

Proposal for future of Supporters Board, January 2022

At the meeting of January 8, it was suggested that Supporters Board members question their own attendance at such meetings.

The club were asked to review options for the Supporters Board in order to create a terms of reference.

The Fan Led Review of Football Governance makes some specific references to supporter engagement including the use of a Supporters Advisory Board. While its recommendations have not yet been implemented, using the document as guidance it suggests a strategic recommendation of consultation with supporters via a Shadow Board.

The following details are extracted directly from the review

7.22 Having considered various models and approaches, it is recommended that the mandated Shadow Board should:

- a) Operate according to written terms of reference registered with IREF, which should be based on a standard IREF template (which may be varied to allow flexibility according to local circumstances if so requested by supporters and the club);
- b) Consist of 5 – 12 members appointed according to a democratic process;
- c) Have a Chair appointed from among its members on an seasonal basis;
- d) Have reserved seats for representatives from key supporter groups including: representatives of the body holding the Golden Share; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion representatives; youth supporters; and international supporters (if relevant);
- e) Members should be subject to retirement by rotation, ensuring both that there is a regular turnover of members but also that at any one time there will be a number of experienced members on the Shadow Board; and
- f) Hold at least quarterly meetings with club executives, with guaranteed attendance from the club CEO or equivalent twice per year

7.23 The aim of the Shadow Board would be to improve transparency between the club and its supporters. It is also aimed to offer supporters an opportunity to be consulted on some of the major decisions being taken within the club and for the club to take advantage of consulting with some of its most important and committed stakeholders. Given the uniquely important status of fans and the potential benefit to clubs of better consultation, the default expectation should be that the supporters are consulted, via the Shadow Board, on all material 'non football/off pitch' business and financial matters.

7.24 In order to ensure productive, open, discussions the Shadow Board members will need to enter into a confidentiality agreement with the club to ensure certain commercially sensitive discussions remain private. This should allow for information

on most matters to be shared with the wider fan base, whilst also allowing a space for the Shadow Board to help the club by consulting confidentially on certain key matters.

7.25 It is recommended that the Shadow Board be engaged and consulted on (without limitation):

- a) The club's strategic vision and objectives
- b) Short, medium and long-term business plans;
- c) Operational matchday issues of concern to supporters;
- d) Any proposals relating to club heritage items;
- e) Marketing, merchandising and sponsorship plans and performance. This would not involve consultation or approval on specific contracts or proposals but, for example, the club Commercial Director should meet the Shadow Board at least once per season to explain the club's commercial strategy and how the club is performing in relation to such strategy. Similarly, the club Marketing Director would be expected to present once per season on the club's marketing strategy and performance;
- f) Stadium issues and plans; and
- g) The club's plan for broader supporter engagement.

7.26 As part of the consultation process Shadow Board meetings should also receive suitably redacted club Board papers (including any parent company boards that make relevant decisions on club operations) in advance of any meetings. This would accord with common practice for Shadow Boards in other industries.

7.27 It is important to emphasise two aspects of the Shadow Boards. Firstly, they should be seen as a minimum level of consultation, and clubs are encouraged to adopt additional mechanisms as appropriate for their circumstances. Secondly, the Shadow Board will not be a forum for supporters to discuss football matters with the club (e.g. formations, player performance). Meetings will be solely focused on the business side of the club.

Proposal

It is clear that the way the current Supporters Board works is already quite close to replicating the recommendations set out by the Fan Led Review of Football Governance.

If we are to follow the recommendations to the letter the following options should be considered:

1. Reducing the number of participants from 14 as current down to 12.
 - a. Of those 12, it is suggested that 4 spaces should be ring-fenced for:
 - i. Supporters Club representative
 - ii. Supporters Trust representative
 - iii. Black Bank representative
 - iv. Women's supporters representative

- b. Within the 12:
 - i. At least 1 space on the board should be for EDI representation
 - ii. At least 1 space on the board should be for youth supporters representation
2. Representatives should be subject to retirement by rotation, therefore fixed terms are needed for seats, which could be a mixture of 1, 2 or 3 years.
3. Representatives should be democratically elected
 - a. This could take place by a vote amongst supporters on mailing lists via email or in person. It is suggested that a ticket purchasing history that includes any ticket purchased within the last 12 months is enough to allow you to be registered for a vote.
 - b. An alternative suggestion is that potential Shadow Board nominees receive 20 supportive signatures from Doncaster Rovers supporters (not including existing Shadow Board members). Once 20 signatures have been received, then the existing Shadow Board vote whether to elect that person.
4. The Shadow Board should elect its own chair each season.

Given the feedback from the last meeting and through individual conversations, it is clear that there is a will from the current members of the Supporters Board that they can do and want to do more. Therefore in addition to the proposals above it is proposed that:

1. Shadow Board members should be made public to other supporters.
2. Shadow Board members should sign a confidentiality agreement
3. Shadow Board members should be able and willing to communicate information to the public domain that is agreed falls outside of any confidentiality agreement as agreed by the Shadow Board.
4. Shadow Board members represent the club, therefore behaviour in person and on social media should fall under the same guidance as employees and other representatives.