



Leighton United Football Club

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES: DECEMBER 2020

Meeting Date: Tuesday 22 December 2020

Venue: Held via a virtual conference call due to Covid-19 restrictions on gatherings

Present:

Current Management Committee members: Carl Pickard, Chris Haybittle, Craig Wells, Michelle Hibbert, Tom Andrews, Jo Baggaley, Correy Voo, Paul Redsull, Mark Longman, Alan Redrup (Chair)

Coaches and Others: Paul Fynn, Ash Hartwig, Joe Levien, Ant Lock, Andrew Parker, Matt Rawdon, Simon Wood, Giancarlo Zanatti; Richard Blake

1. Introduction

Alan Redrup opened the AGM by thanking all for attending. The agenda had been previously circulated along with the minutes of the 2019 AGM and an invitation to submit questions in advance. The meeting had been delayed from June primarily due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Apologies

None received.

3. Minutes of the 2019 AGM held on 10 June 2019

Completion of actions:

- Revision of Management Committee structure outstanding from 2018 – Now done
- Revision of player registration fee hardship criteria outstanding from 2018 – Reviewed - Financial hardship criteria includes receipt of state unemployment and social security benefits. Cases adjudicated by Club Welfare Officers.

All actions thereby completed.

4. Chairman's Report – AR

Report attached. There were no comments.

5. Secretary's Report - CH

The FA Whole Game System had been very difficult to use following the lifting of the first Covid-19 lockdown with over two-hour queues and painfully slow. The club has had disciplinary issues, including abuse of referees, which is a common theme across football.

Under an FA scheme to address abuse, U18 referees are now wearing yellow armbands.

6. Receive the Treasurer's Report and End of Financial Year Accounts for 2019 – 2020 - MH

The trading profit and loss account for the year ending 31 May 2020 was presented and accepted. A forecast for the 2020 – 2021 financial year was included. Accounts have been audited and await signatures. Main points from the 2019 – 2020 accounts:

- Income of £71k, including £39k from player registration fees, £7k from the tea bar, £13k from sponsorship and funding and £10k from grants.
- Expenditure of £55k, including £7k for ground maintenance, £15k building costs, £13k on football kit and equipment, £7k on pitch hire.
- The net surplus was mainly grant.

For 2020 – 2021 the forecast includes:

- A reduction of around £3k in player registration fees (there are more younger age group teams but fewer older age group teams).
- A substantial increase in essential building costs (including replacement of the defunct clubhouse heating and hot water system, replacement of the dangerous wooding decking, continual roadway and car park repairs, kitchen refurbishment etc.). Some of these items are partially grant funded.
- A predicted deficit of £26k.

7. Review of Management Committee Structure

Currently President; Vice-President; Chairperson; Vice-Chairperson; Treasurer; Club Secretary; Head Coach; Club League Secretaries – Chiltern Youth Football League, Bedfordshire Mini Soccer Football League, Bedfordshire FA Girls Football League, Milton Keynes and District Development League; Club Welfare Officers; Facilities Manager; Events Manager (including tea bar); Sponsorship and Communications Coordinator; Charter Standard Club Co-Ordinator

No changes were considered necessary.

The girl's team coaches will be trawled for a new Bedfordshire FA Girls Football League secretary.

8. Election of Club Officers to Serve on the Management Committee for 2020 - 2021

In accordance with the Club Constitution and Club Rules, the Chairman had emailed all existing committee members in advance of the AGM asking if any proposed to stand down. There were no replies which indicated that all committee members were willing to be reappointed.

There were no other nominations. Management Committee appointments are therefore confirmed as:

President – Carl Pickard	Vice-president – Chris Haybittle
Chair – Alan Redrup	Vice-Chair – Craig Wells
Club Secretary – Chris Haybittle	Treasurer – Michelle Hibbert
Head Coach – Craig Wells	Facilities Manager – Tom Andrews
Club Welfare Officers – Temporarily Michelle Hibbert and Alan Redrup (back-up)	
Events Manager (including tea bar) – Jo Baggaley	
Sponsorship and Communications Co-Ordinator (including website) – Correy Voo	
Charter Standard Coordinator – Alan Redrup	
Bedfordshire FA Girls League Secretary – To be appointed. Temporarily Chris Haybittle	

Chiltern Youth League Secretary and Player Registration – Paul Redsull
Bedfordshire Mini-Soccer League Secretary – Mark Longman
Milton Keynes and District Development League Secretary – Ant Lock

Four of the positions are held by coaches, so the Coaching Group is well represented.

Two new club welfare officers have been recruited and are currently completing the requisite FA training. The Beds FA has recommended that a club of our size should ideally have three, so it is hoped to recruit a third. The FA require welfare to be represented on management committees, but it is not necessary for all club welfare officers to be committee members.

The non-committee kit manager role has been advertised.

9. Confirm Playing Fees for the 2020 – 2021 Season

Playing fees had been determined by the Management Committee prior to season start. Unable to be confirmed via the AGM due to Covid-19 pandemic delay. Reductions made to planned rates due to subsequent Covid-19 restrictions. Fees confirmed in a revision of the playing fees policy and in a playing fees and financials frequently asked questions newsletter (which included a summary of how funds are spent).

Usual process would be to benchmark, review finances, Management Committee make recommendations to be ratified at the AGM.

10. Review of the Club Constitution and Club Rules and Club Policies and Procedures

AR advised revisions were outstanding but anticipated that most changes would be fairly small, in some cases limited to basic updating.

The welfare officers will be asked to review the safeguarding, child protection and any other welfare related policies and procedures.

The code of conduct for coaches will be reviewed, compliance with the current FA template checked, reissued and coaches and assistants asked to confirm acceptance.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions actual coaches' meetings have not been possible, except for Covid-19 briefings in August 2020. CW will set up periodic virtual conference calls for the coaching group.

11. Resolutions

None received.

12. Questions from Coaches

Q: Why are playing fees higher than other clubs?

A: Fees are benchmarked against other local clubs as part of annual review. We are not overpriced and very competitive overall based on what is included and levels of coaching. Some clubs charge more. Can be hard to compare like with like because club offers differ.

An idea was put forward to publish the brochure produced for grant applications as an information leaflet.

Q: Why are home games called off when other clubs play?

A: Games are called off for numerous reasons and criteria. Need to consider how much damage could be caused long term by a short-term use (e.g. one game).

Pitch usage can depend on physical characteristic like soil type – our pitches are on heavy, impermeable clay so are prone to surface compaction, others could be on free-draining sand and chalk, level of usage, player age groups etc.

CW invited feedback on a preferred procedure for calling off matches.

An idea was put forward to provide coaches with guidance on what they should do pitch wise after matches.

Club league secretaries had been asked to ask leagues for advice on consequences of the club calling off games due to Covid-19 risks (since superseded by Covid development and the third suspension of grassroots football).

Q: Why does the club not publish information where money is spent?

A: The Playing Fees & Financials Frequently Asked Questions newsletter issued last October included a summary.

Q: Why is home kit not sponsored?

A: The club currently pays for kit which in effect is loaned to players and remains club property. Concern about having lots of different sponsors and what happens when sponsorship ends but the kit is still in use. Not having a logo keeps things constant. A corporate sponsor for all playing kit across the club (complete kit change estimated at £15k - £20k) could potentially be of interest. Not many suppliers do navy blue and gold.

An idea was put forward to set up a small group with representation from the 5, 7, 9, 11 aside teams and girls to review kit, costings and what could work.

Q: Could the website be improved?

A: It was explained that the website operates within what can be done on the Pitchero platform and FA safeguarding restrictions. Content contributions are always welcome.

Q: Could 11 aside teams be moved off-site to provide more capacity for small-sided teams?

A: It was explained in the past playing off-site has been a last resort. The U18 boys currently play off-site. More teams might have done this season if the Cedars pitches were available. Playing off-site does present challenges – for example teams feel disengaged from the club, do not get opportunity to use and enjoy the club facilities, coaches may not like playing off-site, teams seek playing fee reductions because they feel they are not getting equal entitlements, off-site hire adds costs etc.

As the growing number of younger teams progress through the club the demand for pitches will be even higher.

Approaches to ground share the local Recreation Ground have been rejected, there is a waiting list for Astral Park, football pitch provision in the East of Leighton development is unclear and we do not have the funds to buy additional land and convert it to pitches.

An idea was put forward to establish a small group to discuss pitch provision.

Q: Why is the Kit Manager now a non-committee role?

A: Management Committee decision.

Q: Could targets be set for email responses by 'decision makers' or could there be a monitored official email address?

A: All Management Committee members are volunteers with full time jobs and families, who commit time to club business as and when they can. In such a voluntarily organisation setting response times is not viable. There are email links to key contacts via the contact menu on the website. The feasibility of establishing a monitored official email address will be investigated. NB. The Management Committee are the decision makers.

Q: Can there be a better of a complaint – to differentiate between real complaints and moans or gripes.

A: Subject to Management Committee agreement, it is proposed to define a complaint as a formal expression of dissatisfaction about a club related situation. This will enable some sifting. Complaints do not automatically trigger disciplinary action. Complainant requests for anonymity must be respected.

Q: What are the club doing to help new coaches?

A: CW will be arranging virtual meetings for the Coaching Group.

Q: What are the club doing about playing fees and training facilities due to Covid-19 disruption?

A: Due to be discussed during a Management Committee meeting immediately following the AGM. It is apparent that Cedars have no plans to review the current closure so the facility will not be available in the New Year.

Q: What plans does the committee have for the club?

A: The football development plan is reviewed annually by the Management Committee and changed to include new developments and remove those completed or no longer pursued. As a mandatory Charter Standard requirement, it's also reviewed by the FA. As well as details, it includes vision, mission and footballing philosophy.

Q: What support can coaches get for their CPD?

A: When Covid-19 restrictions are sufficiently lifted, in-house training events will resume. The Beds FA are pushing out a lot of on-line opportunities. There are also free and low-cost FA webinars.

Q: What can be done to support the tea bar?

A: Opening is currently restricted due to Covid-19. Some equipment is now out of use. A full kitchen refurbishment is planned during 2021, when finances permit. Quotations are being obtained. Staff resourcing and opening times are arranged by the Tea Bar Manager.

Q: Is it possible to have a single kit supplier for training and playing kit?

A: Sourcing from a manufacturer rather than a supplier could be investigated as an option.

Q: Is there a possibility to have the mound removed to create more car parking space?

A: This has been investigated and quotations obtained. It's on the list to do when finances permit. Repairing the roadway and car park is a continual task. There have been two repair operations in the past nine months. There is no proper sub-base, noticeably increased car traffic when the ground has been open during the Covid-19 pandemic and adverse weather last autumn have all been factors. Quotations to install a proper durable surface have been obtained but the costs are currently prohibitive.

On the advice of a contractor, putting a screed across the whole area, rather than just filling potholes, will be investigated to try and make it last longer.

13. Any Other Business

None.

Planned Management Committee Dates:

Monday 18 January 2021

Monday 15 March 2021

Monday 17 May 2021

A meeting in April will be arranged specifically to plan for summer events, provided that Covid-19 restrictions have been or look like they will be sufficiently lifted.

Dates avoid school and bank holidays and will meet the FA stipulation for at least four meetings per season. They are subject to change and it may be necessary to schedule additional meetings in response to Covid-19 developments.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: DECEMBER 2020

It's been a very difficult year and a bit. Pleased and relieved we've got through so far.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused last season to end early, the first lockdown meant all summer events were lost, this season started late, there was the second lockdown in November and the short-term prospects are worrying with cases increasing locally.

As a responsible organisation, we've had to comply with legal requirements and FA instructions and take actions accordingly, often in difficult, unprecedented and uncertain circumstances. Perhaps at times these were unpalatable to some and caused frustration.

Maybe with the benefit of hindsight there are some things that could have been done a bit differently, but an objective has always been to provide as secure a Covid-19 environment as possible. The club has responsibility to put appropriate measures in place. People then have responsibility to implement the measures.

Think the most severe impact was the short notice loss of the Cedars 3G facility for club training. Very frustrating because we had addressed all their concerns and gone further, but obviously they couldn't make exceptions.

Covid-19 caused massive additional work, much of which went on behind the scenes in order to get football back up and running in a compliant manner. Thanks to the coaches for adapting to changing circumstances and for taking on additional responsibilities. I'd also like to thank the re-start sub-group and those who completed affiliations and player registrations. I had personal experiences of being in FA Whole Game System waiting queues of over 10,000 so how you did affiliations and registration on time was remarkable. As usual there are unsung heroes whose contributions are vital, but which largely go unseen by coaches, players and parents. That said, it's a big disappointment there has not been a single word of thanks from these groups.

The management committee will be reviewing the Covid-19 situation, including future playing and training arrangements, as priority after the AGM.

It is another frustration that some of the parent base and the FA treat us as being full-time club officials, when we are all un-paid volunteers, the majority of which have full-time jobs and who commit what time they can to support the running of the club.

Simultaneously with Covid-19, substantial issues involving two now ex-committee members have had to be dealt with. The situations were regrettable, disruptive and time consuming, but matters are now close to finalisation.

We ran 23 teams last season, 17 boys and 6 girls. This season its 26, 18 boys and 8 girls, with the prospect of another boys' team to come. There are currently 37 coaches and assistants in the coaching group, which could be the highest ever or at least for a long time.

Think I said the same last year but a big challenge facing the club is outgrowing the facilities. It's demand and supply - demands for football exceeding what we can supply. Unless additional pitches can be found, running more teams than at present may not be feasible.

Finally, I'd like to thank the Management Committee for all their hard work, help and commitment. In my view you really are the glue that holds it all together.

Alan Redrup
December 2020