



Notes of the CFU meeting held on 21st April 2016 at 7.30pm

In the Blues Bar – Lookers Vauxhall Stadium

The meeting was attended by 55 CFU members and a total of 29 members were listening via the streaming service with a maximum of 18 at any one time.

1. **Welcome and apologies** – apologies were received from Anne Salmon. Simon Olorenshaw welcomed members to the meeting and the new home shirt was previewed on a confidential basis (no photos!) prior to the official launch on 30th April 2016.
2. **Notes of the meeting held on 21st January 2016** – these had been published on the CFU website and they were confirmed as an accurate record. There were no matters arising.
3. **Chairman's update:**
 - a. **First team manager** – SO referred to the difficult decision that the board had to make regarding the termination Steve Burr's contract and the interim arrangement for Jon McCarthy to take charge of the first team along with Ian Sharps. He said that the vacant post had been advertised with a closing date of 25th April 2016. A 5 page document had been prepared which set out the criteria for the job, this emphasised the need for the manager to buy in to the fan owned model with the need to work with the youth section and the community as well as the first team. SO emphasised the need to have a new manager in place as soon as possible so that the club didn't lose potential players.
 - b. **Chief Executive Officer** – SO said that the aim was to move ahead with filling this post as soon as possible, once the first team manager has been appointed. Criteria would also be produced for the CEO role and it was felt that this appointment would bring a focal point to the club which was important with the frequent turn over of board members. SO said the board saw the role of first team manager and CEO would be pivotal to the club.
 - c. **Stadium accessibility** – there was some frustration that there had been no response from 'Level Playing Field' and arrangements are being put in place for the report to be looked at by someone locally when it's available.
 - d. **Training facilities** – this issue remains on going, there have been some useful discussions with the council and whilst there are still issues regarding the proposed route of the relief road, the current option has still not been excluded but others may need to be considered if this happens.
 - e. **Strategy** – SO said he was meeting with the Exiles regarding their input to the SWOC exercise, the information collected so far had been summarised with a number of key themes emerging, some of which were identified as both a strength and a weakness. Also the work recently undertaken by the Governance Group would feed into the development of the strategy.

In response to a number of questions SO said:

- The cost of releasing Steve Burr was not as expensive as it could have been and a settlement had been reached.
- The management restructuring resulting in the redundancy of the Commercial Manager was to allow for the creation of the CEO role and there would be no duplication of responsibilities with the General Manager; both roles were affordable.
- In respect of the Football Manager role the best possible contract will be looked at that limits the risk to the club. The style of play will not be dictated by the board and the selection panel has yet to be agreed.

4. Finance update – Laurence Kirby referred to information provided at the previous meeting which highlighted the in built budget deficit of £40k; following the review he had undertaken there was no major change from this position, although a number of things would still have to be finalised before the end of the financial year. There was still lack of clarity relating to the margins on stock in the shop. LK referred to the amount of speculation regarding the playing budget and provided the following information as the real budget and spend figures:

- a. **Season 2014/2015** budget £325k
- b. **Season 2015/16** budget £330k (which included squad builder) and had been
Supplemented by £20k from Crowdfunder making a total
budget for the season of £350k

The current position against the budget is projected at £372k an overspend of £22k.

In response to a number of questions LK said:

- In respect of the shop LK acknowledged there had been a number of problems these included over ordering of items, discounting some stock and selling at less than cost. He highlighted the need to get prices right to realise good margins. The tills had not been well maintained and new software had been installed and a bar code reader purchased; this would contribute to the capture of more accurate data.
- A four year contract had been entered into with Genesis for the supply of home and away shirts and also leisure wear; this would not all be for sale as some would be for the first team, girls team and academy. A number of suggestions were noted that may assist with turn over of stock. The suggestion for promoting availability of items for sale on social media was noted. A sale stall was planned outside the shop, weather permitting, before the Gateshead game.
- In respect of reserves, there are 3 – loan notes, general reserve of £27k and the special reserve of £100k. At the present time the special reserve is in tact, but if it has to be drawn on it will be a priority to replenish it as the board were given a mandate to achieve this level of reserve.
- LK said details of the playing budget of all clubs was not available although there was voluntary disclosure to the league. He said that he thought our budget was in the middle of the range and there were some with significantly lower budgets e.g. circa £250k.

- The arrangements for payment of loan players vary depending on the circumstances of the loan and as a general rule the cost is about half of the player's wage.
- The bubble game and Tranmere game – the cost of policing cancels out the increase in gate money.
- Confirmed there are four players contracted for next season – Jon Worsnop, Tom Shaw, Sam Hughes and Craig Mahon

5. Youth development – BB said there was a lot of good news and highlighted the following:

- Open trials had taken place and had been successful in terms of recruitment.
- The whole of the academy from age group 9 and upwards had played matches against teams from the North West Youth Academy.
- The under 18's team were top of their league and it was hoped that by the time they play Ashton Athletic at the Lookers Vauxhall Stadium on 12th May they would have won the league.
- The under 18's team are in two cup finals, the first on the 8th May against AFC Fylde being played at West Didsbury and Chorlton, and the second on 15th May at the Lookers Vauxhall Stadium, with Chester FC hosting this game on behalf of the North West Youth Association, this would be against Ashton Athletic KO 2.30pm.
- An awards evening for the Youth Academy was being held on 22nd April.
- All proceeds raised through the sponsored walk planned for 30th April would be for the benefit of the Youth Academy, with Rainbow Slush, who sponsor the away kit for the under 18's providing a blue and white slush drink for every child.
- A new partner will need to be found for the proposed scholarship scheme now the arrangements for the International Business School had fallen through at Christleton.

6. Commercial – Jonny Hughes provided updates as follows:

- Work is under way to develop a commercial website as the club website does not provide appropriate information relating to commercial opportunities.
- Match day programme – this is under review.
- Match day experience – options for this being considered e.g. Fanzone, half time competitions.

A number of suggestions were made in relation to the above and JH said he was keen to capture ideas from fans and is willing to listen to ideas. A marketing group will be set up to work on these issues anyone interested should contact JH on jonny.hughes@chesterfc.com

7. Communications – Neil Bellis provided updates as follows:

- Mike Day and NB had set up a new section on the CFU website and this now included both details of agenda for board meetings and a summary of the minutes from the board meetings. He explained how this would work and said it would be launched formally.
- Member's forum – a proposal to establish a forum along the lines run by FC United had been discussed at length both at CFU meetings and at board meetings. Based on the time needed to run it and moderate it properly also the experiences of FC United the board had concluded that they would not proceed with the establishment of such a forum. Whilst recognising that communications remain a

weakness there are many opportunities for both CFU members and fans to ask questions and full details of how to contact the club are well publicised.

8. Q and A

- a. Agreed to explore the possibility of a large board to advertise home games somewhere near to the ground.
- b. The new manager will be full time and ideally live locally.
- c. Option of providing bus transport from the city centre – not top of the list to be looked at, there would be a cost and it would be difficult logistically.

SO said it was good to see some new faces at the meeting and more people than normal. He emphasised that any emails will be responded to and concluded by saying there was lots of energy to take the agenda forward and the board should be judged on what happens as we move forward.

The meeting closed at 9.40pm