

The meeting was chaired by Andy Roberts and attended by 10 current members of NTFC Supporters Ltd. A total of 24 proxy forms had been received via the chair.

### 1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Ian Atkins, Andrew Little, Bob Payne and Bob Souster.

### 2. Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting

Copies had been made available for those present and Bob Clarke proposed that these be adopted, the proposal was seconded by John Morgan and carried 33 against 0.

### 3. Matters Arising

There were none.

### 4. Chairman's Report

Trust Chair Andy Roberts addressed the meeting. He said:-

*'The Supporters Trust has experienced a challenging year, the biggest disappointment being the failure to build a relationship with the football club's owners David Bower and Kelvin Thomas.*

*Following a difficult 2022, which I spoke about last year, I personally felt it important to try and build bridges with club chairman Kelvin Thomas, alongside Ashley Brown from the Football Supporters' Association. I thought I owed it to members and the wider fan base and, while the meeting was not altogether productive, the chairman made it clear to both myself and the FSA that he would sit down again with the Trust following the election of a new board.*

*In February last year, six new members were elected to the Trust board to help shape a fresh mandate going forward. In July, following the outcome of the Judicial Review between West Northamptonshire Council and Cillarda - over whether or not the council had followed correct process in provisionally agreeing the sale of land to the club's development company - the Trust offered the club a meeting.*

*But we were firmly batted back by a letter which contained a litany of lies and misinformation. So it appeared that the club had never had any intention of brokering a future relationship with the Trust, this in spite of a new board, the introduction of a social media policy and the organisation of community-based activities which sat neatly alongside an update on the stand and land deal.*

Again last year, I said that I would welcome the club leading on directing an appropriate way for all Cobblers fans to communicate with each other on social media platforms but nothing was forthcoming from the club, presumably as it suits their narrative to influence and present the Trust as being anti-club. Certainly they have sought to marginalise us and discredit us at every turn for having the temerity to ask some awkward questions over the years – as any self-respecting Supporters Trust should do.

We remain in contact with many Supporters Trusts given the ongoing debate on the fan-led review – interestingly at Swindon Town, the Trust there has been accused of being too cosy with the club's owners. It is a very difficult balance to achieve.

We should finally see the land deal signed off in the coming months and we trust the East Stand will be completed to a satisfactory standard by the present owners as part of a mutually-robust enabling agreement with West Northamptonshire Council. The Trust, alongside the vast majority of the club's fans, has always favoured prioritising the completion of the East Stand above all else.

But the team's excellent progress in League One, coupled with the biggest home attendances for 55 years, has brought the debate of stadium expansion and increasing the capacity of the North and South stands into greater focus.

The current board could likely now prefer that the two ends of the stadium should be addressed first and foremost and so we will be engaging with our members, and the wider fan base, within a few weeks to gauge opinion – something we last did as part of our Football Conversation three years ago.

To that end, please find enclosed some notes around the concept of an Infrastructure Foundation which has the potential to benefit the club. Is this something you think could work at Northampton Town?

In closing, can I thank you for your continuing support – if you can, please support our Club 500 and Cobblers Travel fundraisers if you do not already do so.

If you have any questions please contact us at [ntfctrust1992@gmail.com](mailto:ntfctrust1992@gmail.com) and if you are on email and haven't given us permission to use your email address, please email us and 'opt in'.

*It makes life very much easier! Our town, our club and your Supporters Trust. Up the Cobblers!'*

## **5. Secretary's Report**

Acting Secretary John Morgan reported:-

*'Between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023 there were 10 board meetings.*

*Nine of the meetings were held on Zoom. One special board meeting was held in person at the Obelisk Centre in Northampton.*

*Attendance at Board meetings was steady throughout the year, with the average attendance being 75 per cent.*

*The Board welcomed 12 visitors over the course of the 10 meetings.*

*Since our last AGM, the Board has agreed to reduce the maximum number of board members from 15 to 12.*

*Since our last AGM, there have been five resignations of board members.*

*These were from Tom Packer (March), Jeffrey Roy (October), Rob Duncan and Heidi Green (both December) and Bhyll Stephenson (January).*

*If acceptable to the board, I am happy to go forward as the Secretary of the Supporters Trust.'*

## **6. Treasurer's Report**

Bob Clarke reported to the meeting:-

*'The accounts year ended 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 are being prepared with Clifford Towers, the Independent Reporting Accountants, in accordance with the requirements for Industrial and Provident Societies.*

*There is no requirement to have accounts fully audited and the board considers the accountants report and opinion sufficient to provide transparency and credibility.*

*Our income in the financial year was £2,897 as shown in the Trust's main Co-op account, plus £8,685 in the Club 500 account at Nat West – a total of £11,582, up from £4,449 last year.*

*We are still trying to get full and final control of the other two active Trust accounts at Nat West - the Trust Travel account, which stood at £18,023 this time last year, and the dormant Business Reserve account £80.*

*It requires a change of signatories to remove three former board members from the accounts.*

*This has proved difficult owing to incompetence on the part of the Nat West and intransigence on the part of the Trust's former Treasurer.*

*The Trust has lodged three complaints with the Nat West – in respect of the active accounts mentioned above and also an historic dormant Trust account which will shortly be closed.*

*The complaints will hopefully be resolved in the coming weeks – as a full accounting picture cannot be presented at this meeting, I recommend full information be re-circulated to members when available and that adoption of the accounts be deferred until then.*

*Expenditure was £6,042 of which travel was £1,615 and merchandise £2000.*

*Accountancy fees doubled, as forecast last year, at £960.*

*Meetings of the Trust Board continued to be held on Zoom, which proved successful, and the cost was modest at £176.48.*

*There was a small net surplus for the financial year of £1,097.82.*

*Working on the provisional figures, our balance sheet improved through the combined value of the active bank account balances for Club 500 £20,602.89, Trust Travel total £18,023.77 (provisional) and Co-op £48,536.51.*

*Fixed assets of £71,954 is the shares of £1 each held in NTFC at cost.*

*Our fully paid and called up Share Capital is £721.'*

## **7. Membership Report**

At 1 September 2022 membership stood at 725 and by year end, 31 August 2023, it had fallen slightly to 721.

As of today, 22 February 2024, membership stands at 681.

The reduction in the last six months can largely be attributed to lapsed memberships, as of 1 January, from a large number of NotMyTrust representatives who joined the Supporters Trust in late 2022.

The Trust is no longer offering life memberships – renewals can be made at the start of each calendar year by individuals (£10) and corporate members (£100).

We believe the annual membership fees continue to represent excellent value when compared to other Trusts across the country.

## **8. Cobblers Travel Club/Earls Barton Cobblers**

*As a consequence of the majority of Trust Travel users, including the Trust's former Treasurer, opting to form their own travel club in the summer of 2022 – Teyn Travel – Cobblers Travel was seriously impacted during the 2022/23 season.*

*But thanks to the guiding hand of former Trust chairman Roger Averill, the travel club continued to operate for a handful of away matches that season.*

*To update to the present day, the travel club has run coaches to an increased number of selected away games during 2023/24 in partnership with Earls Barton Cobblers. The preferred coach company is Country Lion.*

*It is hoped the club will regain strength next season by providing a different offer to Cobblers fans including:-*

- *Discounts for Trust members*
- *Cheap travel for accompanied U16s*
- *Pick up points in Wellingborough, Earls Barton and Northampton*
- *Loyalty bonuses*
- *City centre shopping on selected trips*

## **9. Adoption of accounts, appointment of auditors and vote for shortened accounts**

Bob Clarke proposed that Clifford Towers were appointed as auditors for a further 12 months - the proposal was seconded by Andy Roberts and was carried 34 votes against 0.

The 2022-23 accounts were deferred pending full accounts information which should be available shortly and circulated to voting members for approval or otherwise.

John Morgan proposed that the Supporters Trust be authorised not to undertake a full professional audit of the accounts for the period ending 31 August 2023. This was seconded by Bob Clarke and was carried 31 votes against 1.

## **10. Board resolutions**

There were none.

## **11. Appointment of Board Members**

Andy Roberts informed the meeting that the board had been carrying no vacancies during the past year, at the new agreed maximum level of 12 directors. There had been 5 resignations.

At the AGM, 2 board members were required to stand for re-election. This meant there were 7 vacancies to fill.

Two nominations for membership of the board were received.

1. Ian Atkins
2. Robert Souster

Since the number of members putting themselves forward was fewer than the number of vacancies, all are elected unopposed.

## **12. Any Other Business**

The floor opened to a general informal discussion on various issues.

The most discussed subject was the status of the stand and land deal between Northampton Town FC/ County Developments Northampton Ltd and West Northamptonshire Council.

Andy Roberts told the meeting that on the afternoon of the AGM the Trust had received an update from council leader Jonathan Nunn on the land deal, which Councillor Nunn confirmed should be concluded within the next couple of weeks.

Alan Gregory said that he felt the Trust was very unpopular with much of the fanbase and asked the board what positive direction they now intended to take.

The chair said he had been keen to build bridges with the football club but the approach had been roundly rebuffed.

He said it was important to build a relationship with the council as the Trust had circulated information about a suggested Infrastructure Foundation to all members and felt that the time was right to engage members and the wider fanbase around a vision for the club and how the stadium infrastructure could be improved – what were the priorities, what is realistic, how could it be paid for, what do we need to consider to help build an ambitious and progressive football club in Northampton?

He hoped this football conversation would be a positive way forward, helping bring together all parties committed to safeguarding and improving the club.

Chris Payne asked about the intransigence of the Trust's former treasurer in refusing to hand over account responsibilities and also about his role in the formation of the breakaway Teyn Travel club – Andy Roberts said that the summer of 2022 had been a very difficult period for the Trust and that he had been disappointed by the behaviour of the former treasurer.

In a discussion about potential infrastructure improvements, Rob Duncan said he was not sure about the benefits of rail seating and safe standing, having observed the rail seating in place during the recent game at Portsmouth.

Alan Amos said that his son had been re-assured that the East Stand completion would enable a larger Carr's bar in the West Stand complex which would hopefully alleviate some of the capacity issues currently being experienced.