

TORQUAY UNITED SUPPORTERS TRUST

MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING HELD AT BOOTS AND LACES ON WEDNESDAY 16 MAY 2007

Approximately 90 people were in attendance.

The meeting was officially opened by the Chairman of the TUST, who introduced the Board namely:

Chris Fleet	Chairman
Hayden Jones	Vice-Chairman
Phil Smith	Treasurer
Laurie Noble	Membership Secretary
Steve Breed	Secretary
Simon Cavanagh	
Jon Lear	
Jon Gibbes	
Maria Lunn	Assistant Secretary

Apologise from Andrew Fiderkiewicz

The Chairman opened by explaining the aim of this meeting was originally to hold the AGM but due to legal procedures this was not possible at this time. However it was felt that it would be a good time to advise members of the progress made within the last few months.

The meeting was advised that the Trust has been able to assist in financing a sports scientist, at the request of Colin Lee and Keith Curle to help with the fitness of the players. The Trust had also subsidised the coaches to the Swindon game to help swell the support for the players, which was much appreciated by them.

The Trust were approached by the club and asked to make a collection at the Hereford game to assist with the purchase of goals. The collection raised £668.71. The Trust rounded this up to £700, which is the largest amount for any half time collection at the ground. A very big thank you to all who contributed.

The chairman explained that it had been a hard task to get the Trust going but with help from Support Direct in London this has now been achieved. There have been a few teething problems with setting up bank accounts etc., but hopefully these have now been resolved.

The membership is fast approaching 400 which is in excess of 20% of the average home gate which when you consider that most Trusts only have 10%, is a very impressive start. However we need to push for more members and at least 50% of the home gate which would give us 1000 members, which the Trust believes is not an unreasonable figure to aim for. This is not just

necessarily supporters but also friends, local businesses, pubs, clubs, etc. This is a community club and relegation to the Blue Square Premier League should concern everyone in Torbay and South Devon. So one of the main priorities is recruitment. The more members we have the more say we have.

The Trust will be approaching former members of the Capital Gulls, the Norwegian Gulls (who have 400 members) and their sister club the Danish Gulls in the hope that they will join the Trust and swell the numbers.

We are and will continue to improve the website to give members more up to date information and also a greater level of interaction with being able to download forms, etc. We would like to say a big thank you to James Barnard for all his hard, unpaid work on this.

Upcoming events will include the AGM which is now scheduled for September. We are waiting to set the exact date until after the fixture list has been made available as games could be played on any day of the week under the TV deal with the Blue Square League. The exact date will be announced on the website, in the press and in the next Trust magazine which will also include details of the election process.

With regard to the magazine, we would appreciate any contributions by way of articles, pictures, etc. Also included within the magazine will be the Badges and the standing order mandates.

We do need membership money but we also need a more regular income and it is hoped that people will be able to help by setting up a standing order mandate and contribute as much as they are able, be it £2 a month or £10 a month. If 300 people contributed £10 per month that would be £3,000 per month to the Trust.

The Chairman went on to say that invitation had been sent out to Cris Boyce, Debbie Hancock, Nick Bye and Adrian Saunders to attend this meeting. Mr. Saunders however was in Parliament today and was not able to attend.

No other invitees were in attendance however the Chairman advised the meeting that the consortium headed by Cris Boyce were meeting tomorrow morning and would be meeting with Mr. Bateson tomorrow afternoon with a revised offer for the Club.

However the aim of the meeting today was to find out what you, the members, wanted. The Chairman stated that he wished to clarify the position with regard to the Player of the Year award. This had previously been policed by the Supporters Club and the Trust approached the Club to ask they would like the Trust to police it this year. The reply was that the Club did not think it appropriate to hold a Player of the Year award. The Trust unfortunately did not have the resources to run this themselves. However if the members of the Trust want to know why, then the Board can put this to the Club.

Questions were now taken from the floor.

A question was asked about how much clout the Trust had if they could not help with the Player of

the Year Awards. The Board reiterated that if we had more members then we could not be ignored for things like this.

A vote of thanks to the Board was expressed from the floor for all their efforts over the past few months. However the question was asked if the Club was in crisis and whether there should be a vote of No confidence in the current Board of the Club or a vote of confidence in the consortium trying to buy the Club. It was felt that the Trust had to be seen to be impartial on this matter as they had to work with whoever was in charge after tomorrow (16 May).

The Board was asked would it be possible for the Trust to help if money was the reason for a failed bid. At present this was not an option and it was felt that the consortium had enough money to buy the Club in any event.

Proposals were then made then if the bid did fail that there should be some form of direct action. The Trust do not condone boycotts but perhaps some other form of action which would capture the imagination of the people of Torbay in a positive way and send a very loud message to the Board of the Club. It was felt that if the new consortium did take over then people would turn out at the start of the Season. However this would not be the case if they failed in the bid for the Club. If people voted with their feet then they would be making a statement to the Club.

The Chairman then pointed out that the Trust was there to represent supporters and as a group our mandate is to organise things which we can do to help the Club. The main reason for this meeting was to see what we could do as a group to achieve something. We need to set our own Agenda and then work out a way forward whether that be with a new regime or with the current regime. It was mentioned that in the last 17 years no one has stood up to the current regime. However now it was different and we had a Supporters Trust who were prepared to stand up and be heard. The meeting was advised that there are currently 144 Supporters Trusts in the country and they could no longer be ignored.

The Trust needed to be proactive and look at the positive. It was suggested that perhaps the Trust could fund a Scout and this was seen as a good idea. It was pointed out to members that the Trust were determined to ring fence any money that was raised for any specific things. It would not be just handed over to the Club.

The matter of Stewards was raised and members asked if we could have new stewards for next season. Again the Trust could help with this and it may be possible to train our own stewards. Certainly the offer was made to the Youth Development officer to help them with stewards at matches. This was the right input and motivation from the Trust members.

Mention was made of the Coca Cola promotional fund for Clubs. It was advised that £2,000 had been collected for our Club and the money was supposed to have been presented to the Club on the last day of the season but this had not appeared to happen. The Board agreed that this was a matter they would take up with the Club.

At this point there was a short break in the proceedings.

After the break the Chairman said he has spoken to a few people in the break and the view was that there should be another Open Meeting sooner rather than later bearing in mind the events which have happened and will be happening shortly. It was agreed this was a good idea and it was therefore hoped to have another meeting in about a month. It would be advertised on the website, in the press and on the radio.

The meeting felt encouraged by the consortium but as a Trust we could not say we were 100% on their side but as a Group we could say we were encouraged by what we had heard from the new consortium.

It was agreed that should the consortium bid fail then the Board would have a meeting, perhaps as soon as Monday to discuss the next steps. As a Trust we need to set a clear and concise agenda to put to whoever was in charge. The meeting was asked to use their computers and log onto TorquaySupporters.com from there a Yahoo Group could be formed so that discussion and feedback could be left for the Board's consideration. We need members feedback.

At this point it was proposed from the floor that there be a show of hands from all those who felt positive about the Cris Boyce consortium. There were a few abstentions but the overall majority was in favour.

A question from the floor was what had happened to Keith Richardson. The Board said that did not know what had happened with Mr. Richardson.

The floor asked whether the consortium would own 51% of the shares and what would happen to Mr. Sadler's 34%. It was believed that the consortium would bid for 51% of the shares but it was not known about Mr. Sadler's 34%. It was asked whether it would be feasible for the Trust to buy the 34% shareholding. At this present moment in time this was not possible as we did not have the money available.

The Vice Chairman stated that the Board was always working behind the scenes but we had to walk before we could run. We therefore needed more members to get behind the Trust and then the club could not ignore us. We needed to take the moral high ground. One piece of food for thought was that if 1000 people pledged £500 each that would be £500,000. Obviously not everyone could do so but if you pledged as much as you could it would all add up. We needed to be united as there was strength in unity.

The trust money would be used to help in ways the members felt appropriate be that in the Youth Development side of things or be in painting fences and railings or fixing seats or stewarding Youth games. It was pointed out that the Youth Development had lost approximately £138,000 of funding by the club being relegated as there was no parachute payment available as there had been no Youth Development scheme in operation in the previous 3 years. They therefore needed our help both financially and in other ways. We needed to look at all the funding options we could find.

The Chairman advised the members that there would be a Board meeting on Monday when consideration would be given to the outcome of the current proceedings.

The members felt that we needed to look at

- a) The pitch
- b) The ground, generally (i.e. general tidying up, etc)
- c) Catering

We needed to improve these standards to encourage people to attend.

A member of the Exeter City Supporters Trust was present and he gave an insight into their matters. He suggested that we needed to set up direct debits and encourage people to pay in this way which would bring in a set amount per month. Say someone paid £2 per month this would be £24 a year as opposed to £12.50 membership.

It was felt that tonight the members could not set an Agenda until the outcome of the meeting tomorrow afternoon was known which was agreed.

At this point it was proposed that the Trust send a good luck message to Exeter City for their game on Sunday. This was followed by a show of hands. It was felt that this area needed a team in the Football League, which would not only be good for the club but also good for the area. It was mentioned that Exeter City had donated their half of the gate receipt from the recent cup match to the club.

It was then mentioned from the floor that Buster Phillips had announced his retirement today and that it might be a good idea to send him a good luck message from the Supporters Trust. This was agreed.

The meeting finish at 9.50pm