



MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Held on Thursday 24th October 2019 at 6.30pm
at Torquay Athletic Rugby Football Club, The Recreation Ground, Torquay**

Present: 25 members and Andrew Fiderkiewicz (Independent Examiner).

Apologies: received from 14 members as announced by the Secretary.

Michel Thomas, the Chairman, welcomed the members, introduced the board and thanked the Rugby Club for hosting the meeting.

Minutes of the 2018 AGM

The minutes, having been circulated with the agenda, were taken as read and proposed for approval by Rob Dickinson, seconded by Jon Gibbes and unanimously approved including seven proxy votes cast by the Chairman.

Receipt of the accounts and balance sheet for the year ending 30th June 2019

Ali Bryant, the Treasurer, presented the profit and loss accounts showing a turnover of £15,933 and an operating surplus of £5,938. The balance sheet showed total funds of £44,428.

The accounts were proposed for approval by Sam Balsdon, seconded by Alan Robinson and unanimously approved including seven proxy votes cast by the Chairman.

Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2019/20

Rick Williams thanked Andrew Fiderkiewicz for providing independent examination of the 2018/19 accounts and advised that he had kindly agreed to continue in this role for the current year. His appointment was proposed by Jon Gibbes, seconded by Bryan McKenna and unanimously approved including seven proxy votes cast by the Chairman.

Election of board members

Rick Williams, the Secretary, reported that there were ten places available on the board with five current members continuing to serve. The five vacancies had been notified to members and nominations invited. Only three nominations had been received and they were therefore duly elected for a term of two years without the need for a ballot as follows;

Ali Bryant and Michel Thomas	current board members re-elected
Rob Dickinson	co-opted member now elected

Matt Carpenter, an exiled board member had not stood for re-election.

Report of the board

The Chairman gave details of the activities of the board during the year, noting that the membership had been kept regularly informed of these via monthly newsletters.

He reported on the success of recruiting seventeen corporate members, attending numerous business networking events, maintaining a close dialogue with the MP and councillors of all parties and with the Football Supporters Association (FSA) and supporters groups from other clubs.

Robin Causley reported on the Premier League Fans Fund initiative which, in partnership with the Torquay United Community Sports Trust, had delivered a series of successful Fan Zones and Out Reach events and support for junior fans in various forms. All such activities were aimed at raising the Club's profile in the community.

Nick Brodrick, board member with responsibility for Supporter Liaison and the Matchday Ambassador Co-Ordinator, spoke passionately about the scheme and TUST's disappointment when advised by the Club, without explanation, that the scheme would not be run in the 2019/20 season.

There were a number of questions and suggestions from the floor including queries about the proposed Official Supporters Club, a suggestion that ambassadors could operate outside the ground and the relationship with the Club's staff.

There was a 20 minutes break at this point for refreshments.

Rob Burkitt, board member with responsibility for social media and communications informed the meeting of the successful campaign to use various forms of media to keep members informed.

Strategic Plan

Rick Williams introduced the draft Strategic Plan which was recommended by the board to the membership for approval. He explained that a Strategy Team had been established in the Summer of 2018 to look at all aspects of TUST's activities.

A mission statement had been agreed followed by five core objectives, all previously reported to members. The draft Plan had been circulated with the papers for this meeting and included goals to support the objectives and proposed actions to achieve these. Three key issues were presented for discussion.

The first was a commitment to work constructively with the ownership to consider and promote any plans to relocate the Club providing that such plans are transparent, realistic and sustainable. There were a number of comments from the floor and generally a view that Plainmoor was an adequate stadium in the short term and proposals for any new ground would have to be robustly tested to ensure that they were for the long term benefit of the Club. The importance of the Council retaining the freehold of Plainmoor was stressed and this should be incorporated in to the Plan.

The second key element of the strategy was to be as prepared as possible to act if the existence of the Club is ever in jeopardy and to do everything possible to find a way of ensuring its continued survival. Rick explained that a contingency fund is held to facilitate this and the board are working to identify ways of raising funds at short notice should this be required. It is not considered feasible for TUST to buy or run the Club itself but with appropriate funding it could draw on professional advice and experience to ensure a future for the Club, even if it had to be resurrected as a 'phoenix club' as others successfully have been. There was much discussion from the floor and it was proposed that the wording 'as a sustainable football club' be added to the objective as set out in the opening sentence of this paragraph.

The third key issue was around funding. The board had given consideration to the level of membership fees and whether reduced fees would encourage increased membership. It had concluded that the current level of £2 per month or £24 per annum was appropriate. Apart from ensuring the long term future of the Club, another core objective was encouraging community engagement and with this in mind TUST has developed a strong partnership with the Torquay United Community Sports Trust and with the Women's Football Club. It was proposed that 50% of income, net of expenses, should be devoted to supporting such community initiatives, subject to annual review.

After further discussion, including a suggestion that the board should seek a member with marketing/relationship skills, a motion to approve the Strategic Plan, subject to the amendments outlined above, was proposed by Alan Robinson, seconded by Peter Caton and unanimously approved including seven proxy votes cast by the Chairman.

Member's motion

A motion submitted in advance of the meeting and signed by two members was presented by Bryan McKenna as follows;

"This motion calls upon the membership to instruct the board to inform the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Torquay United AFC of their deep concern and strong objection to the actions of the Torquay United directors in refusing to work, engage or communicate with our Trust and for instructing club staff to do the same.

This decision is seen as a wholly retrograde step in improving relations between supporters, the wider community and the club and cuts off an essential mechanism whereby members of the largest democratic supporter organisation of the football club can express their views and opinions on club issues and initiatives and provide constructive suggestions and input to enable the continued improvement and development of Torquay United AFC.

It should also be noted that such actions are not in accordance with the stated aims of government, the National league and FSA directives and guidance on club and supporter engagement and liaison. In the opinion of TUST, such non engagement and liaison reflects badly on Torquay United AFC and does not fulfil the goal of listening and responding positively to the views of the club's supporters.

TUST therefore calls on the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Torquay United AFC to urgently review this decision and to recommence engagement and dialogue with the TUST board immediately with the aim of re-establishing a positive and constructive relationship which enables the club and TUST to work together collaboratively with the mutual aim of benefitting all aspects of the future of Torquay United AFC.”

After some discussion in support of the motion, as proposed by Bryan McKenna, and seconded by Matt Gorman, it was unanimously approved including seven proxy votes cast by the Chairman. It was agreed that the directors should be given a fixed period of time to respond and if this was not forthcoming or favourable, TUST should publicise its concerns widely and seek the assistance of the Football Supporters’ Association in bringing the Club’s directors to account.

Closing remarks

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking the board for all their hard work during the year, the attendees for their support and valued contributions and the rugby club for its hospitality.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Chairman’s signature.....Date