

Bristol City Supporters Trust
Board Meeting
4th November 2008
Bar BS3, Ashton, Bristol

Attendees: Stuart Rogers, Andrew Marshfield, Miles Hendy, Jon Darch, Mike Adams, Nick Tomkins.

City 'til I die Book

This project, based on a series of successful books at a range of clubs, allows us and our fans to create a book about our club. It will be produced by a professional publisher and will be sold by the Trust and the Club. 1,500 books will be made, 900 of which will be sold to provide money for the Trust and to bring benefits to local schools through a literacy project. The remaining 600 books will be distributed for free to local secondary schools.

We will be part of a national project which is a partnership between Supporters Direct (SD), Legends Publishing (LP) and the National Literacy Trust (NLT). Eight books like ours are being made across the country – local football fans telling their stories about their club. The fans will create their contributions with help (where needed) from Skills for Life tutor Steve Cowan, and the books will be compiled and edited by publisher Dave Lane from LP.

The project is for our fans, from our community. This is a great chance for us to bring different parts of our community together, giving them a chance to work together on a project and get to know each other. Parents will be welcomed to the project alongside their children, while adults who don't have children will be encouraged to work with and help the younger participants.

It costs us £14,755 to produce 1,500 copies of *City 'Til I die*. This money will be covered initially by a combination of grants, a loan, and a **deposit from the Trust of £1,500**. After we have given 600 books to local schoolchildren we will have 900 books to sell. These should be sold at £10 each, producing £9,000. When we have sold all of these, we will not only have got our deposit back, but we will have made a profit of £2,924. An additional 500 copies can be printed at an approximate cost of £1,500. We agreed to do this.

This is a great opportunity to work collaboratively with the Club and other supporter groups.

Renewals and CRM System

Mike has sent the membership data to Customers Really Matter for loading onto the InTouch CRM system. This won't halt the renewal process and we agreed to get letters out as soon as possible to maximise income and tie in with the launch of the Atyeo statue campaign. There are several versions of the renewal letter and help was offered to get these produced and sent out. The new membership cards have arrived.

Events

David Lloyd attended a pre-meeting with the Trust and Supporters Club to talk about the end of season Player of the Year (POY) event.

It was agreed that the format for last year, a hybrid of standing and seated dinner attendees, did not work so well. The impending play-off game and the players arriving late did not help with the interaction between players and fans, which is important.

Gary Johnson is keen to include players, partners and staff in the event, so the proposal is for the event to be run completely as a sit down dinner, however at the lowest possible cost for fans and on a non-profit basis. The following component parts are for consideration:

- Maximum 800 attendees (80 tables)
- £20 per seat
- Trust and Supporters Club can subsidise up to 100 tickets each at £10 if they generate sponsorship to cover it. (More if they can get the sponsors)
- There are 3 dates proposed depending on how we finish the season. It will be after the season ends, whether that is pre, post play-offs or promotion!
- An essential part of the evening is for fans to interact with players. Players should be spread around on each table. The Trust feels there needs to be some guarantees around player interaction.
- Effort should be made to “de-sanitise” the DEH and make it less corporate. Hanging flags and having no dress code are possible options.

To progress this, Miles will represent the Trust and the SC will put forward someone to form a working group with David and Kerry. The SC will take it to their committee first.

Mark Tovey is organising an event to mark the centenary of Bristol City's only FA Cup final appearance in 1909. He would like to hold an event with Manchester United Supporters Trust (MUST) and to get ex-players from both teams involved. One possible idea being a match between two teams representing the clubs played out in replica shirts from 1909. MUST have agreed to underwrite the cost of pitch hire and we now need to co-ordinate with any plans that the club might have to mark the occasion.

Finances

Stuart reported that work on completing the 06-07 finances was on-going and is now with the auditor.

There is £17,800 in the bank and £2,300 in Paypal Of this approximately £1,400 will be spent on printing the annual newsletter.

AG8 Plaque

Andrew has researched a number of options for this and has come up with a very good solution. This was discussed and the overriding features of this purchase will be:

- Designed in the shape of an “8” (including the backing plate) with players names around it
- Made out of “Amour brite” material, which requires no maintenance
- Can be mounted downwards at an angle using a wedge
- Can be taken down and remounted
- 3 sizes available, 24”, 30”, 36”
- Decided to go for 36” at £1,468 + Vat including installation

Atyeo Statue

Mike has been researching other statues erected at other clubs, including build costs and sculptors. Interestingly, we need to consider ongoing maintenance costs. At the meeting we considered that the fundraising target should be set at £100,000 rather than just raise as much as we can. This may be more than we need, but provides an aspirational target. The Trust is in a position to put £15,000 into the pot to kick start the appeal.

Persistent Standing

The club has written to both the Trust and Supporters Club asking for support with persistent standing in the East End. The club is coming under pressure from the council to take action or face the prospect of reduced capacity in the stand.

Two next steps are proposed by the club. To issue a joint statement from the club and supporters groups and to write to season card holders in the East End. Both communications aimed at outlining the possible consequences to the club (reduced revenue) and fans (possible ejection) of persistent standing. The club is very keen to avoid any confrontation with fans.

The main issue for many fans is that:

- The rule around what constitutes persistent standing is unclear, particularly when it states that you may stand only in instances of “extreme excitement”
- The rule is pretty much unenforceable and most fans recognise this. No other club in the country has had its home capacity cut as a result of standing and every televised game in most leagues show that this is a common problem.
- The East End is a terrace designed originally for standing with a shallow rake, which has some backless seats bolted to the floor. It constitutes a low health and safety risk for standing, probably less than for continual sitting and standing.

The Trust will not condone breaking of ground regulations, however, is also sympathetic with fans views on the vagueness of the rules. Both the Supporters Club (who were present) and the Trust feel that it is not their place to tell fans what to do. However, the Trust does feel it can help outline the issues and make fans aware of the implications.

We decided to respond to the club by asking for an open meeting with fans, attended by the Club and the Council. This would be an opportunity for the Council to explain the rule and have some debate on it. One suggestion is to hold the meeting straight after a game in the DEH, whereby all season card holders could get access and would not need to make a separate journey to the ground midweek.

In issuing any supporting statements, the Trust would seek a quid pro quo and ask the club to consider issuing a statement of intent to work with supporters groups to look at the option of safe standing in the future.

The Trust was surprised that the Forza East End representatives were not approached by the Club on this issue.

New Stadium Consultation

The public consultation process gets underway this week and the Trust has been invited to attend on 5 November at 11am. Mike, Jon and Miles have agreed to attend on behalf of the Trust.

OTIB

The Trust is still not covering its costs, however, has agreed a revised cost structure with the hosting company. Jon Darch has re-modelled the shopping forum and has been proactively placing adverts. This has been well timed to catch the Christmas shopping period. Jon has a revised online "match day travel and accommodation" website that he has asked to trial on Trust websites. The Trust board agreed to this as it will bring revenue to OTIB. If it cannibalises any existing ad revenues from certain sites like Travelodge etc, Jon will underwrite that value.

Wedlocks

Stuart Wrote to John Skinner at Backwind to establish if he would be prepared to sell the Wedlocks to a local community consortium. He responded by telephone to Nick Tomkins and said that he felt the Trust had set him back 2 years by opposing the planning permission and that he would rather pull it down himself than sell it to us. Nick explained that we were perfectly entitled to challenge a planning application and that we are still open to coming to an arrangement with him. He declined.

Actions:

- Initiate “City ‘Til I Die” book production with the Club and publishers – SR
- Get renewal letters produced and in the post – MA
- POY Working group to be formed and meet at the end of November – MH
- Put new match day travel website on OTIB and continue to promote shopping forum for Christmas – JD
- Reply to the Club about persistent standing – SR
- Check with club what their plans are to commemorate the 1909 FA Cup final – SR
- Explore possibility of the Trust meeting with Gary Johnson