

Minutes of PTFC Trust meeting with supporters, 6.00pm on 4 December 2018 at The Energy Check Stadium at Firhill

Trustees in attendance: Pauline Graham – Chair (PG), Gerry Britton (GB), Andrew Byron (AB), Alan Caldwell (AC), Jacqui Low (JL), Alan Rough (AR), Gordon Shaw (GS) **Apologies:** Robert Taylor (RT)

In attendance: Circa 70 supporters

1. Chair's Welcome

PG opened the meeting and welcomed the supporters present. PG outlined the background to and the role of the Trust. The PTFC Trust exists for 'the purpose of holding shares' that were gifted to supporters as part of the deal that saw the Club become debt-free. With a holding of 19.28%, the PTFC Trust is the single biggest shareholder in the Club and is recognised as the primary vehicle for fan engagement. The beneficiaries of the Trust are the supporters.

PG updated on the Trustees

Supporter Trustees are: PG (due to stand down in October 2019), AB & AC (recently elected by supporters), GS & RT (co-opted). Club Trustees are: JL, GB and AR. PG explained that a vacancy for a Co-opted Supporter Trustee had arisen as a result of Foster Evans' term finishing.

2. Club update

GB gave an update on Club related issues.

- **Online ticketing** – the Club acknowledged the difficulties supporters have faced. A new provider should be in place by April 2019.
- **Club Shop** – this will be open throughout December with normal opening hours (12 noon-4.30pm).
- **McParland Park** – 3 Black Cats company will provide a facility for the Club to lease. In response to a question from the floor, GB confirmed that the Club will proceed with the development regardless of how this season ends.
- **Buy a Brick** – current bricks have deteriorated significantly through weathering. New locations will be developed in both the John Lambie and Jackie Husband stands. The Club will provide owners the choice to have their brick relocated, without cost, to one of the new locations. There will be an opportunity for supporters to purchase a 'new' brick in one or both of these new locations. The Club hopes to announce details next week.
- **Upcoming events:**
 - the Business Club has proven very successful, with over 80 members. The key speaker at the next meeting on 6 December, is PTFC Chairman, Jacqui Low. Supporters were asked to consider joining the Business Club if relevant to their own situation.
 - TW Academy is holding its Award Ceremony at Hampden on 7 December.
- In response to a question, GB indicated that repairs to the Jackie Husband stand will be carried out on 18 December.

3. Enhancing Engagement & Communications

AC outlined work already being done by the Trust and the future aims to enhance communication bilaterally between supporters and the Club board. Supporter Trustees now have better engagement with the Club. The Club board recently introduced a process where supporter trustees meet them after board meetings. We also receive a briefing paper from GB. The aim is that Supporter Trustees will produce a briefing to be posted on Club website with links from Trust and Club Facebook pages ASAP after each meeting.

Going forward, Trustees aim to be more visible on match days and publish more regular updates in match programmes. A twitter account will also be set up. The Trust aims to host events such as Meet the Manager, Meet the Board and play a role in Open Days. AC spoke of the desire to improve match-day experience and the Supporter Trustees are keen to investigate the role of supporter 'Trusts' in other football Clubs

4. New Co-opted Supporter Trustee

PG outlined the process, timescale and eligibility. To be eligible to stand as a supporter trustee, (as per Trust Deed), you must hold a season ticket for the current and two preceding seasons. Anyone attending who is interested can provide contact details on the sheet available on the night. We will also advertise the vacancy via Trust Facebook, Club website and match programmes.

Those who apply will be sent a short application form for additional information. The completed nomination forms should be submitted to the Trust email address or by post to the Club by 31 December 2018. The review panel will select the new Supporter Trustee by mid-January.

5. Q&A session with Gary Caldwell

NB. With permission and thanks, the text summary below is taken from a Facebook posting by Tom Hosie.

Please note that not all quotes are verbatim though I have tried to be accurate as possible but my notes are pretty sketchy I've also combined some questions and answers together for the ease of reading. Text doesn't always capture nuance and context and this should be seen as a flavour of what was discussed not a 100% accurate reflection of all that was said. (Tom Hosie)

Before opening the event to the floor for questions Gary Caldwell made a brief introduction:

'Thanks for coming. I'm delighted to be at this football Club although the start I've made hasn't been what we wanted. Aside from that I've been pleased with the board and with the potential they see for the Club. It is my job over the next months and years to turn that potential into reality. It's going to be a hard road but the players are giving their all and they need your support. Football is a difficult environment especially when things aren't going well and your support can help give the players confidence. We are progressing and feel we are getting closer to getting that win. Once we get that one win then I think we can then go on a run.'

The event was then opened to the floor. As mentioned above similar questions and answers have been combined for ease of reading and not all questions were asked in the order that follows. Again this is just for ease of reading and structure.

Q. What is happening with Jai Quitongo and Stuart Bannigan?

GC: We are in talks with both players and hopefully both will be part of the future of Partick Thistle.

Q. Has the pre-season target of promotion being readdressed into one of consolidation in this league?

GC: My target is to win on Saturday. I believe if we win one game then we can go on and win two or three. Winning breeds confidence and there is evidence of teams in this league making poor starts and recovering from them. Inverness last season are an example of that last season they had a poor start and then finished 5th just outside the play-offs. While it is still possible to win promotion we will do everything that we can to do that but my target is to try and win football matches and everything we do in training is geared towards doing that.

Q. Is there a problem with the team's mentality?

GC: That was one of the first things we identified and I think the mentality has improved. Confidence though isn't something that you simply give to players. It is something that they need to find themselves. A lot of what we do in training is geared to trying to help them find that confidence because I think the players look uncomfortable on the pitch. We've even had the players speed dating with the aim of them getting to know each other better and trying to turn the uncomfortable into the comfortable. We had the players in the army barracks with the Paras and that wasn't about making the players fitter. It was to try and change their mentality. The players came through that and enjoyed it. Well, enjoyed it afterwards if not during it. It was about putting them into situations as a team that they might not have thought they could overcome. I don't think that all of our problems are tactical but rather in mentality but changing the mentality of 24 different players, with different characters, is not easy but we are doing all that we can to make them more free in how they play'.

Q. What are the plans for January? How many players do you hope to bring in? Do those players you want to replace know that they will be replaced?

GC: I've prepared something for the Board and they will do all they can to get the players we need. There is a plan and a strategy but strategies can quickly change and we have contingency plans in place should that happen. We know what we need and whether a signing is a short or long term signing depends on a number of factors. It's hard to put a definitive figure on the number of players we will bring in but you always want to end a window stronger that you entered it and I'm confident that we will be. Any player we bring in will have to have the right character. By that I mean a player with good mentality, a desire to work and a desire to improve. No, the players that don't fit in our plans haven't been told that. I've talk to the players each day and I have to manage 24 different characters and try to prepare them to win football matches. You come into a job with an idea of the players but once you are in a job it isn't you that decides a player's future. It's football that decides and how a player performs on the pitch.

Q. What scouting system does the Club have?

GC: We have three volunteer scouts based in England who report on players from there. I met with them before the Inverness game to discuss what I am looking for them. Scouting in Scotland, by going to games and watching players and utilising contacts, we do ourselves. Moving forward I think signing foreign players is something that we won't be doing. Our preference is to sign British based players preferably with experience of the Scottish leagues.

Q. Is it a lack of fitness that has been causing us to lose late goals?

GC: I don't think that is down to physical fitness, our fitness is improving, but more physiological frailties. Our training had to change to address that and we have changed our training with greater intensity. Things are improving and will continue to improve.

Q. How are the long term injuries?

GC: Aaron Lennox is training on grass and doing work with Kenny Arthur. Tam O'Ware should be back in March. Coulibaly has had his operation and is working, and annoying everyone, in the gym so he is coming along. Craig Slater we had thought might be a long term injury but he should be three weeks or so and Cammy Bell isn't long term either and is doing some running.

Q. Is Jamie Sneddon now first choice?

GC: He is until Cammy Bell is fit and then there will be competition for that position. Jamie has been excellent. He came in in difficult circumstances against Falkirk and did well. He has shown maturity and composure.

Q. What do you think is James Penrice's best position?

GC: in a back 4 he is a left back and he looks like a natural wing back. He also looks capable of playing on the left side of midfield. He is a player with a bright future.

Q. Miles Storey, do you see him as a striker or a winger?

GC: I see him as a winger and he sees himself as a winger although he can play him through the middle. We would like to see him play more inside. James Forrest at Celtic is an example of what we are looking for. He is a winger but gets into central positions and scores goals. Miles is low on confidence at the moment, I think he would say that himself, but he has enormous talent and enormous speed. With confidence he could be a very dangerous player in this league.

Q. Do you plan to replace Junior Mendes?

GC: We already have with Carlos coming in. He was part of the Academy but worked closely with Junior Mendes on a match day and we wanted to keep that continuity. He's been first class with a real willingness to implement changes. We have GPS so we know every move the players make and their fitness is improving.

Q. Do you watch the opposition ahead of playing them?

GC: We watch 4-5 games. Their last few games and games against sides that perhaps play a similar way that we do. We also study every goal they score and concede. We are pretty detailed in our study of our opponents but we don't pass all the information on to the players. We know the opposition's strengths and weaknesses but our focus is on our strengths and on how we need to play to win the game.

Q. What areas do you think have improved the most since you took over?

GC: My very first training session focused on counter pressing with the main emphasis on winning the ball back quicker and I believe that we are better at that. The biggest improvement though, Morton game aside, has been defensively. No matter what formation we've fielded we have been much more compact. The thing now is to improve our attacking play. Since the Inverness game we have been able to get the ball forward quicker. We now need that final piece to score goals. We need to show more care and composure with our final ball.

Q. You must accept that to go from top six to bottom of the Championship is unacceptable?

GC: I understand the frustration and I accept being bottom of the league is unacceptable. But this is a process. We can't go from one place to another just like that. We are working really hard in training on developing a process that will help us win games. Right now it is the small things, at both ends of the pitch, which are causing us problems. Look at Saturday when Sean McGinty had a header cleared off the line. People say that is unlucky. It's not unlucky. Its instructions not being followed perfectly. In that instance Aidan Fitzpatrick didn't come out far enough and that allowed the defender to drop back to clear off the line. That's what I mean about the small things costing us. I said we've been more compact and we have but we haven't kept a clean sheet but look at the Falkirk game. We restricted them to just four shots on goal, only two on target. Few teams restrict the home side to just 4 shots but of course Falkirk score with one of those shots. That's the small things again. Ultimately that's not good enough and we need to figure out why it keeps happening and that is the process that we are working at. If there is a quicker way that gets us to where we want to be would like to know it.

GC also said 'We have been working on set plays, which are very important in the modern game. The Academy and the reserves are very important. We have seen the development of Aidan Fitzpatrick and Calum Wilson, who have great potential. Ryan McCann is working with the young players with the aim to progress them to the first team'.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed with PG thanking the manager, fellow trustees and in particular the supporters present for their attendance and contributions.