

Chester City Supporters Trust

Board Annual Report May 2009

As many of you will know, Paul Reid, our Chairman at our last AGM stood down during the course of the year and the remaining board members never filled the position of Chair.

Obviously, without a Chairman, there can be no Chairman's Annual Report, however, as the Secretary I have collated a number of news items and comments from board members and will now read what is likely to be a relatively brief Board Annual Report.

Success in any organisation is often reflected in the success and achievements of related groups and services. The same can be applied to failure, and in the same way our football club has failed to hold onto its League status this can be reflected in the failure of the Supporters Trust to move forward in the way we would all have hoped during the last 12 months.

As the football season was about to start, the Trust Board were in discussion with one of our members, Paul Baker, regarding the Trust taking assignment of a substantial investment in Chester City Football Club Limited. Much advice was sought (from both Supporters Direct and Corbett's Solicitors) and after careful consideration to ensure the Trust was not exposed to any financial or legal risk, the decision was made to take the assignment. This effectively means that for the foreseeable future the Trust will be a creditor of the club instead of Mr. Baker. Paul Reid, Trust Chair at the time, said "We are pleased to have been considered a safe pair of hands by Paul Baker. We have the same ideal at the end of the day.....a love for Chester City Football Club".

The Trust were also involved in the early season fixture against Leeds United in the Coca Cola Cup, with a joint sponsorship with one of our corporate sponsors, GPS Decorators. Whilst the result did not mirror the success from the mid 70's, our honorary presidents involvement did, and it was great opportunity to reflect of one of the greatest successes of our league history.

Internal matters diverted our focus as the year drew to a close, with questions asked about the validity of the Trust rules, or constitution.

At the time the Trust was founded, now over nine years ago, it was at the forefront of the initiative from Supporters Direct to give supporters of professional sports clubs a voice through democratic representation. By setting the Trust up as an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) it provided a vehicle by which supporters could acquire a shareholding in the club and even run it themselves should circumstances permit. There are now 15 clubs who are controlled and operate using these model rules, including Exeter and Notts County who we played this year, and Cambridge and AFC Wimbledon we may be playing next.

Ever since it's formation, the Trust has found it difficult to maintain the number of members elected to the board as stipulated in the rules, and whilst this was never a real problem, a decision was taken to propose an amendment to the rules.

The rules can only be amended by the members, therefore the 1st Special General Meeting was called in February allowing members this opportunity, whilst also providing a chance for members to voice their opinion on both the increasingly worrying situation at the football club and the direction they felt the Trust should be heading.

The evening was a great success, with a large number of new members joining on the night, and with unanimous support of the proposed rule changes. A very clear message also came from the night, with members looking for the Board to continue it's efforts to work more closely with the other supporters groups, with the aim of becoming more united, and if possible as one.

Discussions with the ISA, Exiles and Official Supporters Groups has been ongoing, and steps have been made to work more closely together in the coming season, which started with the combined Player of the Year award which was won by Ryan Lowe.

Unfortunately, it looks like the ghost has moved to the new award with the winner more often than not starting the following season at another club.

The future of our football club looks more and more precarious as the days go by, with the threat of Administration a real possibility if press reports are to be believed. Whilst there will always be differences of opinion in terms of how the Trust can directly help the football club, I know this is not reflected when it comes to it's long term survival. We are all united in the common desire to see the club prosper, to grow and to be there for generation to come.

On a personal note, my time on the board has come to an end. I was elected 3 years ago, and have enjoyed serving you all, even though at times it has been somewhat challenging, if for nothing else our walk to Shrewsbury!

Unfortunately, my girlfriend has finally convinced me to leave my home in Leeds and take her back to hers in Scotland, so I'm now just too far away to continue to take the active role I have. Whilst I could go on and reflect on my time on the board, I'd prefer to look forward and to briefly thank the 4 members who have chosen to stand for election and who, along with the 3 serving members, will take the Trust forward over the next 3 years.

It has been a pleasure to get to know you all, and I have no doubt about any of your passion and commitment to all things Chester City. I would also like to wish Chris the best of luck, and can only hope his time on the Board is as enjoyable and interesting as mine has been.

Finally, I'd like to thank everyone here tonight for your commitment and support, but would also like to challenge you to take a more active role in strengthening your Supporters Trust.

A Trust can only every be a reflection of it's membership, and the more that take an active role, the more will that organisation achieve.

Adrian Williamson
Trust Secretary