



## **Cheltenham Town Supporters Society Limited**

### **Minutes of the Open Meeting of the Society Board on Monday, May 15.**

**TRUST BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Clive Gowing, Tarran Wilson, Leo Hoenig, Murry Toms.

**APOLOGIES:** Louise Gowing, Claire Mitten, Anne Mitten.

#### **1. Statement from Trust chairman Clive Gowing**

CG opened the meeting at 8pm by thanking the 38 present who were not already members of the Trust board.

He said it was a strange feeling to be talking about standing down as chairman after a decade in the post, but it was heartening to see so many new faces showing an interest and how he hoped those present could help take the Trust forward to the next stage.

CG explained that the open meeting would be given a brief report as to the current Trust membership and finances, but said that the meeting was mainly aimed at looking to the future.

##### **1.1 Current Society Board**

The current board has seven members, although four of those will be standing down at the 2017 AGM (Clive Gowing, Louise Gowing, Claire Mitten and Anne Mitten)

Murry Toms had been appointed to the board when voted as Fan Elected Director, so the quorum will be maintained for the needs of the society.

CG explained that the Trust would be looking for new members and that any Trust member wanting to do their bit should be encouraged to put their name forward.

##### **1.2 Finances**

CG explained that the current Trust bank balance was circa £17,500 – the majority of which was the rest of the legacy gifted to the Trust by Bryan Jacob.

He said that the Trust's average annual turnover was around £8,000.

The Trust 50-50 draw accounted for a significant amount of this figure, around £4,500-5,000 per year.

membership subscriptions are, on average, £2,000 per year.

Clive concluded by stating that the Trust had invested more than £277,000 in the past 12 years into Cheltenham Town shares. The Trust is currently the fourth largest shareholder at the club, owning around 10% of the purchased shares.

### **1.3 Membership**

Current membership of the Trust was 235. Although CG pointed that the membership database showed that more than 700 people have, at one time, been members of the Trust.

CG conceded that his combined role as chairman, treasurer and secretary of the Trust had made it difficult to keep on top of the membership database and he urged people to come forward, join the board and help share the load in the future.

### **1.4 Change of registered address**

With CG deciding to stand down from the Trust Board, the business address for the Trust would need to be changed.

It was decided that the address of current Board member Tarran Wilson would be used. Steps will now be taken to change the registered address with the relevant authorities.

## **2. The Trust, an introduction: Leo Hoening**

LH started by asking those in the room to show their appreciation for the work CG had done in the past to get the Trust to where it is now.

He then went on to reiterate CG by saying he hoped that the strong turnout at the meeting would transfer into a stronger, broader Trust Board, saying that the more people able to share the load, the more successful the Trust would be.

### **2.1 The important rules governing the Trust.**

LH read from the Trust Model Rules that were voted in at the inception of the Trust in 2005, and amended by a special resolution of the Society in April 2015. [The Rules can be read on the Trust website](#)

LH drew particular attention to rule: 3. Community Benefit Purpose and the sections of rule 4. Objects.

He explained how the Trust is duty-bound to apply those two rules in particular to all of its business.

However, in regards to Rule 3, in particular the sentence:

*The Society's purpose is to be the vehicle through which a healthy, balanced and constructive relationship between the Club and its supporters and the communities it serves is encouraged and developed."*

LH conceded that while the relationship between the Club and Trust had always been strong more work was needed to strengthen the relationship between the Trust and the supporters.

## **2.2 Election of new board members**

LH explained that members can be co-opted to the board in advance of the AGM – which will be held within six months of the financial year end on May 31 2017 – but it was expected that elections, if necessary, would take place at the AGM.

He also explained that the maximum number as prescribed by the Rules was for a board of 16 members.

He asked for a quick straw poll of the people in the room as to who would consider standing for election to the board. There were seven people, five of whom would be new to the board, who are keen to help. Details of those interested were taken and they will be formally invited to the next meeting of the Board.

## **3. Events**

Tarran Wilson explained about two events that would be coming up.

The first being an evening with former Premier League referee Chris Foy.

TW explained that the recent EFL Open Evening at Bristol City, had included a presentation by Foy and that he had arranged for a similar presentation to take place on June 1 at CTFC.

[More details of the event can be found on the Trust website](#)

The second event, would be the Annual Open Day, to be held at Seasons on a date to be confirmed as soon as the CTFC pre-season schedule had been confirmed.

The Trust would be coordinating the organisation of the event and a separate organising committee, led by Tarran will be set up.

The room was asked what they wanted to see at the Open Day and there were countless ideas.

It has already been confirmed that the 'Legends Game' that was part of the Crowdfunder Scoreboard campaign will be held on the Open Day.

The main positive of the Open Day, it was agreed, was the chance for interaction with the players and management staff.

TW will confirm the date, time and place of the Open Day Organising Group via the Trust website and club channels ASAP.

#### **4. Open Discussion**

After the conclusion of the main business of the meeting discussion was opened to the room as to what they felt the Trust needed to do next.

The following items were all discussed:

##### **4.1 Trust Membership (price and accessibility)**

Current Trust membership is £12 per year for a standard membership, with other rates available dependent on age and length of membership.

The room was asked whether this was too high. There was a mixed response, with some saying "I'm happy to pay as I am supporting my club." While others felt it was not clear what they were getting for their membership.

There was a debate about whether the Trust should be seen as a revenue generating, or a representative organisation.

There was no definitive response.

However, it was agreed that the Trust needs to make what it offers to members clearer. Too many people feel that there is no advantage to joining the Trust.

Some fans are unaware of the Trust, what it does, how to join and how to help.

It was agreed that the changes in the board that are coming would be an ideal chance to look to relaunch the Trust.

Future meetings of the (new) Trust board would look into this.

##### **4.2 Fan Interaction and Communication**

The overwhelming feeling from the meeting was that Trust communications have been poor and need improving.

Memberships have expired without people receiving information to renew. Other members have dropped off e-mail communications lists.

Also, the Trust website had not been updated quickly enough, or had enough relevant information on it.

It was widely agreed that communication needs to improve. With Murry Toms now on the board, with his expertise in the area and James Young rejoining the board with media and communications experience it is expected that the communications side will improve.

In terms of interaction, MT will look into a plug-in for the website for members to be able to look at their membership status and to when their renew date is.

It was also suggested that not enough fans know what the Trust is, what it stands for and how to join. At least two people in the room felt that the Trust was a “closed shop.”

As part of a wider re-launch the new board will look into improving the systems it uses; both for communications with members and to non-members about the Trust’s aims and objectives.

### **4.3 Events**

There was a lengthy discussion about the kind of events supporters would like to see the Trust stage, the cost of those events and their frequency.

In the past the Trust had agreed not to mirror the offering of the club, who focus on larger corporate-style events.

It was felt that smaller, more informal, interactive events were seen as the Trust’s niche.

A reduced-priced admission ticket for Trust members to all event would be a tangible benefit to being a member.

With next season marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1998 FA Trophy win at Wembley, the Trust wants to take ownership of the anniversary celebrations.

After the recent jockeys match at CTFC, a number of the former players spoke about how they were pleased to be back at their old stomping ground.

The Trust will look into a season-long celebration of that 1998 side, looking to invite one player to a game throughout the season. He will then be introduced on the pitch at half-time to do the Trust raffle and have a short interview.

Post-match the Trust will hold a Q&A session in the main bar with supporters, allowing great interactivity between supporters and the former players.

At the end of the season, the Trust would aim to stage a Wembley Winners anniversary event, on the date of the final (May 17).

Other events, such as quizzes, meals with former managers/players etc... were seen as being popular and would be discussed by the new Trust board once established.

### **4.4 Merchandise**

CG spoke about the problems with the current club shop and agreed that while it had been “financially good” for the club, there were significant problems with what it offered.

Merchandise had been a sore point in the Trust in the past as plans to do a “Johnson had a dream” T-shirt, similar to the retro-style shirts in the past had

to be sneived last season, because of a perceived crossover on to club turf – only for the club not to do anything.

The new Trust board will look into unique merchandising, away from what the Trust already produces with the focus on fan culture.

In future, it is hoped that there will be no repeat of the absurd situation in the summer of 2016, when the Club and Trust missed an opportunity.

Trust merchandise could be offered as part of the membership pack, or at a discount to members. With details to be discussed by the new board once in place.

## **5. Next Meeting**

A follow-up meeting of the Trust board was arranged for Monday, June 5 (7.45pm) at the LCI Rail Stadium.

This meeting will be the next step in forming the new Trust board and anyone interested in becoming a Trust Board Member is welcome to attend.

A date and time for the meeting of the Open Day Organising Group will be confirmed ASAP on [www.robinstrust.org](http://www.robinstrust.org) and the Club and Trust's social media channels.

The meeting was concluded at 9.56pm.