

Chester City Supporters Trust
Minutes of Special General Meeting

Held at Bull & Stirrup Hotel, Chester

Thursday 19th February 2009

Board Present: Campbell Smith (CS); Tom Jones (TJ); Adrian Williamson(AW);
Colin Mansley (CM) also taking minutes; Di Foulkes (DF); Kevin Wilding (KW)

Number of Members Present: approx 23 including a number who joined on the night

In Attendance from Supporters Direct: Jacqui Foster (JF)

AGENDA

Introduction

AW took the chair at 8.15pm and welcomed people to the Special General Meeting.

Several people had joined on the evening.

AW Welcomed Jacqui Forster from Supporters Direct. He outlined the agenda for the meeting including the Q&A session.

Ground rules – only existing members eligible to vote tonight.

AW confirmed that everyone on Chester City Supporters' Trust Board is an unpaid volunteer and it is about how we can all work together for the benefit of the Club.

AW introduced board members, stating the date of their election or co-option.

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Pauline Meakins, CCST Board member and Grenville Millington, CCST Life President.

AW also introduced Graham Page (GP) and Kevin Jones (KJ) as former members of the CCST Board, both having resigned during the year along with ex-Chair, Paul Reid (Not Present)

Presentation of the resolutions

AW then read out the resolutions as per written notice.

Vote on the resolutions

a) a) amendment to rule 58 – not less than 12 Board members etc. ie to have not less than six and not more than twelve. Elected members to have a majority over co-opted members.etc.

...if it drops below 6 the current members can only act to fill vacancies and to call Special General Meetings

13 members in favour of resolution plus 16 proxy votes

b) 12 year rule, bankruptcy etc...

13 members in favour plus 16 proxy votes

Both resolutions carried.

The meeting was then opened to the floor for a question and answer session for all attendees.

Question & Answer Session

AW began by reading some previously submitted written questions

1) Question from Pete Mitchell - The Supporters Trust have for many years attempted to forge a good relationship with the club and its owner. In recent time there have been marked differences in opinion which has led to a breakdown in their relationship and this, in turn, has led to differences in opinion amongst board members. What action will the board be taking to remedy these differences:

a) between board members?

AW commented that the Trust Board was hoping to get a clear and common goal from this meeting in order to work together.

b) with regards to the club's owner?

AW stated that, towards the club – a number of attempts have been made to engage with the football club. For example as an Industrial & Provident Society (IPS) we have access to funds which would not be available to the club. Rochdale Trust, for instance, gained £5000 towards developing junior membership of the Trust. Every time we have been to club we have been shot down in flames and the club have not followed up suggestions. Our last meeting with owner was held in March 2008 and is minuted on the Trust website. Frustration with this impasse with the owner has led Kevin (KW) to campaign to get higher attendances at matches.

2. Question from Peter Mitchell - Recent statements made by Stephen Vaughan have highlighted the severity of the clubs financial difficulties and it is not inconceivable that we could be placed in administration before the end of the season. If this should happen then the Trust should be prepared to play a leading role in rallying the fans many of whom are not members of any Supporters Group.

AW answered that on the question of administration, CCST has spoken with a number of people over last 12 months trying to buy the football club, those channels are still open with the Trust. AW added "How do CCST Board propose to win over fans?" This question was opened up to the floor to comment.

3. Question from the floor.

Could Trust not run official website again? It was well run before. Why don't the Trust do it again?

AW gave some background information by stating that the Trust funded and ran website but when club wanted editorial control they alienated those who ran it. The Trust did not close it down but handed it over. The club has apparently chosen to open a new site. The Trust has also lost valuable skills when a Board member resigned recently.

AW continued by saying "It takes a massive amount of time and dedication, 20-30 hours a week, just to keep it up to date so it's not a small commitment. Someone has offered to run website (Nathan) if desired. AW said that all members are fully

committed – if we have new volunteers willing to support that then we could possibly approach the club again about that”.

4. Question from the floor

We have been here (in this situation) for quite a while – we meet the same brick wall every time. OK you’ve got to ask the club, but what happens when the man in charge doesn’t want to know.

AW We can only work with the football club if they want us to.

KW then added his comment

“As you are aware there is a split on the Board at the moment. The Board has refused to go to Steven Vaughan and work with him. The Board have done nothing”.

KW continued “I’m trying to unite the fans – set up meeting to help club in their hour of need. We are now implementing about 15 ideas to help the club. I can understand how difficult it is - it’s been frustrating for the Board to work with the club in the past. But the club are extremely under-staffed. The Club have not got the resources to remember the fans. SV has had no backup from supporters’ groups for last two or three years”.

KW questioned about how long he had been involved with the Board. He maintained it was seventeen months. During the introduction AW stated he had been co-opted in October 2008. KW came back on to the Board then after twelve months absence due to personal reasons.

AW intervened then to say ”To say that the Trust has done nothing is unfair. As has already been mentioned we ran the website; we have criticised club on a number of issues though the ISA is probably better placed to do this than the Trust. We have sponsored match balls in the matches against Leeds and Barnet. We were involved with *Fans United* event to bring the different groups together; we ran Deva Text service for five or six years until the need for this was superseded; we did a Kick To Win competition last year; a Walk for City event that raised £1500 towards Centre of Excellence; fanzines edited by Nathan; a Race Night by Kev and Di. So to say that we have done nothing is unfair”.

5. Question from the front of the room said that he had heard that SV took people from the Trust Board out for a meal and wined and dined them and the meeting was taped secretly without him knowing about it. Is this true?

TJ corrected this false impression. It referred to the time last March when the Trust approached SV when he asked for people to meet him. TJ submitted twelve written questions to SV beforehand. The meeting was held just before a match at the Deva Stadium. Notes were then taken of the meeting and the transcript shown to SV. SV could not believe how detailed the notes of the meeting were and accused the Trust of secretly recording the meeting. TJ spoke to SV following writing up notes and only published what was agreed to – SV had final say on what came out. SV signed the minutes that he agreed to, and these are the notes that have been posted on the website since last March.

AW pointed out that all of the Board’s meetings are minuted and that “we see it as important in trying to conduct Trust business in a proper manner”.

KW reiterated that the Board did not actually help the club – the only thing they had done was to provide some flyers for matches for which he had paid for personally.

The Sponsorship from the walk went to Centre of Excellence, not directly to the football club.

Barry Hipkiss (BH) then intervened. He said to KW that he was just being vindictive against the Board and it wasn't doing any good. If he disagreed with what the other Board members were doing, he should come off it himself.

KW replied that he was trying to fix it from inside.

Open comment was then made from the floor:

The main purpose of Trust is to be there when the club goes belly up, that's the main purpose, anything else is secondary. Lack of trust, because of the way that the club has been run in recent times, is understandable

Open comment from the floor:

There is no reason for club to go bust. I can assure you that the club will not go into administration. And if it did SV could just buy it back for a £1 and clear all the debts.

Open comment from the floor:

Why are we putting up barriers among ourselves? The only reason we are here to night is to get behind club. We need positive ideas for the club.

KW then openly accused AW of not attending games and boycotting games, and the rest of Board members of not supporting the club.

TJ replied that he and his company had put £800 into the club since last August.

Open comment from the floor:

One of reasons why supporters don't go is because supporters are not united. Could the various supporters groups not sign a statement to say that we are working together?

AW replied that over the last month we have held a joint meeting about how we can work together. We have spoken to Huddersfield about how they've brought their different groups together.

AW continued :It has been my aim since I joined the Board to bring the different supporters' groups together. Each of the groups is set up differently and we need to respect that, but the hope is to set up a single umbrella organisation. People have to pay a membership fee to join each group currently, if we came together then we'd need to have one membership for all.

Open comment from the floor:

We have to push it all together.

AW - I Agree with that. We are trying to do this.

BH - we are hoping to do this starting for next season. Many of us try to help the club quietly – we just do it; we just get on with doing things and work as a team.

6. Question from the floor:

Asked if any members of board boycotted game? How can this happen? What do you gain by not going?

Lee Walton spoke from the floor about how lots of supporters boycotted under Terry Smith to try to force him out. The questioner replied that he continued going even when TS was in charge, though he couldn't attend regularly now for financial reasons.

New member Comment :

I can't believe how split it is. We've lost 1500 fans – how are the club going to win them back? We should be going through turnstiles to try to keep them in the League.

Jacqui Forster was asked to comment on “What is a Supporters Trust for?”
“It is for the fans – not necessarily raising money but trying to get some influence for the club. You have a right in that club to have your influence heard. Supporters Direct currently helps 157 Trusts around the country. They will often raise money – MU raised a phoenix fund just in case, for when the Glazer family bought MUFC. If you are not getting a say, they withhold that from the club until they gain an influence.

Open comment from the floor:

I won't say a word against SV but wish he would involve the fans more.

KW commented “I asked the Board if I could approach SV and went to him and he seemed a decent bloke. I came back to the Board and hit a brick wall so I went ahead with the “bums on seats” campaign”.

AW added that we (CCST) have access to funding sources for helping the club link with the wider community like Rochdale have done - encouraging kids to go to the ground. But we can't do that without the co-operation of the club. We need to speak with one voice.

General agreement from the floor about this.

KW tried to interrupt but a comment came from the floor – “At least let the chairman speak as he has put forward some positive suggestions”.

AW continued “A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since I said I'd boycott. I now live in Edinburgh – it's difficult to attend matches whether I am boycotting or not. We have had a meeting within the last month about bringing the groups together.

BH confirmed this and said that the ISA AGM is coming up and we should let them put it to their members. This cutting of each others throats has got to stop.

Open comment from floor:

This happens when we are in trouble that we talk about this then it all quietens down again and everything gets forgotten.

BH - When the muck was hitting the fan with TS – loads went. When things are going smoothly fans don't want to get involved. We can't keep forcing people to go onto organisations.

7. Question from the floor.

Could we not publish something in the press to say that fans groups should come together? Also can't we do ideas on our own?

AW answered “When we walked to Shrewsbury we didn’t ask the club permission to do this. A chap I was at school with, now on an oil rig out in Azerbaijan, has just raised money on a sponsored walk. Yes it can happen”.

Comment from the floor:

Would not a gesture towards the club, a fundraising effort make a common bond with the club?

GP stated “I have great respect for Trust but find it frustrating that we are not rallying the fans more. We did the walk, that was fantastic. If we went into the community doing things we could do more”.

AW commented “The Club needs to get players in to schools etc. We can put out a statement and we are minuting this meeting for publication on the Trust website”.

KJ said “Ideas on the piece of paper (Circulated by the KW group) are excellent but lots of them are not for the Trust to do”.

KJ then stated to KW “Your group have come together with best interests of the football club at heart – it’s not necessarily the work of the Trust”.

KW added “The Trust has had £2000 in the bank for last three years. Membership not increased. Wrexham have many more members and £350,000 in the bank”.

KJ replied “ Wrexham have raised that money because of the Hamilton factor – uniting all the fans against a common enemy. Chester fans did raise a comparable amount of money when the ISA was formed but you can’t repeat it just like that.

KW “The list of ideas is something all supporters groups should be doing together”.

KJ “With respect to other supporters groups - none of them has done anything either but the Trust is not constituted for this”.

BH added “Lot of tasks are not relevant to supporters groups – wages; students going through turnstiles etc”.

Comment from the floor: **There’s a role for the Trust but I don’t think it should be used as a vehicle for this. Clearly what KW is doing is fine but not necessarily for the Trust.**

AW stated “Meetings between groups needs to happen again and thrash out the nuts and bolts (How to handle life memberships etc) . Different strands within that umbrella organisation can then focus on different areas. ISA have AGM in April; Trust in May; Exiles in August? We can talk with Huddersfield about how they sorted out the complexities”.

Questioner asked could not this be done sooner?

Jacqui Forster “What you have to do is put the idea to their own members at their AGMs –everyone needs to be consulted”.

8. *Question from floor:*

Could other groups not have SGMs?

BH/AW It's got to be done according to rules but not necessary to take a long time. It would be good to have it in place for the start of next season.

AW thanked everyone for their attendance and positive suggestions and hoped that next time we meet we could give positive news about how we got everyone together.

AW was thanked from the floor for his chairmanship.

The meeting concluded at approx 9.45pm