



Notes of the CFU meeting held on 7th September 2015 at 7.30pm

In the Blues Bar – Lookers Vauxhall Stadium

The meeting was attended by approximately 40 CFU members and was being streamed on a trial basis to a number of exiles (NB the whole of the meeting was not streamed due to technical difficulties.)

1. **Welcome** – Grenville Millington welcomed members and introduced David Evans who was attending to present the findings of the Big City Survey. Apologies were received from John Martin and Mike Poole. This meeting was being streamed on a trial basis to members of the Exiles.
2. **Notes of the meeting held on 21st May 2015** – these had been posted on the CFU website and were accepted as a correct record with any matters arising being covered by the agenda.
3. **Feedback from Big City Survey** – David Evans presented the findings from the survey – full details of which will be published on the CFU website. The following are the key points highlighted from the survey:
 - a. 350 responses received and now possible to benchmark data against previous years to measure progress. These responses represent the core support of the club and the board might want to consider seeking views on a wider basis e.g. supporters who are not CFU members.
 - b. 91% of respondents supported the proposal to allocate tickets to season ticket holders first, followed by CFU members second and the general public third. This will be taken to the AGM.
 - c. 99% of respondents had supported the proposal to change the date of membership subscriptions from 1st July to 1st June to link with the club's business year. This will be taken to the AGM.
 - d. The club has a lot of long standing supporters and this demonstrates the need to grow a new supporter base.
 - e. 70% of respondents rated the newsletter good or very good and a number of suggestions had been made for things to be included in it.
 - f. The performance of the board has improved with good and very good up to 84% from 61% last year.
 - g. Communications have also improved with ratings increasing from 33% feeling they were good or very good last year to 50% this year.

- h. Whilst the website showed an improvement from a good and very good rating of 29% last year to 40% this year there were still very significant very poor, poor and average ratings so improvements still required.
- i. In respect of the match day experience there was a big improvement in the kiosks in respect of both the quality and range of items supplied with an increased from 25% to 40% being satisfied or very satisfied. Where supporters have a positive experience they will tell others and similarly they will tell others where they are not satisfied.
- j. There were some positive comments in respect of the club sponsors and also offers of individual sponsorship, help with fundraising and involvement in some of the groups in the club.

In summary the survey provides some good news in respect of board performance, communications and match day experience and also flagged up some areas for improvement. There is also useful benchmark data flagging up progress and areas where more attention is required. The board will continue to look at the more detailed comments contained in the full report. There was a brief discussion about how it might be possible to encourage more supporters to become CFU members. GM thanked DE for the presentation.

The exiles had submitted a question asking for information on:

- i) Current CFU membership
- ii) Plans to increase CFU membership and would there be any incentives
- iii) The accuracy of the database

These questions reflected the concern of the exiles who are keen to support the club with fundraising and have set a target of £10k but wanted assurance that they have sufficient information to enable them to accurately target and also increase their membership.

Mike Day responded to the question, in respect of current membership there are 1009 paid up members, and 311 who have still not renewed. MD said that Barbara Rogers and her team had been very successful in both getting members to renew and recruiting some new members as part of the season ticket process.

It is expected that membership will reach between 1300 and 1400 which would be an increase of 20/25% over last year's membership which was 1089. The intention is to contact everyone who has ever been a member regarding renewal, this will be done by the office team and GM has also offered to help, an offer of help was also made on behalf of the Senior Blues. MD said that following Jonathan Freeman's resignation from the board that he and Marion Needham had been managing the database and queries and more recently his wife Ruth had also undertaken a lot of the work to input data relating to renewals but that a more permanent arrangement needs to be put in place.

In respect of incentives MD said that most people did not need an incentive and that being a part owner of Chester FC was sufficient, many suggestions made previously would negate the annual membership fee of £12. Some options regarding incentives were still being explored e.g. discounts with local traders and the recent vote in the Big City Survey if

approved would provide the opportunity for CFU members who are not season ticket holders to get priority tickets for all ticket games.

Work is still being undertaken by Campbell Smith relating to the upgrading of the system and alternatives have also been looked at but all come at a significant cost whereas the current system is free. The intention is to train all office staff to be able to use the system to check membership queries.

MD will put exile members into a group (both current and lapsed) based on postcode location so that they may have direct access to the system but a volunteer will be needed from the exiles to take on this role.

4. Finance summary – JK said he had taken over the finance portfolio on a temporary basis as Mike Poole had been unavailable due to serious health problems with a family member. The following points were highlighted:

- a. Stephen Baker the club accountant is leaving, but will continue to work on a voluntary basis until towards the end of the year. With the appointment of Haidee McHugh as accounts assistant it has been possible to catch up on the back log of work. Consideration is now being given as to the best structure for the finance team to ensure the continued smooth running of the department.
- b. Final accounts are almost complete and at the next meeting information will be provided regarding the end of year position and the quarter one position for the current year. JK said he was confident that the end of year figures will be positive and this will enable the club to contribute to the cash reserve to help reach the planned target of £100k.
- c. Cash flow is healthy with no outstanding debts and all payments to HMRC being made on time and in full every time.
- d. In respect of Crowdfunder, after deduction of fees the figure stands at £23.5k but a further adjustment still has to be made in respect of the cost of gifts and associated VAT.
- e. The away travel had funded the trophy cabinet, the refurbishment of the board room kitchen and also new fencing outside the bar area; John Needham was thanked for the work he had undertaken on the trophy cabinet and kitchen.
- f. The Senior Blues had funded new chairs for the Blues Bar.
- g. Improvements had been funded to enable work to be undertaken at the back of the west stand and all the steps in the ground had been sandblasted and painted, thanks to all the volunteers who had undertaken this work.
- h. The board has approved the funding of a new PA system as their number one priority and the next big item will be the replacement of the CCTV. Both these items are an essential part of the safety certificate. It was hoped that some funding would be secured from the football stadium improvement fund.
- i. Other work still to be undertaken is new blinds and new carpet for the Blues Bar and redecoration. Discussions are also underway regarding the provision of a new downstairs kitchen.

5. Commercial report – in the absence of John Martin MN reported that ball sponsors and programme sponsors are all in place for the current season and that a sponsor has already

been secured for the end of season awards event. It was noted that work is being undertaken to find a suitable venue for this event.

6. **Youth development** – Brian Burns and Mike Day continue to be the lead directors in this area with Calum McIntyre now taking on the role of Head Coach for the Academy. The following points were noted:
 - a. The youth team had a successful trip to Scotland as part of their pre season preparation and are currently top of the North West Youth Alliance.
 - b. All teams have a proper kit which means they present a very professional image.
 - c. Funding – new sponsorship arrangements have been put in place for the youth team with everyone being sponsored.
 - d. 22nd September is the date for the youth team play their FA cup qualifying game this will be against Chadderton and played at the Lookers Vauxhall Stadium.
 - e. Michael Wilde has been involved in the recruitment of coaches.
 - f. Further information will be available at the next meeting in respect of progress relating to the scholarship academy but it is still expected that this will be in place for September 2016.
7. **Volunteer groups** – GM reminded the meeting of the current volunteer groups:
 - a. Media / communications
 - b. Fundraising
 - c. Match day
 - d. Office / shop
 - e. Stadium maintenance
 - f. Governance
 - g. Finance
 - h. Match hospitality / Legends Lounge

GM referred to the last volunteers meeting where the title the volunteers agreed for the DNA was The Chester Way supported by the following statement:

'Here at Chester FC we are striving to achieve excellence in everything we do, both on and off the field, by developing and inspiring all the players, staff, volunteers, visitors and supporters and by us all:

- ✓ *Putting the club first*
- ✓ *Others second*
- ✓ *Ourselves third'*

8. **AGM** –GM said there would be an opportunity for prospective directors to meet with current members of the board prior to the next CFU meeting. MN referred to the timetable relating to the AGM which will begin on 5th October when CFU members will be formally advised of the date of the AGM which will be 26th November, 2015 and also have the opportunity to formally express an interest in becoming a director. MN also said that in future years it was hope that it would be possible to arrange the AGM for a Friday evening before a home game, this was being considered in response to a request from the exiles.
9. **Q and A**
 - a. Confirmed that streaming of meetings will only be available to CFU members and access would be by password.

- b. In response to a question raised relating to the lack of a statement made in respect of the appointment of Tony Allan, JK read out a statement prepared on behalf of the Operations Board, the full text of which is published below.

'Following the departure of Dave Riche to AFC Fylde in the Autumn of last year, we had been running without any paid staff member in this role, with the work attaching to Dave's commercial portfolio being covered by Tracey Wainwright, Operations Manager, along with the key volunteers on our Commercial Group.

Whilst this interim arrangement worked well in the short-term it was clearly not a long-term sustainable measure, particularly because of the impact it was having on Tracey's primary role and it was neither possible, nor fair, to expect Tracey to cover both roles indefinitely.

Consequently, the Operations Board decided to advertise for a Commercial Officer post to cover this area of work and an advertisement to this effect was placed on the Club website and also with Job Centre Plus. The Ops Board appointed an interview panel which received all of the applications which were submitted; then shortlisted and interviewed the selected candidates but in the event were not able to recommend a candidate for appointment. This process was overseen by our Governance Lead.

This left us in some difficulty and so, following consultation, it was agreed that Tracey would move across to cover the commercial portfolio given the excellent work she had been doing in this area to good effect ever since Dave left us and Tracey indicated this was something she would be interested in doing. This would then require us finding the right person to cover the general management aspects of the Club which attached to Tracey's operational role.

We accept that we could have advertised for the new general manager role but by this point time was pressing with the new season already upon us and we were also aware that we had been through a similar process just a year ago re the Ops Manger role when Tony had applied for that role; been shortlisted and interviewed and had been deemed to be above the bar and appointable. We took further advice from the Governance Lead to see if it would be appropriate for us to approach Tony to see if he was still interested in the role and the advice we received was that it was both normal and good business practice to do this, so we proceeded on this basis.

The Operations Board is charged by the membership and the CFU Board to ensure the efficient and effective day-to-day running of the Club. We believe that we have at all times acted in good faith and in the best interests of the Club to cover both our Commercial and General Management requirements and that in Tony we have secured the services of one on the most experienced administrators in football within the north west region and this can only be for our long-term good.'

The board accepted though that it would have been helpful if a statement on the matter had been issued earlier.

- c. In view of the high amount being raised by the 50/50 draw a request was made that consideration be given to splitting the prize money into two cash prizes. Agreed that this will be considered.
 - d. A request was made that the club's strap line 'Our city, our community, our club' be incorporated into the club badge. This will be considered.
- 10. Date of next meeting** – Monday 5th October 2015 at 7.30pm with a meet the board event at 6.30pm for prospective director applicants. This will be an informal CFU meeting with details of the guest speaker to be published nearer the time.

The meeting closed at 10.20pm