  - e. SL the goal was to ensure once a full election cycle had been completed that all members of the Shadow Board were democratically elected by either the wider supporter base or members of individual supporters' groups.
6. Proposed dates for Shadow Board meetings
  - a. It was acknowledged that SL had sent out a list of proposed Shadow Board meeting dates across the 2023/24 football season.
7. Update on HMRC issue with club (7.50)
  - a. GB offered an explanation of the details behind a winding up order being issued against the club.
  - b. GB explained that the HMRC had received the payment and there was no risk of a transfer embargo or winding up order.
8. Update from on meeting with the club's police liaison
  - a. SL explained that Paul Chapman is no longer the club's police liaison with responsibility passed to Owen Fisher. SL and head of safety Mike Allott met with Owen Fisher.
  - b. SL said the police had a concern over a section of the club's travelling away support. A meeting will be held on July 12 with Owen Fisher where LS, PM and MS would be present. The purpose of the meeting is to produce an away travel policy based on good practice.
  - c. SL warned there could be ramifications if there are continued behavioural issues with sections of the away support.
9. Update on away ticket sales policy

- a. SL said the club's ticket site operator Seat Geek had confirmed setting up a system based on the new sales policy would be possible and that LS and the Main Branch of the Supporters' Club had offered to pay for the work to be carried out.
- b. Seatgeek are currently wanting to clear some previous invoices and transaction history before starting the work, which head of finance had said would be week commencing July 3.
- c. SL is hopeful Seat Geek can turn the system around before the start of the season but they had suggested a seven to eight week turnaround.

#### 10. A question from DP on merchandising

- a. DP raised a point from a meeting last year where he suggested themed merchandising such as advent calendars
  - i. SL said the point was raised too late last year to be explored. SL said marketing plans were being put in place following the release of fixtures while regular meetings were to take place with Elite Pro Sports regarding merchandising.
- b. DP asked whether there could be a move to releasing shirts on a two year cycle rather than season-by-season, to help reduce costs for supporters and guard against potential wastage.
  - i. SL said that this would be discussed with EPS, but previous feedback from retail providers suggest this is not feasible for the club as it would drastically impact sales and probably sponsorship values with less sales of shirts.
  - ii. SL said the club have always attempt to be environmentally sustainable as possible and challenges contractors to do the same.
  - iii. SL said he would raise the question with EPS but did not expect it to be viable.
  - iv. JE said he would propose home and away shirts on alternative years with a third kit each year.
  - v. SL said early conversations have been had regarding the technical supplier contract, with the club happy with the relationship with EPS.

#### 11. Details of potential fixture changes

- a. SL said Tranmere Rovers had requested the October 21 fixture at Prenton Park be moved to Friday, October 20 in order to avoid a clash with the Merseyside derby.
- b. SL said following dialogue with South Yorkshire Police there was a potential change to the home Wrexham fixture with it moving from Bank Holiday Monday to the Tuesday night. Millwall are travelling to Rotherham on Bank Holiday Monday which has the potential to stretch police resources.

- c. Football have not been against the idea of moving the fixture as it provides an extra day recovery following the Good Friday away trip to Crawley Town. Conversations are ongoing with Wrexham.
- d. SL asked for any objections to be emailed to himself, DD and JE.

12. Update on season ticket sales

- a. SL said in cash terms, the club was around £50,000 ahead of sales at the same point in 2022. SL said in numbers sold, the club is around 500 ahead of the same point in 2022. These figures do not include corporate season tickets, nor those purchased by former chairman John Ryan.
- b. SL said suggestions on social media that current sales were lower than last year were false.
- c. SL said the initial budget for season ticket sales was based on a decrease in sales from the previous year and therefore sales have been much better than expected.

13. Question from PM submitted regarding away ticket sales for the pre-season friendlies with people having trouble buying.

- a. MS said she has purchased hers with little problem. MS said people need to create an account with both York City and Scunthorpe United in order to purchase tickets.
- b. LS and MS agreed to share information on how to purchase the tickets.
- c. JE asked for the rationale in allowing the host club to sell tickets to Rovers fans for away friendlies, particularly in regards to safeguarding
  - i. LH said it was at the request of the host clubs that they sold tickets.

Meeting closed