

Chester City Supporters Trust

Annual General Meeting 2009

Held at the Home Guard Social Club, Canal Street, Chester

on Thursday 14th May at 20.00

There were ten members present plus Board members: Tom Jones (TJ); Adrian Williamson (AW); Colin Mansley (CM); Campbell Smith (CS); Diane Foulkes (DF).

Apologies had been received from: P Baker; D & E Evans; B Hipkiss; K Jones; Alice Jones; P Meakins; C Underwood; M Howells.

1. Chairman's Annual Report

In the absence of a chairman since the resignation of Paul Reid, Adrian Williamson, the secretary read out an annual report on behalf of the CCST Board. ([click](#) to view).

Adrian also chaired the meeting.

2. Ratification of New Board Members in the absence of challenging candidates.

Each of the candidates standing for election spoke to the manifestos which they had written and which had been previously distributed to members with the notice of the meeting.

- Chris Courtenay Williams (CCW) spoke of his long support for the club and his anxiety that the club could soon die if the current situation continues. He could not let that happen without doing something to try to help. Chris's appointment was ratified unanimously.
- Colin Mansley spoke to the five brief headings in his manifesto – the need for the club to become more rooted in the community; for a new business plan for the Trust; for raising the Trust's profile; to maintain its independent voice and to promote reconciliation between supporters. CM's appointment was ratified unanimously.
- AW read Pauline Meakins' manifesto on her behalf. PM was ratified unanimously.
- Kevin Wilding (KW) spoke briefly to say that he was not going to knock the Trust. He saw the Trust as the future and he wanted to be part of it. KW's appointment was ratified by a majority of 12 to 1.

3. Trust Accounts for the Financial Year ending November 2008 & Accountant's Independent Examination Report.

CS spoke about the accounts which were presented to the meeting. In general, though subscriptions were up, income from raffles collections and donations were substantially down on last year's figure. However this was balanced by a significant reduction in expenditure thanks to generous donation from GPS Decorators who had covered most of the Trust's costs for stationery, postage, venue hire and other categories. AW thanked CS for his report and work as Treasurer during the past year. He reminded the meeting that CCST gets a small commission via its website for purchases made from certain linked companies. Members are urged to use these links when shopping over the internet. On a lighter note our income included a donation of £100 donated by a Wrexham supporter who had lost a bet with Paul Baker over where they would finish

last season compared with Chester. The meeting agreed unanimously to adopt the accounts.

4. Appointment of Auditors.

CS proposed appointing James Hargreaves as auditors, AW seconded and the meeting agreed unanimously to appoint them as auditors once again.

5. Any Other Business

KW proposed a vote of thanks for AW who was not standing for the Board again because he had recently moved to Scotland and found it increasingly difficult to commit time to supporting the Board's activities. CM also paid tribute to AW's contribution as Secretary to CCST. He had performed the role with a high degree of professionalism and would be greatly missed.

D asked that given the precarious financial position of the club (The press have reported that they are considering administration), what contingency plans does the Trust have?

AW replied that although there were no concrete plans in place, Supporters Direct would be on hand to advise if the need arose. For example they helped Scarborough to re-form. When a club is in crisis Supporters Direct are there to help the club's supporters. We would struggle to unite Chester fans at present until a definite crisis arose. Part of the plan, in our case, should be to bring the different fans groups together. CCW commented that he felt the supporters groups need to come back together sooner rather than later.

ML had attended the ISA AGM recently and felt that there was still rivalry between the groups. Peter Mitchell (PM) Chair of the ISA commented that the ISA had sent a questionnaire out prior to their AGM two weeks ago and received a fairly mixed response on the question of the fans groups coming together. PM thought it would be good to consider moving together under a different name. There has been some very unfair criticism of the Trust on the internet – it seemed that some people were deliberately trying to bring the Trust down. We may, if the fans groups come together, need to re-brand ourselves.

ML wanted confirmation that if the Football Club does go belly up that the Trust is the *only* fans organisation in a position to take it over. This was how the Trust was sold when it was first launched. AW replied that yes the Trust is certainly set up for this as an Industrial and Provident Society with its guidelines of good governance and rules and so on. It is often the case that a Supporters' Trust will appoint or employ someone to run the club for them. Stockport is a good example of this – they brought people in to act as Managing Director etc. It has not been easy for them even so and they are currently in administration themselves. AW thought that the Stockport Trust paid a nominal sum for a debt-free club and that they borrowed £300K. Part of the difficulty for Stockport is that they don't own their ground and that they share the pitch with Sale Sharks. They have created a website to try to generate funds to be able to buy the ground. AW added that in Chester's case we need to raise the profile of the Trust again and build reconciliation amongst the fans groups and to work behind the scenes to develop a network of support.

CCW commented that reconciliation between the Football Club and the Council was

needed because the relationship appears to be non-existent at the moment. TJ said that the current owner of the club, Stephen Vaughan was entitled to do with the club as he wishes – for better or worse. There may be a stumbling block in that SV does not appear to be listening to offers of help. CCW agreed and added that SV is not helping his cause at all by the dearth of information coming out of the club. He had never known a period in the club's history when less information came out of the club. The supporters are not told anything.

KW then stated that in his view, there is a split on the Board of CCST at present which he was bitterly disappointed about. He had been voted back onto the Board; he had liaised with SV and had set up the "Bums on Seats Campaign" in order to help the club. He said that he had joined the Trust to help CCFC. "I am heartbroken at what SV has done to the club but I also don't blame him because of a stagnant ISA and a Trust that does not help. I thought that the Trust was for a rainy day but it has done nothing, the membership has dropped".

AW replied to KW that he had been elected on to the Board – a Board which was working to move in one direction. It was set up to discuss and agree things together. There was no point in your seeking to undermine it. CCW added that KW had said a few minutes ago that he was not going to knock the Trust. Now the first thing you have said since is to do exactly that.

AW reminded members that Paul Reid as Chair had put forward a detailed business plan for the Trust and this included getting the club to the negotiating table with the Council and the local MP. This had involved a lot of hard work and had been progressed really well until SV had fallen out with the Council.

Unfortunately the club has got to be interested and they had refused to get involved. KW stated that SV will not deal with the Trust.

CS commented to KW that he had voted for his ratification as a Board member because he had believed his manifesto statement. "I now regret that vote because you have not changed".

TJ said that he had joined the Board because it was run very professionally. At the end of Board discussions the members voted and issues were decided democratically. Some times his own views were overruled but he had learned to accept this because it was democratic.

PM asked KW if he was prepared to do this (i.e. accept this democratic procedure). CS added that the majority decision had to be accepted over issues. TJ pointed out that we now have seven Board members which was an ideal situation – there never had to be a casting vote. CCW added to KW saying to him that at the moment he was a lone voice. "I thought you would offer lively debate but all you have done is knock the Trust. We shouldn't be pulling it apart. You are the lone voice in disagreement."

AW said in reply to KW "I would applaud some of the things that you've done with the club Kevin, and in the past we've taken things to the club". KW replied that what he'd done with Bums on Seats has been absolutely fabulous. The Trust have done absolutely zilch. AW said that KW needed to consider whether standing for the Trust Board is

appropriate. PM agreed that it has to be a democratic decision making process.

ML Surely you (KW) should be trying to persuade the Board to accept your ideas. If they're good ideas, the Board are sensible people they'll accept them. If you try ten they may accept five.

AW "Discussion needs to be had at the next Board meeting. But I find it quite personal Kevin, that you say that the Board has done nothing. When Paul Reid was chair lots of energy was put into developing the business plan but it was so frustrating because we had to work with the football club. We can't just plough ahead on our own without the co-operation of the club"

ML asked if any light could be shed on what the transfer embargo was about. AW replied that no-one seemed to know. He had contacted the Football League about it and received a reply to confirm that there is an embargo but they would not say why it is in place. DC offered his opinion that he thought the PFA have been paying players wages and they don't pay the full amount. Dinning and Butler took the option of staying and I think that triggered it off. AW added that the last three seasons had all followed a similar pattern: the club did reasonably well until Christmas and then the wheels came off. It seemed to be something to do with the payment of players wages. I've not had many direct dealings with SV but he seems to be very proud. He has to now get people in to help him – he must offer an olive branch – there are many people willing to help.

CCW wondered whether it would be any different if we were taken over by Gary Metcalfe? He reiterated that he has never known a time when there has been such a lack of information. We get told absolutely nothing.

AW added that the Trust was set up when the club was in crisis but we get told (By SV) that he could run this club forever. PM intervened to say that SV did admit that he couldn't see how he was going to meet the wage bill for December at one of the fans meetings last year.

AW replied that he needed to say that to the press rather than to a small group of Chester fans. The idea of posters advertising matches got knocked at that meeting but they do make some impact. Other simple promotion through e-mail work too. I booked tickets to watch Falkirk play (closest to where AW now lives) and I get sent an email every time they have a match.

LS said he had a few random points:

- a long time ago we had a car sticker that said "A Chester fan is for life – not just for a crisis"
- Any club that has an income of £700K and a wage bill of £1.2million is asking for trouble.
- Loads of us used to post posters out but the club have never done that.
- For a brief period under SV the club was run well when Ian Knox and Dave Burford had positions in the management.
- Talk of splits among the fans really annoys me because the ISA set up the Trust.
- Initially we had meetings with Brian Lomax from Supporters Direct and so on. I have no problem with the Trust whatsoever.

AW - There are opportunities to help the football club through Supporters Direct –

Rochdale and Bury for instance are very active. The difference is that they are seen as part of their respective football clubs. PM commented that the key seems to be to get the club on board with the work of the Trust. AW added and this would be better when it's a single group. May be an umbrella organisation is the way to do that – the ISA and Exiles, for example, could retain their own committee, but as a fan you would join “City Fans United”. Such re-branding or merger can be done – at Huddersfield Town for example and we have already had discussions with them and SD to see how it can be done. Others Trusts can help us – for instance if we had needed an election this evening SD had approached members of Wrexham Trust to act as tellers for us. But we do need to be in a position to work with the football club. PM Added how are we to get over the breakdown in relationship with SV.

KW stated that SV will not work with the Trust.

TJ replied to KW that when you come back on the Board you must accept the decision of the Board. AW reminded KW that he had proposed liaising with SV and that the Board had agreed he could do this but then when he came back with a proposal that SV addressed a meeting of supporters in the name of the Trust - the Board did not agree with the idea. KW went ahead and organised a meeting with SV and the supporters without the consent of the Board and this was used as an opportunity to attack the Trust.

DC commented that the past can't be changed. I want to see KW and the rest of the Board working together. Draw a line under the past. KW then agreed that he would accept majority decisions.

PM said that we have to move forward with the fans starting early next season. Bums on Seats and the ISA were looking at funding Junior Blues. We need to combine some of the good things that KW has successfully achieved and do it. At other meetings only around 10% are members of any fans group. We need to start recruiting more members. AW agreed and added that KW knows how hard it is to arrange events like the race night that he and DF organised for the Trust a couple of years ago.

AW proposed that we co-opt PM_i onto the Board to represent the ISA. PM_i declined because of personal commitments.

DC said that the supporters need leadership at the moment. He had spoken to PM_i about the idea of holding an ISA/Trust open forum to show unity. It would encourage people to join. PM_i agreed . He said we are being accused of doing nothing while the club were relegated. If we had a forum – it might appeal to uncommitted fans. It would have to be taken seriously in view of the threat of administration. AW agreed it was a good idea with the caveat that the meeting must be used to discuss how we move forward, and not to go back over the past. It would need a strong person to lead it.

CCW commented that we have to realise that the timing of a meeting is absolutely crucial. The last meeting in the Blues Bar followed after a match, which meant many people could get to it. PM_i said that if we could latch on to the threat of administration it might provoke a larger attendance. CCW agreed but only when we hear a definite announcement that the club is in administration. DF asked where the best place to meet would be. PM_i felt not the Blues Bar because you can't legislate for what people might

say if it was at the club.

AW felt that the Board needs to meet soon. PM_i agreed saying that sometimes events overtake you. It would be a good move to get ahead of the game. DC thought it would be a good idea if the ISA and Trust Boards met together to agree a common agenda.

KW added that people needed a common goal. What annoyed him was that he had been labeled as pro-Vaughan.

PM_i. The club may soon be in the Unibond League, SV will not get £2million for it then. So we need to plan for a day when we might be in a position to take over.

LS asked that if the embargo has been in place for a long time will we be allowed to enter the Conference? Will the Council allow City to play below that level?

AW felt that the Council would not want the club to disappear.

ML asked that members of the Trust be kept in touch with what the Board decides to do. He suggested that communications could be via an email network where one gets a message and undertakes to contact say four other members to pass it on. This would reduce postage costs – like a telephone tree type network. Members would begin to talk with one another.

N asked about the role of Grenville Millington, the Trust president's role. AW replied that Grenville is happy to get involved at any event.

AW thanked people for their attendance and concluded the meeting.