



Brentford Independent Association of Supporters (BIAS)

2019 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Date: 2nd November 2019 at 12:05

Venue: The Griffin Public House Brentford

Minutes

1. Attendees and Apologies

- Meeting attended by the following members of the BIAS Executive Committee (Quorum as defined by the BIAS Constitution):
 - Adam Hobbs (AH) - Chairperson
 - Phil Marchant (PM) - Deputy Chairperson
 - David Minckley (DM) - Finance Officer
 - Richard Nabarro (RN) - Committee Member
 - Darren Castle (DC) - Acting Secretary
 - Richard Kirchner (RK) – Proposed Committee Member
 - Apologies – Gemma Teale and Lisa O'Brien

2. Approve minutes of 2018 AGM

- *Minutes from the last AGM have been available on the BIAS website for about 8 months – Minutes passed as accurate*

3. Chairperson's Report

- *See Appendix A*

4. Finance and Membership Report

- *See Appendix B*

5. Q & A Session

- *Question from the floor about availability of BIAS badges, **Action 1:** AH to investigate*
- *Question about availability of the clubhouse – will the new stadium have a location to accommodate events such as Jazz Club. **Action 2:** AH to raise at meeting with John Varney*
- *Migration of season ticket holders to the new stadium discussed. DM stated that BIAS were in discussion with the Club regarding a set of frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) to help supporters better understand the migration process and the impact of moving to the new stadium.*
- *AH mentioned that the new stadium may be a cashless environment. BIAS will investigate with the Club and if confirmed, how this will work for our younger/older supporters who do not have access to contactless technology. We will ensure this is also included in the FAQ's mentioned above*

6. Motions

Motion 6.1:

- **Adoption of Financial Accounts for year ending 31st May 2019**
 - Section 7.3c of the Constitution states the adoption of the audited Financial Accounts of the Association shall be conducted at the AGM
 - Accounts audited by Jim Walsh 8th July 2019
 - Proposed by David Minckley – Seconded by Adam Hobbs

Motion passed by AGM

Motion 6.2:

- **Approve retention of Jim Walsh as auditor for BIAS Financial Accounts**
 - Section 7.3e of the Constitution states the election of auditors shall be conducted at the AGM
 - Proposed by David Minckley – Seconded by Adam Hobbs

Motion passed by AGM

Motion 6.3:

- **Approve election of new members to the Executive Committee**
 1. John Kenkel
 - Proposed by Adam Hobbs – Seconded by David Minckley
 2. Richard Kirchner
 - Proposed by Richard Nabarro – Seconded by David Minckley

Motion passed by AGM

Motion 6.4:

- **Approve re-election of Executive Committee**
 - Section 5.7 of the Constitution states all members of the Executive Committee shall retire annually but if nominated, will be eligible for re-election at the Associations Annual General meeting
 - All current members of the Executive Committee have sought re-election for a further 12 months.
 - Darren Castle will take over duties as Association Secretary, replacing Lisa O'Brien who will remain a member of the Executive Committee.
 - Proposed by Adam Hobbs – Seconded by David Minckley

Motion passed by AGM – ACTION 3: Lisa O'Brien to be removed from Bank Mandate and Darren Castle to be added.

Motion 6.5:

- **Approve continuation of free membership to the Association**
 - Section 4.4 of the Constitution states membership fees will be agreed at the Annual General Meeting
 - Free membership adopted at the 2018 Annual General Meeting
 - In November 2018, 217 members were paying subscriptions to BIAS
 - Currently BIAS has 708 full members (plus 20 Junior members) with 176 full members continuing to make donations to the Association by standing order and 37 via Paypal this calendar year (data as at the end of September 2019)
 - Proposed by Adam Hobbs – Seconded by David Minckley

Motion passed by AGM

Motion 6.6.1

- **Approve changes to the BIAS Constitution**
 - Section 4.2 of the Constitution states all applications for membership should be directed to General Secretary.
 - Following re-organisation of responsibilities within the Executive Committee, the Finance Officer now has responsibility for membership.
 - Wording in Constitution needs to be amended to reflect this change - All applications should be directed Executive Committee member responsible for BIAS membership
 - Proposed by Lisa O'Brien – Seconded by David Minckley

Motion passed by AGM

Motion 6.6.2

- **Approve changes to the BIAS Constitution**

- Section 4.5 of the Constitution states Membership must be renewed annually
- Following decision at the 2018 AGM to make membership to BIAS free the Executive Committee believe that annual renewal of membership is no longer necessary.
- All BIAS membership have been advised of the change in membership fees
- Proposal is to change section 4.5 to 'Membership can be cancelled at any time by notifying the Association'
 - Proposed by Adam Hobbs – Seconded by David Minckley

Motion passed by AGM

Motion 7

- **Adoption of the BIAS 2020 Manifesto**

We are the Brentford Independent Association of Supporters (BIAS).

We are a fully democratic, inclusive and independent supporters' group that aims to give a voice to all Brentford Football Club fans.

We want to ensure that every Brentford fan has the opportunity to communicate with the club and for the club to listen to any concerns they may have. BIAS holds regular meetings with the Chief Executive of Brentford Football Club and other high-level staff and we have very open and clear lines of communication to put forward ideas or concerns on the supporter's behalf, to the people that run the club.

With honesty and integrity, we will represent and campaign on issues and concerns raised by our membership for the benefit of all supporters.

To achieve this, we will:

1. be the conscience of Brentford Football Club and be accountable to our membership
2. maintain a working relationship with Brentford Football Club whilst remaining independent
3. work closely with Brentford Football Club to ensure a successful transition from Griffin Park to the new stadium at Lionel Road
4. represent members at the Lionel Road Focus Group meetings run by Brentford Football club and provide feedback to the membership
5. work closely with Bees United and the Brentford Community Trust when required for the benefit of our members and Brentford Football Club
6. work with Brentford Football Club to champion diversity amongst football fans and work to ensure all fans feel safe and welcome at Griffin Park and Lionel Road
7. be a listening organisation with every member's opinion being considered valid

8. raise any questions or concerns from our membership with Brentford Football club and help communicate their response
9. provide a response to all enquiries received via feedback@bias.org.uk within 7 working days
10. work to increase BIAS membership in line with our aim to represent the needs of all Brentford fans as far as possible
11. make our membership open and accessible to every Brentford fan regardless of age, race, gender or disability
12. work with Brentford Football Club to consider the options for safe standing at the new stadium at Lionel Road
13. work with relevant football bodies, other supporters' groups and government departments when required to maintain/improve the Brentford match day experience for all supporters
14. hold regular Executive Committee Meetings and an AGM that are open to all members
15. up-hold the BIAS constitution, have minutes and /or summaries of committee meetings on the BIAS website and hold fully audited accounts and maintain accurate financial records

Proposed by David Minckley – Seconded by Adam Hobbs

Motion passed by AGM

Meeting Closed at 12.47

Appendices

Appendix A - Chairperson's Statement

Thank you all for attending today, can I start by thanking all those who are here and also to those members who have sent apologies. Thank you to the Griffin Pub for allowing us to use the restaurant for this meeting for the third year running and for supporting us throughout the year by hosting our executive committee meetings. It is strange to think that this will be my last annual statement with the club playing at Griffin Park. When I set foot in the new ground I will always remember that the move to Lionel Road would not be happening if it was not for the fans. It's seems incredible that it was back in 2013 when initial planning permission was granted and there was over 1,000 Brentford fans at the planning meeting in the Civic Centre until past midnight.

I would like to thank Lisa O'Brien for stepping up to the plate as secretary for the last year. Lisa has decided to relinquish the role due to family commitments but intends to remain on the Committee for the next year. Darren Castle has been nominated to replace Lisa as Secretary, so thank you to Darren for picking up the baton.

Last year we made a big change in that we agreed to remove the mandatory membership fee from the organisation. With the club making huge strides off the field and moving to the new stadium it is vital that we have a supporter's association that is reflective of the entire fan base. It became evident that we were not attracting enough new members using the traditional subscription model. This is something that I hope you will agree has been a success which you will see when Dave delivers his finance and membership report shortly. I hope you will join me in ratifying the motion later on to keep the membership free.

In my statement last year I spoke about the importance of a strong committee and I am delighted with how we have worked over the last year. I would also delighted to have two new committee members nominated to join the executive committee which can only help make us stronger. One of whom, John Kenkel, who regularly travels over from the USA to watch the Bees and runs the BIAS USA branch.

Events over the last year have been good, we have attended various diversity and inclusion events which have been put on by the club. We have agreed to have regular meetings with the new CEO, Jon Varney, and this will ensure that we have positive structured dialogue with the club going forward.

The working groups for the new stadium were positive, albeit we would have liked to have seen some additional meetings. We have had a number of good outputs from that which will directly benefit the fans, these are mostly around season ticket priorities, on sale dates and allocations. We are still pushing the club for a few other actions, such as an FAQ and pop up Q&A sessions and to also have some final closure meetings with those who attended the focus groups.

We continue to work with the other fan groups and club historians to see the club make changes to the naming of the lounges in the new stadium based on our collective recommendations. Ensuring that Brentford's legacy and history is not forgotten when we move to Lionel Road.

Our external meetings continued with the Metropolitan Police Football Unit via the Advisory Group alongside other London football clubs, where we discuss safety and other football related policing matters. We also continue to attend various other FSA led meetings, some of which can last several hours. So I would like give thanks to those on the committee who give up their spare time, sometimes on weekends to attend these.

As expected our primary focus for this forthcoming year will be ensuring we say farewell to Griffin Park in the most appropriate way and ensure that the old stadium gets the send-off it deserves. More importantly it will be about how we can transition to the new stadium, ensuring that everyone ends up in the correct area and pays the right price and gets the right experience that they want.

As we say goodbye to Griffin Park, it is important that the voice of Brentford fans continue to be heard. Being a BIAS member is the best way to achieve this, but to do this we need enough members to be effective. So if you know people who are not members, whether it be in person or on somewhere like Facebook then please get them to sign up. It only takes a few minutes and with every new member our voice gets stronger.

Our attendances will grow at the new stadium and the supporter base will become more transient and more diverse, we need to ensure our membership reflects that. As the club's stature increases no doubt they will continue to look at how they can make gains on the commercial side and it remains our responsibility to ensure that they do not forget about you and me, the ordinary fan.

It is easy to think that whilst everything is going well on the pitch, there is nothing to worry about off it. This couldn't be further from the truth, supporters groups play a vital role in protecting clubs, we are here to hold the club to account and we speak as one voice for all Bees fans.

I hope the coming year is a good one for the club both on the pitch and off it and I am determined to ensure that BIAS will still be here to represent you all and to ensure that as the club transforms, the core element that makes Brentford unique, is the thing that is constant - that is the fans.

So let's make this year a great final year at Griffin Park both on and off the pitch and ensure that the spirit of the old ground lives on at the new stadium.

Adam Hobbs

Appendix B - 2019 AGM Finance and Membership Report

Finance

- Total balances as at 31st May 2019 were £23438.81 an increase of £2948.00 compared to 31st May 2018. For the corresponding period 31st May 2017/18 we saw an increase of £3846.01 in surplus funds (a reduction of £898.01 compared to previous financial year)
- Total balances as at 30th September 2019 amount to £24708.95 a further increase of £1270.14 helped by a profit of £368.00 from the BIAS sponsored boat trip to our away game at Charlton Athletic
- Following decision to remove membership subscription at last Novembers AGM, we have continued to see our surplus funds grow albeit at a now reduced rate
- We have seen a steady cancellation of membership standing order subscriptions – reduced from 217 paying members in November 2018 to 176 in September 2019, a reduction of 41 paying members.
- The reduction in standing order subscriptions has been an ongoing trend before free membership was agreed last November – paying members in November 2017 were 229 a reduction of 12 in that financial year
- In real terms monthly standing order income has reduced from £272.00 in November 2018 to 213.50 in September 2019, a reduction of £58.50 each month. However this level of income is more than sufficient to cover our administration costs and the committee feels this sustainable in the short and medium term
- Income from Paypal (May – September 18) has reduced slightly compared to similar period this year (1 subscription £11.41)
- Our administration costs have risen over the last 12 months which reflects increased activity by the committee with meetings held on a more regular basis. Costs connected to updating our membership records (stamps/letters) amounted to £60.00 and 2 donations were made to CRY following the sudden death of Rob Rowan totaling £200.00.

Membership

- At the last AGM BIAS had 217 members paying monthly standing order subscriptions and 47 members paying subscriptions via Paypal for the year leading up to the 2018 AGM – This totals **264 members**. This is based on the need to pay a subscription to be a BIAS member and this is now regarded as our baseline figure
- A full review of the membership database has been completed with 66 members removed where we have not been able to confirm any contact details, are not making donations or they have requested cancellation of membership (16)
- As at 30th September 2019 we have **708 full members and 20 junior members**, an increase of 444 members (+37%) since our last AGM.
- However we still have 16 Full Members who **are** making monthly standing order payments but we do not have an email address nor have they responded to our letters – we are continuing to investigate. For the remaining members we believe we have up to date contact details and this is confirmed when sending out our Newsletters
- In summary BIAS is in a healthy financial state with a growing membership and we are well placed to build on this over the next 12 months, ensuring as a priority the move to the new stadium at Lionel Road is as seamless as possible

David Minckley

Actions

Action Number	Action	Responsibility	Date Complete
1	Investigate whether any BIAS badges are available	Adam Hobbs	
2	Investigate whether the new stadium have a location to accommodate events such as Jazz Club.	Adam Hobbs	
3	Amend Bank Mandate to remove Lisa O'Brien and add Darren castle as signatory on account	David Minckley	