



## Swindon Town Supporters' Trust AGM

Board Room, GW Hotel, 73 Station Road, Swindon. SN1 1DH

27th March 2014

7:00pm – 8:30pm

## **Trust Board**

Stephen Mytton – Chairman

John Ward – Vice-Chairman

Alan Jones – Treasurer / Red Army Fund / Local Residents Liaison

Phil Stokes – Membership Secretary <retired>

Paul Robson – Media and Communications <retired>

Ron Smith – Media and Communications

Simon Brooks – Media and Communications

Cliff Ponting – Secretary and Website Editor

## **Agenda**

1. Introduction and Apologies (5 mins)
2. Chairman's Review of 2013/14 (20 mins)
3. Accounts for 2013/14 (5 mins)
4. Looking ahead to 2014/15 (40 mins including open Q&A throughout)
5. Election of Trust Board (10 mins)
6. Adoption of Supporters Direct New Model Rules for Supporters Trusts (5 mins)
  - 6.1. Model Rules for a Supporters Community Mutual
  - 6.2. Election Policy
  - 6.3. Standing Orders for Board meetings
  - 6.4. Standing Orders for General meeting
  - 6.5. Disciplinary Policy
  - 6.6. Board Membership and Conduct Policy
7. Any Other Business (5 mins)

## **Chairman's Report – Full Version**

2013 was an eventful year at Swindon Town.

Our famously outspoken manager left and was replaced by a lesser known, quieter man who would later quit and be replaced by his assistant. Three different managers in one year.

Off the pitch, our benefactor Andrew Black wanted out, and by the end of the year we'd also have had three different Chairmen and owners.

It had been rumoured that Andrew Black wanted to sell the club, but I don't think anyone was ready for the sudden urgency and the end of January deadline, especially with things going so well on the field of play. The headlines read that Swindon Town were once again considering administration, evoking bad memories of the not-so-distant past, and initiating a sudden revival of fans' interest in the Trust.

When Andrew Fitton's original consortium had originally bought the club, they had proceeded to run it in an open and business-like way, and supporters concentrated exclusively on what was happening on the pitch. All the then-board members could do was to keep the Trust in existence, in case an emergency arose.

At the end of January it was confirmed that the club had been sold to an unnamed consortium, and many raised concerns about who they were, and how the club was going to be run from then on. The Trust's AGM was lively, with a good attendance by Trust members, including the local MP Justin Tomlinson, and former STFC Chairman, Jeremy Wray. It was at this time that I joined the Trust for the first time. I too went along to the AGM and expressed various concerns, and in doing so, found myself drafted onto the board to help out.

My knowledge of Trust activities until then had been mainly limited to the very dark days of the early and mid 'noughties'. In particular, the famous 'Orange' hat campaign, put together to promote the proposed Bill Power takeover, however I was also aware of the loan signings they had funded.

Anyway, as a newly elected Trust board member I attended the 'welcome' meeting with Jed McCrory and Steve Murrall, which was an interesting evening at the Swindon Advertiser offices.

It's safe to say that the questions put to the new incumbents were uncomfortable for them, and the evening did not go as planned. We probably came away with more questions rather than answers.

It had become clear that dealing with the new owners of the club and building a relationship was going to take time, and would require a local contact to attempt bridge-building with Jed McCrory and Co. It was following this meeting that London-based John Ward asked me to step up to replace him as Chairman of the Trust, which I accepted, albeit whilst wondering what I was getting myself into! (Incidentally, at this point I would like to say that John has been a tough act to follow, and I thank him for all of his support over the course of the year).

The first thing I did was send the trust board a summary of my independent views of the Trust, and promote a vision of where improvements could be made. I had garnered opinion from friends and fellow supporters and identified the perceived areas of weakness. I felt positive that we could implement some improvements that would help the Trust be clear about their objectives and to also promote greater communication and help identify with the broader supporter base.

## **I also asked myself - what are the Trust really there for?**

I believe many consider this to be:

- To raise awkward questions and challenge the current club custodians
- To raise funds for players during times when the club is strapped for cash

...and more generally, to get active during perceived 'bad times'

In fact, if you research Supporters' Direct and the message that they send out, and also look at many other Supporters' Trusts around the country (and the World) – there is so much more to it than that.

When taking over as Chairman I wanted to give the trust a fresh start, and simplify the message we are trying to put out. To do this, we very clearly established our SAFE motto on the newly rebranded Trust website

[www.truststfc.com](http://www.truststfc.com)

The website addressed many of the criticisms that I had seen aimed at the Trust, e.g. the anonymity of the board members, the aims and the motives of the trust, the general direction etc. and also provided a platform for better communication – a crucial aspect (backed up by an active Twitter account and mailing list that we also maintain).

The website was intended as a new, fresh start - so now the months have passed, how are we doing in respect of the SAFE message? Let's take a look...

## **Strengthen bonds : Strengthen the bonds between the club and community through regular, open and honest Q&A sessions between the board, Trust STFC and Swindon Town Supporters' Club.**

Alongside the Swindon Town Supporters Club, we've had several Q&A sessions with the previous regime in 2013, and as mentioned already – these were often frosty affairs.

In fact, the recommendation I put forward at the most recent meeting was that the club concentrate on holding regular Q&A's through the two main media channels: BBC Wiltshire phone-in's and the Swindon Adver website.

The idea behind the Q&A meetings was to build a relationship with the club, and to enable open communication between the club and the fans. It gave a chance to respond to the rumours that circulate around the football club, many of which are negative and non-productive.

The problem is, the trust was formed during dark days, and often the questions we posed during the Q&A sessions were counter-productive to the relationship building process. They could be deemed accusatory or even worse, devious and/or geared towards bringing down the current regime.

In truth, they were just questions that fans talk about (and gossip about), and when questions go unanswered they have a tendency to stick around for years. It's accepted that some answers are not suitable for the public domain, be it for contractual or legal reasons, but many questions can be answered with a reasonably constructive response that helps fans get a clearer picture.

We've obviously had a change of ownership since then, however the recent Lee Power Q&A was extremely successful – and I feel this format should continue.

At one of the Q&A meetings the point was raised that the Trust have been pretty much invisible within the club for quite some time and it was hard to argue that the Trust are there for the benefit of the club when you look at the past history, which has lots of confrontational elements – although it should be noted that the combined Trust/Supporters' Club Red Army Fund has helped to secure player loans too.

It made me consider how other people perceive the Trust – are we considered just a bunch of meddlers? Fans with concerns? Powerless? Loony Lefties? Militants?!

I can assure you that since joining and becoming Chairman, I have got to know the other members of the board, and know them as a bunch of regular Town fans that have the clubs best intentions at heart. They are people like me, who give up their free time for no financial reward, and want to ensure that the club is here and stays healthy for future generations.

**Accountability: Encourage the football club to be fully Accountable to the fans and to take proper note of the interests of Swindon Town supporters and the community when making key decisions.**

This element made little progress in the past year, however going forwards into 2014, we have some fresh new ideas that we hope will not only strengthen the bonds between the club and the community, but also promote a more accountable organisation. You can expect to hear more about this in the coming months, so please keep an eye out for our communications.

**Fan representation: Promote the principle of Fan representation on the SwindonTown board of Directors, enabling supporters to have a real say in key decisions within the club.**

Although we talk often of Fan Representation and Accountability, we realise that up to now few football club owners have been willing to concede this. We will continue however to press for this as a long term aim.

**Emergency planning: Establish Emergency plans to address any future ownership crises that may ensue, and continue to work towards the possibility of future fan ownership of the football club.**

We have spent time preparing Emergency plans, i.e. a suitable plan and system to raise funds in a short space of time should the club fall into trouble, even if we are optimistic that there is no threat of this in the foreseeable future.

## **So what next for the Trust?**

The Trust board continues to meet on a monthly basis and has already established contact with Steve Anderson, the new General Manager of the football club. At time of writing we are due to have a meeting with both Steve and Lee Power to discuss our plans for 2014, and it's hoped that together we can work productively and positively towards improving our football club.

We will continue to liaise with Supporters' Direct and other Supporters' Trusts, and put together information that will help guide supporters towards a future which delivers the following:

- A more democratic, transparent and accountable structure for Swindon Town
- A financially sustainable club that lives within it's means
- Improved social value and community benefit
- Greater engagement of stakeholders, generating opportunities for volunteering, democratic participation, skills development and enabling fans to take responsibility

## **How can you help?**

If you have particular skills that you think may help us as we move forwards, please **let us know** and also pass on any constructive comments or ideas.

We may not see the rewards for our efforts for years, but let's work together and secure the future of the club we all love, Swindon Town FC.

Kind Regards,

Stephen Mytton

Chairman, Swindon Town Supporters' Trust

## **2013/2014 Business Plan Review**

### **Strategic Aim 1 - To strengthen the bonds between the Club and the community which it serves and to represent the interests of the community in the running of the Club**

#### **1.1 Establishing a structured relationship with the club**

- Discussions with the new Board, at least one meeting every two months
- Published reports of constructive dialog with club officials

#### **Results**

We started the year with Jed McCrory and Steve Murrall in charge at Swindon Town FC, and managed to achieve four meetings with one or the other throughout the year. This fell slightly short of our target, although a change of ownership towards the end of 2013 played a factor in this.

Whilst every effort was made to have an open and honest dialogue, the meetings never quite achieved this – unfortunately the nature of the questions we asked meant that we were perceived as ‘nosey’ which was definitely not the intention. Whilst some bridges were built, there was very little ‘trust’ either way.

All minutes were published on the Trust website and promoted via Twitter and the occasional newsletter.

#### **Next Steps**

There have been numerous attempts to arrange an initial meeting with Lee Power and/or Steve Anderson (the new STFC General Manager). Unfortunately, at time of writing, we have been unable to achieve this due to the restricted amount of time that Lee Power spends in the country, and the workload upon Steve Anderson.

Despite this, there have been numerous email exchanges with Steve Anderson who remains positive towards the Trust, and Lee Power himself went public with his openness to talk with us when he completed what was a very encouraging Q&A on BBC Wiltshire.

We have agreed that STFC Marketing Executive Adam Wainwright, will act as the official club liaison and we have already completed a successful kick-off meeting.

The emphasis for the year ahead is on building a positive relationship with the club, and focusing on what the Trust can contribute, both financially, and through our extended community network.

It's felt that future Q&As should continue to be held in the public domain, via BBC Wiltshire, as this enables everyone to put a question, either via email, twitter or via telephone.

## 1.2 To increase Trust STFC membership numbers

- Membership as of February 2013 was 129, Increase this to at least 250 by March 2014
- Conduct analysis of current Trust STFC membership – age, gender profiles, professions, skills etc
- Produce induction pack for new Trust members
- Non-Trust member donators to the RAF to be sent an email outlining benefits of becoming a member

### Results

Membership numbers increased in the first months of 2013, however never topped the 200 mark, which is a disappointing total, and these statistics are not good enough. Whilst the Trust enjoys a healthy following of 800+ on it's Twitter account, receives many emails from the general public, and receives fairly regular media publicity - as yet we have failed to turn 'followers' into Members, and that is something we need to work on.

The strategy for achieving this involves changing the public perception of the Trust - from an organisation that people only turn to in troubled times, to an organisation that maintains it's current values, but also makes a much more positive contribution to the everyday running of the football club.

We can do this by raising funds, building bridges between the club and the supporter base, tackling sensitive issues, and building a relationship that will over time evolve into fan representation on the board.

There are many things going on at other football trusts that we can learn from, and our intention is to come up with fresh suggestions and publish related articles and ideas on our website [www.truststfc.com](http://www.truststfc.com)

In addition, whilst we have had conversations about surveying our supporter base, contacting RAF contributors and creating an induction pack, these items have not yet been fulfilled.

### Next Steps

As part of the reshuffle of the existing Trust board, we will be announcing a new Membership secretary, after Phil Stokes stepped down from the role earlier this year. We would like to go on record and thank Phil for his contribution over a period of many years, in which he has always done a sterling job.

As part of the new role, we will be looking to improve the end-to-end member experience.

This will involve the creation of the much awaited induction pack, and also the day-to-day maintenance of the members database – sending “Welcome to the Trust” emails, as well as reminders when memberships are nearing expiration/already expired. These little touches will make a difference to the overall trust experience, and the overall membership figures in the long run.

The Trust has in the past had a membership in excess of 1000, and we have approximately 750 contacts with an email address in our database. The new role will also involved reaching out to lapsed members.

In the coming year, we also intend to approach organisations to provide sponsorship for badges, as we feel it would be a good thing for members to wear on a match day, however this needs further consideration.

**Strategic Aim 2 - To benefit present and future members of the community served by the Club by promoting encouraging and furthering the game of football as a recreational facility, sporting activity and focus for community involvement**

2.1 Plan and run community events for Trust STFC members and non-members

- Completion of at least one themed social evening
- Identify and participate in at least two community events

### **Results**

With the membership numbers we have, we discussed these points and decided to focus on improving the image of the trust until such a time that the membership numbers warrant an event.

### **Next Steps**

We will continue to grow the membership by implementing the overall business plan, and then look to hold various events – we have in the past discussed football quiz nights, Q&As with club legends etc.

We also discussed occasionally making our monthly Trust board meeting an open event, where Members can come along and join in proceedings to some extent, then have a general social gathering afterwards.

**Strategic Aim 3 - To further the development of the game of football nationally and internationally and the upholding of its rules**

3.1 Maintain active participation in Supporters Direct events and meetings

- Reports of Supporters Direct activity communicated to Trust members

### **Results**

On several occasions this year, we published Supporters' Direct information on our website, and promoted via the usual twitter and newsletter channels.

### **Next Steps**

We are looking to recruit a new role within the board, that of Website editor. The role will involve keeping the content of the site 'fresh' and for that we will often utilise Supporters Direct material from newsletters and their website. Where appropriate we can draw comparisons to our own club, and we will of course attribute the content to SD where necessary.

We would also look to have board members attend Supporters' Direct regional meetings, where they can meet and network with other Trust organisation representatives.

### 3.2 Maintain active contact with the Football Supporters Federation

- Establish contact with Football Supporters Federation
- Reports of Football Supporters Federation activity communicated to Trust members

#### Results

We maintain contact with the Football Supporters Federation, but as yet we have failed to achieve sufficient communications to members, and this is something we will look to improve in the coming year.

#### Next Step

This is very similar to the previous point regarding Supporters' Direct, in that we will be looking for a Website editor to find interesting content from the FSF source and publish this to our members.

### 3.3 Maintain ties with the Swindon Town Supporters Club

- Invite Supporters Club representative to the Trust AGM
- Seek a closer relationship with the Supporters Club

#### Results

We have a good relationship with Supporters' Club chairman Roger Bunce, and together we have attended various meetings with the club. There are still many ways in which we can improve the overall relationship and that is what we should continue to work towards. Roger has also been invited to the 2014 AGM.

#### Next Step

The 'FansFirst' initiative that we are hoping to promote in the near future brings both the Supporters' Club and the Trust together under the same umbrella. Both organisations will continue to have their own identities and funds, but to the club we would be looking to be seen as a much tighter unit.

***You can download the 'FansFirst' proposal document by visiting [www.truststfc.com](http://www.truststfc.com)***

Aside from this, the Trust and Supporters' Club currently have an agreement regarding the "Red Army Fund" that has in the past been used to support the funding of loan players. Despite two offers to the football club in recent years, these funds have yet to be taken up, and therefore it's felt that we should discuss the possible re-use of the fund for other community purposes.

Possible fund uses – (for most of which, the money goes to the club anyway)

- Spend it on sponsorship/advertising
- Set up/fund a 'Season of Fame' outside the Town End
- Shirt Sponsor players through funds
- Trust sponsored promotional giveaways for Exec areas
- Hospitality prize draws for Members
- Put towards the staging of further Fundraising evenings
- Kid for a quid Match sponsorships (i.e. subsidise x number of kids tickets)

- Bring a friend Match sponsorships (i.e. subsidise x number of friends tickets)
- Supporters Trust player of the year trophy
- Pay for a voting system – would enable members to vote on various things
- Supporters Trust sponsored “Meet and Greet the fans” Q&A evenings, to include the clubs Chairman, General Manager, Players and Coaches, we could fund additional elements of the evening (e.g. food/music)
- Put some of the funds towards Trust Membership badges, T-shirts etc
- Fund work towards e-books / magazines / videos online (panel format with guests), or podcast
- Quality Membership certificates for Welcome pack
- Kids season ticket sponsorship for the season, to reduce prices
- Video highlights at half time in the Legends Lounge
- Sponsor MOTM award, using text voting system by Members
- Sponsor POTY award, using online voting system by Members
- Keep the money for a future ownership crisis and rename it the “Emergency Planning Fund”
- Insist to the club that they have to spend the money on player loans

In addition to the Supporters’ Club, there may well be pockets of Swindon Town fans dotted around the country. We would like to promote these fans so that others can join in, or perhaps set up their own regional groups (one such group is the “London Reds”, whom we plan to do an article around in the near future).

We also have a number of international Trust supporters around the World (Australia, Germany and others already known) who might benefit from meeting up with other Town fans overseas.

#### **Strategic Aim 4 - To encourage the Club to take proper account of the interests of its supporters and of the community it serves in its decisions**

##### **4.1 Establish a new annual supporters’ survey to influence future Trust strategies with the results made public**

- Develop survey questions, promote survey, publish results with Trust response to findings, leading to actions discussed with club

#### **Results**

This was not achieved to its full potential this year – we did run a series of ‘Twitter Polls’ asking questions of the regular fanbase, which proved a popular exercise, however this is not sufficient for what we want to achieve and we need to do better on this.

#### **Next Step**

As has been mentioned in previous points, we are looking to reshape the current board, and one of the Board members will be given the task of surveying the membership on a regular basis. The ‘Twitter Polls’ will also continue, however they will more than likely be linked to matters on the field, and perhaps light-hearted.

#### 4.2 Scrutinise and support as appropriate the Club's plans for the County Ground redevelopment

- Secure a meeting with the club to discuss their plans for a redevelopment following the takeover

##### **Results**

During his recent Q&A, Lee Power expressed a view that he is not interested in developing the County Ground, however we will of course monitor events and keep in touch with the club where appropriate.

Back in November 2013, the Trust nominated the County Ground as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). In January 2014 Swindon Borough Council approved the listing (only the second successful nomination of a community asset within the Swindon Borough Council area).

The ACV now means that should the owners of the Stadium propose to sell the ground, the Trust must first be notified, and we can then exercise a right to bid - which would place a six month moratorium on any sale to enable time to put together our own community bid for the Stadium.

The approval to list the County Ground as an ACV places Swindon Town and the Trust at the front of a growing movement that has seen successful ACV nominations to protect grounds including Old Trafford, Anfield, Ewood Park, St Andrews, Portman Road and the Kassam Stadium.

##### **Next Step**

Despite the message from Mr Power on the BBC Wiltshire Q&A, as soon as we can get a meeting with the club, we will ask further questions around the possibility of any further development of the Stratton Bank and other areas of the ground.

#### 4.3 Support the Safe Standing Campaign led by the Football Supporters Federation

- Present the case for Safe Standing with the club and notes reported
- Organise a visit to Peterborough or Villa should their trials commence

##### **Results**

We discussed this with former General Manager Steve Murrall and Mark Isaacs (Stadium Manager) at the Business Plan presentations, and there was no immediate plan to initiate a safe standing area of the ground.

##### **Next Step**

With the recent movements in the Football Supporters' Federation "Safe Standing" campaign, we should also get a response from the current club management on whether this is an area they wish to venture into. If there is sufficient interest, we will arrange a visit to Bristol City, where an example of safe standing is in operation.

## **Strategic Aim 5 - To encourage and promote the principle of supporter representation on the board of any company owning or controlling the Club and ultimately to be the vehicle for democratic elections to the board**

5.1 Explore the opportunities available to the Trust to discuss and promote the principle of supporter representation on the Board with the club

- Presentations delivered and outcome of meetings published

### **Results**

This was briefly discussed with the previous management team, however did not progress to a stage where presentations were considered appropriate.

### **Next Step**

The Trust needs to evolve into an organisation that maintains it's current values, but also makes a much more positive contribution to the everyday running of the football club. We can do this by raising funds, building bridges between the club and the supporter base, tackling sensitive issues, and building a relationship that will over time evolve into fan representation on the board.

5.2 Secure the Trust a 5% proxy stake in the club

- Meeting with the new Board and notes of meeting reported

### **Results**

At the previous AGM, it was explained that purchasing shares in the football club is a very risky business. The trust has in the past invested £11k into the purchase of shares, however these were diluted by a later Andrew Black investment and rendered almost worthless. For this reason, there was very little movement on this item.

### **Next Step**

With previous experience in mind, it's unlikely that the Trust will commit any of their future funds towards this aim, however we will continue to improve our image within the club to a point where Fan Representation enables the fans to have a say in the running of their own club.

**Strategic Aim 6 - To promote, develop and respect the rights of members of the community served by the Club and people dealing with the Society as set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, having regard in particular to the need to provide information to members and conduct the affairs of the Society in accessible and appropriate ways**

#### 6.1 Hold regular Trust STFC Board meetings

- Board dates to be agreed for April – December 2013
- Minutes of Board meetings published to all members

#### **Results**

The Trust board met every month throughout 2013 and early 2014 on the first Thursday of every month. Minutes have been produced for each meeting and are available to members upon request – these would have been issued, however we would like to restrict the notes to Members only and as yet we cannot provide this facility.

#### **Next Step**

The future plan is to redevelop the website to include a proper 'Members Area' – pages that are restricted to members only. Once confirmed, we will place the meeting minutes within the Members area on the website and issue comms to the membership as appropriate.

#### 6.2 Gain members views of what they want the Trust to do on their behalf

- Improve contact with Trust members
- Introduce yearly questionnaire for Trust members on its activities
- Invite guests to attend Board meetings

#### **Results**

The trust has improved communications with Members over the past year, mainly through the Twitter account which has been used to publicise articles that we've created for the Trust website.

Newsletters have been hit and miss – whilst several have been created we have discovered that the paid-for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that we use is not a reliable tool for delivery. We have noted that various people did not receive the emails we sent out. In addition to this, we have been sending newsletters to people whose memberships have expired a long time ago.

#### **Next Step**

We are currently reviewing the viability of the current CRM system, however the database has now been tidied and accurately reflects those members that are active or expired. Going forwards, we will have a board member dedicated to sending the Trust newsletter to active members on a monthly basis.

In addition, we will continue to add interesting content to our site, and to communicate more generally with the membership and wider audience via the Twitter account. We will also look into the worth of having a Facebook account and use that as another tool to reach out to the public.

Questionnaires have been mentioned in previous points, and will be addressed in this year, and we will continue to invite guests to our monthly board meeting on occasion.

### 6.3 To identify and co-opt additional active members into Trust activities

- Increase Trust board membership
- Welcome non-board members into working groups to establish and implement Trust strategies

#### **Results**

Email and twitter communications continue to identify active and interested members. Andrew Deuchar attended our October meeting and played his part in proceedings, he has since returned on a number of occasions and has now been formally accepted onto the Board.

#### **Next Step**

As has been mentioned already, we will soon reshuffle the board, and that may mean that new roles are identified that we will look to the membership to fill.

One of those roles will be to reach out to the current membership and establish working groups that can discuss items either online or in-person. We are very keen to involve the membership in everything we do.

### 6.4 Plan for the 2014 AGM

- Book venue
- Promote more Trust members to stand for election to the Board

#### **Results**

The 2014 AGM was discussed at the January, February and March monthly meetings.

#### **Next Step**

As part of the meetings, the board decided to hold the AGM in a private room at the GW pub, opposite Swindon Train station. This was the venue for last year's AGM and proved a popular choice.

### 6.5 Hold AGM

- Publicise and hold AGM

#### **Results**

The AGM is scheduled for Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March, at the GW Pub in Swindon.

#### **Next Step**

The venue is to be booked, and the event to be publicised via Twitter, Newsletters and the Trust Website.

#### 6.6 Prepare an annual Business Plan to set out the primary objectives and associated deliverables for the Trust

- Publish a Business Plan following AGM
- Second edition Business Plan to contain long term objectives and deliverables, financial planning, further governance and media strategy in accordance with Supporters Direct guide

#### **Results**

A new version of this business plan will be issued following the AGM. It will include various new ideas that the trust have been discussing in recent months.

#### **Next Step**

Business plan to be updated, with amendments and additions.

Some ideas include:

- "Red Army" Supporters' Trust Ale (already discussed with Arkells, more complex than first thought)
- Town legends to become honorary members, Don Rogers being the first.
- Trust merchandise a possibility in the future

#### 6.7 Hold a mid-term review of the Business Plan

- Review and publish outcome to all Trust members

#### **Results**

The business plan was reviewed every month as part of the Trust board meeting, however results were not published to members.

#### **Next Step**

The database has now been tidied and accurately reflects those members that are active or expired. With this in mind, we will introduce a new members' area on the website and the board meeting minutes and business plan tracker will be added to the website on a monthly basis.

#### 6.8 Publish accounts and create Financial Plan

- Publish Accounts
- Adoption of Financial Plan as Appendix to Trust Business Plan

#### **Results**

The monthly board meeting includes a review of the accounts.

#### **Next Step**

As per the previous point, the database has now been tidied and accurately reflects those members that are active or expired. When the new members' area is in place on the website, it will be updated every month to reflect the financial plan and current results.

## 6.9 Establishment of a media and communications strategy

- Establish a Communications working group to formulate a Media Strategy and secure its implementation
- Adoption of Media Strategy as Appendix to Trust Business Plan

### **Results**

The trust has requested both Swindon Advertiser column space and regular radio appearances on BBC Wiltshire. Both parties have been open to this idea, however the Trust as a whole needs to construct a forward planning PR view and work towards an organised approach to publicity.

### **Next Step**

As part of the board reshuffle, we will look to get the PR angle better organised and take this idea forwards.

### **Other Aims – Not included above**

## 7.1 Promotion of the Trust and its activities

- Advertising within the Country Ground on advertising hoardings
- Advertising in the Club matchday programme
- Sponsorship of Club players / staff
- Leaflet distribution on matchdays

### **Results**

Given the relationship with the club throughout the last year, there was previously no desire to pay any trust money out for advertising or sponsorship ( In previous times sponsorship had been very generously subsidised by John Ward, the former Trust Chairman).

### **Next Step**

Depending on the views of the Members, it may be that some portion of the Red Army Fund could be used for this purpose, or alternatively a FansFirst fund could also be used.

## 7.2 Publish communications to all Trust members and to the wider community

- Maintain and regularly update TrustSTFC.com website
- More effectively use social media to promote Trust activities and increase 'followers'
- Publish a Trust newsletter to be circulated to members via email on a bimonthly basis
- Publish press releases, emails and other comms to members and the general public as appropriate
- Review establishing an online forum to improve communications between the Board and Trust members
- Explore publishing a Trust article in the Club matchday programme on a regular basis
- Secure agreement with TheWashbag.com to publish Trust press releases and newsletters
- Undertake consultation of the draft of the Business Plan with Trust members

### **Results**

As has been mentioned, the Trust website was updated and has been maintained with regular updates throughout the year.

The Trust twitter account following has also increased substantially as a result of regular 'tweeting' by the board.

Our newsletter was sent out only three times, which is only half of the amount we intended to send – we also experienced some technical issues that meant not all members received a copy.

Various press releases were released throughout the year.

Regarding online forums, the matchday programme, the washbag.com and business plan consultations – these items were not progressed following further discussions.

### **Next Step**

We will further develop the Trust website to incorporate a members area of the website, and also appoint a website editor to ensure that the content remains 'fresh'. We will also seek to increase our twitter following by publishing and promoting interesting articles for the general public.

Newsletters will be allocated to one of the board members to maintain and send on a regular basis, however there is an initial task to identify a new email solution that will ensure they can be sent effectively.

7.3 Operate and promote the Red Army Fund (RAF) to provide financial assistance to the Club through funding of player registrations

- Promote RAF within the matchday programme
- Regularly update the RAF fund total on the Trust website
- Expand information on the Trust website with previous expenditures by the Club using funds

#### **Results**

Due to uncertainty around the ownership of Swindon Town Football Club, activities around the Red Army Fund were not progressed during the previous year.

#### **Next Step**

We are currently in discussions to understand the best use of the Red Army Fund and will be communicating with the Membership on this in the near future. In addition, when the new members' area is available on the website, all of the RAF details will be published in the secure area.

7.4 Establish a permanent matchday presence at the County Ground

- Commission a feasibility study to explore options for permanent matchday premises at the County Ground / redevelopment

#### **Results**

We researched this item via various Trusts around the country, and discovered that the cost of temporary stands can be prohibitive. Whilst there are cheaper options, we do not want to put over a less than professional image.

#### **Next Step**

The Trust needs to make significant progress on the other items in this business plan, and establish much clearer targets and objectives before we can justify a matchday presence. This remains a longer-term goal however, so it will remain part of the business plan going forwards.



## THE COUNTY GROUND ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE LOCAL POLICY AGREEMENT

Swindon Borough Council approved the listing of the County Ground, home of Swindon Town Football Club, as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) under the Localism Act (2011) on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014. The implications of the ACV status are as follows:

- The listing will be registered as a local land charge and a restriction will be registered against the property at the Land Registry in the following terms: “No transfer or lease is to be registered without a certificate signed by a conveyance that the transfer or lease did not contravene section 95(1) of the Localism Act 2011.”
- The property will remain on the list for a period of five years – until 6<sup>th</sup> January 2019 – unless removed or amended in the meantime.
- In the immediate time following the listing, the owner of the Property has the right to request the Council to review its decision to list the property and any such request must have been made by 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014. No request was made by the owner in this period.
- Should the owner wish to sell the freehold or leasehold (of at least 25 years) they will be required to first notify the Council. In the case of the County Ground, this would mean that Trust STFC would then have six weeks to lodge a non-binding expression of interest. This would bring a further moratorium period of four and half months (making six months in total) to delay the sale and enable community interest groups sufficient time to prepare and raise money to bid for the property, potentially in competition with other interested parties. There is no legislative requirement to prescribe the owner of the asset to accept any bid arising from a community interest group.
- For a protected period of 18 months, (running from the date the owner notified the local authority of their intention to sell), the owner will not again be subject to a further moratorium.

Swindon Town Football Company Limited’s long-term lease of the County Ground expired on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 and is presently rolling on an annual arrangement with the freehold owners – Swindon Borough Council – under the pre-existing terms. Because the club’s tenancy is outside of a long-term lease – defined as at least 25 years – and the agreement is rolling there is a real possibility that, in the immediate future, the freehold or leasehold will be sold; thereby enacting the requirements of section 95(1) of the Localism Act 2011.



'TrustSTFC' – the Swindon Town Community Mutual Limited – recommends that the preparation of this Local Policy Agreement establishes the framework under which the Trust will monitor and use the ACV provisions in the course of the business of the Society.

**a) In utilising the provisions available to TrustSTFC under the Act, the Trust agrees to:**

- i. Support the continued principal use of the County Ground by Swindon Town Football Club;
- ii. Support the leasehold or freehold ownership of the County Ground by Swindon Town Football Company Limited in a manner appropriate to sustaining the principal use;
- iii. Work with the owner(s) to facilitate any opportunities arising for the whole or partial redevelopment of the County Ground in connection with its principal use as a football stadium, that will benefit Swindon Town Football Club and the community;
- iv. Apply to amend, when appropriate, the extent of the asset subject of the ACV should it be, or proposed to become not part of its main use, or non-ancillary to the principal use as a football stadium, under section 88(1) of the Act;
- v. Apply to amend, when appropriate, the extent of the asset subject of the ACV should additional land and buildings become part of the main use, or has recently been to further the social well-being or social interests of the local community and it could do so in the future under section 88(1) of the Act; and
- vi. Apply to maintain the ACV, when appropriate, prior to the expiry of the five year period.

**b) In preparing for a 'right to bid', TrustSTFC will:**

- i. Ensure that the Trust has the legal powers to both fund and acquire a leasehold or freehold of the asset;
- ii. Consider whether to explore what offer would be attractive to the owners in terms of its value and security;
- iii. Consider whether it is appropriate to prepare a business case for the acquisition of the asset and review this on a regular basis;
- iv. Consider means to secure investment in principle prior to the asset coming to the market; and
- v. Consider working in partnership with the present freeholder owner Swindon Borough Council and the football club to bring the asset into the ownership of the club and its community.



**c) In exercising a decision to lodge a non-binding expression of interest within the initial six-week period to inform the owner of a request to be treated as a potential bidder, the Society Board:**

- i. Shall reserve the decision whether to inform the owner of a request to be treated as a potential bidder to the members of the Society at a Special General Meeting; and thereafter
- ii. Shall be appointed by the members of the Society to fulfil, or otherwise, the bidding process within the 'Full Moratorium Period'; and
- iii. Shall continue to use all the Society's powers in exercising a decision to submit a bid to the owner within the 'Full Moratorium Period'.

**The County Ground Assets of Community Value Local Policy Agreement was approved by the TrustSTFC board on \_\_\_\_ March 2014 and ratified by members at the AGM on \_\_\_\_ March 2014**

**SIGNATURE OF MEMBERS**

**FULL NAMES**

**DATE**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**SIGNATURE OF SECRETARY**

**FULL NAME**

**DATE**

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