

WISA AGM 30/05/2002

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Thursday, 30th May, 2002

Wimbledon Community Centre, St. George's Road, Wimbledon

1. Introduction

Kris thanked everyone for coming and explained that whilst the focus of the meeting was our reaction to the FA Commission decision two days earlier, certain formalities had to be dealt with first.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Ruth & Chris Abrahams, Charlie Bell, Barbara Dunford, Michael Dunford, Alan Edwards, Paul Fletcher, Joanne & Pat Fotheringham, David Godfrey, Mark Hillyer, Tim Hillyer, Rupert Jeffery, Trevor Pearce, Neil Presland, Danny Rye, Eddy Rye, Elaine Taylor, Stephanie Timms and Valerie Webster.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meetings (OGM on 24th January and EGM on 6th April) were agreed and there were no matters arising.

4. Membership fees for 2002/03

The meeting agreed to maintain the existing fee levels, i.e:

§ Adult £5

§ Concessions £3

§ Household £10

§ Life £100

5. Treasurer's report

Nicole Hammond summarised our position for the period April 2001 to March 2002 as c.£32,000 received and approximately £27,500 spent, the significant items being:

Income

Membership 6,763

Donations 17,443

Merchandise 6,191

Expenditure

Aeroplane & banner 675

ICM survey 4,560

Stadium design & expenses 606

Fans Utd day 3,640

Balloons & demo items 1,225

"Community thing" & advertising 5,675

T-shirts (various) 4,015

Printing, postage & sundries 4,580

Standing orders were launched last August and Nicole thanked all those who had contributed in this way. This is generating a regular income of c.£500 per month and has really made a difference.

6. Examiner of accounts' report

Erik Samuelson reported that he and Heather Jackson had examined the accounts and "they were fine". He thanked the current Treasurer for the work done and offered his best wishes to her successor.

7. Re-appointment of examiner of accounts

The meeting voted in favour of Erik Samuelson and Heather Jackson being re-appointed account examiners for next year.

8. Election of committee

The following were elected to the committee:

Chair Kris Stewart

Vice Chair Nicole Hammond

Secretary Colette Mulchrone

Treasurer Peter Bowles

Publicity Officer Kevin Rye

Webmaster Ronan Warde

Membership Secretary Mags Hutchinson

Newsletter Editor Simon Wheeler

Club Liaison Officer Graeme Boulton

General Committee: Charlie Bell Mark Lewis

Joe Blair Laurence Lowne

Karen D'Amico Richard McGregor
Rob Dunford Ian Pollock
Sean Fox Charlie Talbot
Marc Jones Lee Willett

9. Future plans

FA Commission decision

Two days earlier, on 28 May, the FA Commission had given permission for WFC Ltd to move to Milton Keynes. Kris explained his understanding of how this process worked. The Commission was appointed by the FA, at the request of the Football League (FL). It sat as if it were the board of the FL and had all the powers of the FL. The FL and FA made representations to the Commission stating their opposition to the move but have said they have no choice but to accept the Commission's decision.

Today (30 May) the FA released the text of the Commission's findings. A quick perusal shows the Commission effectively accepts the argument that WFC Ltd is in a unique or exceptional position. WISA's lawyers are studying the document to see if we have any grounds for a legal appeal.

In addition, we will raise a complaint with the Independent Football Commission (IFC), a body set up by the government. The IFC can accept a complaint from us, review what has happened and give an opinion.

Establish a new club

Since football's governing bodies keep claiming there is no right of appeal and a legal challenge raises further obstacles, not least the length of time such processes can take, some supporters have proposed starting a new club. This club could take its place in Ryman League division 2 next season under a ground-sharing arrangement with another club in the vicinity.

Proposals

The three proposals tabled for tonight's revised agenda are therefore:

- (a) Whilst under the current ownership of WFC Ltd, we do not attend any Wimbledon games next season, wherever they may be played and whatever the team may be called (unless part of a protest)
- (b) We should continue to fight Koppel's plans for Milton Keynes
- (c) We should work towards the formation of a new football club to join the appropriate league next season

It was pointed out that (b) and (c) are not mutually exclusive and discussion was opened up to the floor.

There was a lengthy and impassioned debate on the merits of these strategies, particularly (b) and (c).

Some felt creating a new club now was defeatist and premature until all avenues had been explored. There was also a view that this would play into Koppel's hands and be misinterpreted by the media as us giving up or no longer caring, particularly as the new MK stadium is far from ready. Other specific ideas included:

§ The Commission's decision could be challenged by a judicial review

§ Gjelsten had appeared on Norwegian TV saying they were now prepared to spend £40m on a new stadium in MK. This refutes their claims of poverty and could be used to challenge the decision

§ Take the campaign into MK itself. The proposed stadium has no planning permission; we should therefore put pressure on local politicians, etc.

Those in favour of immediately setting up a new club highlighted the following:

§ Time scale: if a new club is a viable prospect for next season, there is very limited time in which to make the necessary arrangements

§ The alternative, given that we do not want to watch Koppel's team next season, is no football at all

§ As the season wore on, how many would continue going to MK or wherever Koppel's team is playing to carry on protests from the car park?

§ A new club would give us something positive to concentrate on, rather than the past 11 years of negativity

§ a new club is probably more achievable than defeating Koppel

There was also a middle ground, with people advocating setting up a new club and continuing to fight Koppel, e.g:

§ Lee Willett stressed that with 21 people on the WISA committee, 10 on the Trust committee and the several hundred present this evening, we should have the resources to do both.

§ The point was made that we have to contemplate the possibility we might lose our fight against Koppel's plan and any sensible person would have a fallback position. Having our own team established would offer the supporters we are trying to persuade not to go to MK/Selhurst a credible alternative.

There was also discussion on precisely what we are fighting Koppel for. The key things were seen to be the name, badge, history and colours.

Vote

A vote was called on proposals (a) and (b). Both were convincingly carried.

Proposal (c) to form a new club

Kris temporarily relinquished the chair to address this issue from the floor. He explained that, as Chair, he did not usually express his views but would like to give his opinion on this occasion. Like others, he had been fighting hard but believed we now find ourselves in a situation where there is no appeal within football - the FA and FL agree with us and the IFC may also agree but this does not make any difference. Therefore, whilst he did not intend allowing Koppel an easy time, he wanted to watch some football, without having to go to Selhurst or

giving Koppel's club any more money.

Instead, Kris said, we now have an opportunity to build a club. It will be really hard but the club is about us and our traditions. He had been talking to Ivor Hellor and was fairly confident we can find somewhere to play and can start playing this August in Ryman 2. If we carry on fighting and Koppel's club dies, then we will take it back. We will fight him for the name, history and badge but we already know that the history is ours - we don't need a judge to tell us we are Wimbledon Football Club!

Kris resumed the chair and debate continued, new themes including:

§ Merton Council - they said they would pursue Plough Lane whether WFC came back or not. What is their current position? Kris explained he was meeting Andrew Judge the following evening.

§ What would happen if we defeated Koppel and ended up with two clubs? There were suggestions that one club could act as a feeder to the other.

§ This is not just our fight with Koppel about relocation - this is a concern for the whole of football. Other league clubs should be encouraged to call an extraordinary general meeting of the FL and Northampton Town, Luton and Rushen & Diamonds in particular should be persuaded to consider a formal challenge.

§ Information on non-league football - Trevor Williams explained that Ryman League Division 2 is three promotions below Conference level. In Ryman 2 last season the highest crowd was 248, with an average gate of 75. Player costs were minimal, being paid expenses only in the region of £30 per match. The Ryman League is re-organising next year and it is in our interests to join now as there is the danger that ground requirements may alter to our disadvantage.

A formal motion was proposed that we specify exactly what we are fighting Koppel for, namely, the name, badge, history and colours.

Vote

Proposal (c) - set up a new club

Proposal (d) - we fight Koppel specifically for the name, badge, history and colours.

Both were resoundingly carried.

10. Any other business

a) It had been rumoured that Koppel was looking for another league ground to share at but no club is interested. In addition, it has been claimed Koppel asked the police for permission to play at Selhurst behind closed doors but the police refused. Kris confirmed both stories were true to the best of his knowledge.

b) The meeting was asked to ratify that we ask every football fan in the country not to attend any match involving their team playing away to Koppel's team. The meeting agreed.

c) Ivor Hellor asked for a straw poll to determine how many people would be interested in buying season tickets for our new club. The answer was given with an overwhelming show of hands. Ivor then described the current funding dilemma. In order to secure a ground-share agreement for next season, we need to be able to commit £20,000 within 2 weeks. Whilst the Trust had the funds and (hopefully) members would consent, a special meeting to agree this could not be convened before the deadline. It was therefore proposed to ask supporters to send cheques for £200 to the Dons Trust as soon as possible for "season ticket advances" to provide the necessary financing.

11. Pub

The meeting having concluded, many repaired to the Wibbas Down (Wetherspoons) for further conversation.