



Name of Meeting	Grimsby Town Supporters Trust – ‘The Way Forward’
Date	1 st Oct 2011
Venue	Study Support Centre, Blundell Park
Author	Emma Blackbourn – GTST Chair

Attendees (in surname order)

Rob Bartlett	Jack Johnson
Ed Blackbourn – GTST Board Member	Tim Mosey
Emma Blackbourn – GTST Chair	Dave Otter
Nick Bradley	Chris Parker
Richard Cole	Marc Reed
Steve Crosskill	David Roberts
David Douglas	Pete Roberts
Paul Fenty	Chris Stephenson
Steve Fenty	Ian Townsend – GTST Board Member
Ian Fitzgerald – GTST Board Member	John Wood
Bill Jenner	

Meeting Background / Overview

This meeting was arranged in response to a lengthy post made on the forum area of ‘The Fishy’ by myself (Emma Blackbourn) about ‘The Past, The Present, The Future’ of the Grimsby Town Supporters Trust (GTST). The post itself was prompted by the reaction of the fans that post on the same forum of John Fentys resignation from the board of GTFC, the subsequent interview with Mike Parker broadcast on Radio Humberside and further statements made by John Fenty about the boardroom situation at Blundell Park, and GTSTs response.

The reactions to the ‘The Past, The Present, The Future’ post were mixed, however some fans expressed an interest in providing help to GTST.

In response to those offers for help, I arranged for a meeting to be held on 1st October 2011, at Blundell Park. That time and location of the meeting was initially communicated via e-mail to those that had offered their assistance, and subsequently included in a post on the forum. I did not intend the meeting to be a totally open ‘free for all’, predominantly because the room that had been provided at Blundell Park only held 20 people (which was deemed adequate based on the number of people who had offered their services). A reasonably loose agenda was set, which was to discuss whether the attendees felt that GTST had a role in the future, and if yes what they believed that role to be.

On Friday 30th September, Mike Parker made the offer of a gift of 500,000 of his shares in GTFC to GTST. This inevitably sparked further interest in GTST, with additional supporters who had not offered their help earlier in the week choosing to attend the meeting.



Meeting Notes

Due to the number of attendees, and the subsequent amount of discussion that occurred, it has not been possible to provide a verbatim transcript of the meeting. Rather, I have outlined the main areas of discussion, and noted specific points under each.

The initial point was raised that everyone in the room was there for a single reason, and that was out of concern for the future of the football club that we all love.

Mike Parker Share Gift

- It was requested that EB provide details of Mike Parkers offer
 - EB confirmed that an offer has been made by Mike Parker to transfer 500,000 shares in Grimsby Town Football Club currently owned by him to GTST
 - The share will come at no cost to GTST, with no conditions or obligations.
 - There is no obligation for GTST to take a place on the board of GTFC as a result of the proposed transfer
- The question was asked whether GTST have accepted the offer of the shares:
 - EB explained that advice had been sought from Supporters Direct and that a call had been scheduled for Monday with the current GTST board and an SD representative
- The view was put forward that if GTST do not accept the offer, then GTS has no future credibility and may as well close
- The view was put forward that if the shares come with no legal implications, then GTST should accept them
- It was asked that if GTST accepted the shares, what would GTST propose to do with them
 - The response was that should GTST accept the shares, it would provide immediate influence at the AGM, and allow GTST to engage in more meaningful dialogue with the club
 - The point was made that it would also provide the supporters with the 'golden share' should any outside party seek to gain ownership of the football club in the future
- It was asked that if GTST accepted the shares, would GTST be willing to listen to other potential investors. The view was that GTST should be open to the idea of new investors, and not stand in the way if any new investment was for the long term benefit of the football club.
- The question was raised as to whether GTST should demonstrate pro-activity in trying to gain further investment. Some felt that GTST should be doing that.
- There was some discussion about the mechanics of purchasing shares in the football club

GTST – Current Situation

- It was asked how many members GTST currently has.



- The response was in the region of 200, with the majority of these being life members (single payment). There are a number of members who pay via standing order, which provides a small ongoing revenue stream.
- It was pointed out that DO is currently seen as the 'figurehead' of GTST, and that he has been vocal in the past about his support for JF
- It was recognised that whilst GTST is currently dormant, what better driver is there to re-ignite GTST than the offer of these shares. Putting to one side the current boardroom troubles at the football club and the reason for the offer, GTST should aim to articulate to supporters what a golden opportunity this is.
- GTST need to go back to basics and use this as an opportunity to open lines of communication between the club and the supporters – the message being that if you want a voice within the football club, the join GTST and get your voice heard.
- EB asked what barriers currently exist to supporters joining GTST. Responses were as follows:
 - Apathy
 - Inactivity
 - No visible benefits
 - Don't know what GTST is there for
 - Don't think that GTST can make a difference
 - The current position the club finds itself in

GTST Relaunch

- Initial thoughts were that GTST having a presence within Blundell Park on matchdays would be a good initial step. GTST board members making themselves available to supporters, be it to field questions, have membership forms available or just to have a chat.
- GTST needs to be 'doing things for the fans by the fans'. GTST needs to focus on 'our fans' and 'our club'.
- Discussion was held around what should come first, recruiting new members or deciding what GTST stands for?
- The view was shared that GTST's objectives need to be simplified to make it easier for supporters to understand what membership will mean and make it a more compelling proposition. If we were starting with a blank sheet of paper, what would we in the room want GTST to do? Step away from the micro and build on the foundations that are already there, remembering that this is a golden opportunity for GTST to step in and be the voice of the fans.
- Following extensive discussion of objectives, the following revised set were proposed:
 - Working to maintain the long term viability of the football club
 - Helping to improve the matchday experience for supporters
 - Ensuring that GTST is an all-inclusive supporters organisation



- Work to increase the transparency between the fans and the club – providing a mechanism for supporters to have their say in the GTFC boardroom
- The recruitment of new members was discussed, with the following views shared:
 - GTST needs to work with the club to try and recruit new members
- The view was put forward that GTST should re-brand itself totally, to include the logo and the strapline.
- Matchball sponsorship by GTST was raised as an idea – publicised to show how GTST are contributing in a small way to the club/
- Need a whole week of a co-ordinated communication strategy for the re-launch. Get people 'by the balls' using as many media outlets as possible
- GTST also needs to have better ties with both the local media and the local council
- The GTST website is a quick and easy way of getting messages out (but does require an overhaul both front end and back end)
- The general feeling was that there were a lot of people who would be willing to help out, but they just need to be more convinced about GTSTs long term aims / objectives
- In order to be successful, GTST needs new members of the board who can bring fresh ideas. With their being 6 (six) elected and 1 (one) co-opted board members currently, there is room for a further 5 (five) cop-opted board members immediately. The following people put themselves forward to be cop-opted onto the GTST board:
 - Dave Otter
 - Dave Roberts
 - Marc Reed
 - Tim Mosey
 - Chris Parker
- Other attendees showed willing ness to joint GTST – EB committed to distributing membership forms via e-mail
- It was highlighted that prior to any official re-launch, there are some administrative tasks that need to happen, to include holding a GTST AGM as soon as is practically possible.
- Immediately, and official GTST statements will be made via the GTST areas available on the official messageboards.
- In addition, it was requested for anyone involved with GTST to step away from the negativity, and refrain from getting involved in any nastiness and backbiting that seems commonplace on messageboards.
- Examples of Supporters Trusts that have had success or are aligned to clubs that have experienced hardship were mentioned. It was agreed to make contact with those Supporters Trusts to see what GTST can learn >> Dundee United (Arab Trust), Telford United Stirling Albion

Supporter Involvement Ideas



- Identifying ideas that would help bring more supporters to GTFC, to benefit the club financially and improve the matchday atmosphere:
 - Work with the club on initiatives that will improve the matchday experience for supporters. Ensure that the supporters feel that they are getting value for money over and above the 90 mins of football.
 - Work hand in hand with the club on initiatives designed to increase matchday attendance
 - Use an unoccupied area within the Osmond Stand, with GTST liaising with local schools and giving out tickets (possibly widening the net in terms of the local areas that are targeted – Skegness was cited as a possibility). The importance of engaging supporters at a young age was made.
 - Offer a free ticket to ex-season ticket holders (although the potential for this to irritate existing season ticket holders was discussed and noted)
 - The security implication of housing both home and away supports in the same stand was highlighted.
- GTST should be aiming to try and help with any such initiatives – providing ideas into the club and supporting them
- It was pointed out that to an extent, gates will increase if performances/results improve
- It was mentioned that the commercial department at GTFC have tried many different initiatives before – they do work hard to try and make the club appeal to the supporters.
- The opinion that local businesses do not view the commercial setup at GTFC favourably was offered

Fundraising Ideas

- Identifying revenue streams that do not rely on memberships. Ideas raised were:
 - A GTST run bar at Blundell Park – giving the supporters / GTST members a place to meet up. Possibly shoeing highlights of recent away matches.
 - Matchday Catering
 - Events, with some involvement from ex-players. Possibly engaging the help of Dave Boylen who is a very good organiser.
- EB / DO explained that from experience, some initiatives / ideas simply won't work / take off, but you have to not let it get you down and just try something else.

Finally, the need for a follow up meeting was identified, which should be open to a much wider audience and made as inclusive as possible.

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