

## **FAQ DOCUMENT FOR PROPOSAL FOR DERBY COUNTY SUPPORTERS BOARD**

### **PRODUCED BY RAMS TRUST ON BEHALF OF THE SUPPORTERS' CHARTER GROUP**

#### **1. What is the purpose of a Supporters Board (SB) and how is this different to the Supporters' Charter Group (SCG)?**

A Supporters Board (SB) - sometimes referred to as a 'Shadow Board' or a 'Supporters' Advisory Board' - is an organisation composed of supporters that seeks to ensure the Club is run in the long-term interests of supporters. The SB meets with, but is independent of, the Club. It works in conjunction with the Club for mutual benefit.

The SB will advise and challenge the Club primarily on issues relating to governance (as set out in the working document) and the SCG will advise and challenge the Club on broader operational issues including, but not limited to, those impacting the matchday experience for fans. Both bodies are of equal status.

As set out in the working document, the SB will also have the right to veto certain decisions by the Club including proposals to move from, or sell, Pride Park Stadium, change Club Colours or significant changes to the Crest, or to join any breakaway leagues.

#### **2. What is the background to the creation of Supporters Boards by Clubs?**

The proposal to form a European Super League and insolvency problems at several clubs, such as Bury FC, have shown that clubs are often not run in the long-term interests of supporters. Supporters are often neglected in the plans for the future of the game in England.

Tracey Crouch MP chaired the Fan-led Review into English Football Governance which was published in November 2021 and the Government gave its response in April 2022. The review was broadly accepted by the Government and it is expected that there will be new legislation and the creation of a new regulator, The Independent Regulator for English Football (IREF).

One of the recommendations was to improve Fan Engagement, with Supporter Boards seen as a key way of doing that. The Football Supporters' Association (FSA) are backing the formation of SBs. An IREF would require minimum standards of fan engagement for all licenced clubs.

#### **3. What is the relation between a Supporters Board and the Club's own Board?**

The SB is separate from - indeed independent of - the Club's own Board. Its role is to provide advice and challenge to the decisions and strategy of the Club's Board in relation to key areas of governance as outlined in the working document.

#### **4. Would a Supporters Board have prevented (or at least reduced the likelihood of) Derby County going into administration in 2021?**

A SB aims to promote responsible ownership to ensure that owners are committed to the club's long-term financial stability and we believe that had there been an SB it could have made a very big difference.

Firstly, the Pride Park Stadium could possibly not have been sold without the permission of the SB and this would in turn have limited the amount of expenditure by the Club and the increase in debts of the Club.

Secondly, an SB would have had access to some of the financial information in the years running up to administration. In addition to providing challenge to the Club on its plans, it could have flagged concerns to the governing body (currently the EFL but, if implemented, in future the 'Independent Regulator for Football'). This could have allowed action to be taken by the Governing Body to limit any decisions that risked putting the Club's financial stability at risk.

#### **5. Why have you chosen a Supporters Board model with 3 supporter groups and 3 independent members? Why not choose 6 independent members?**

There are many ways in which one could form a Supporters Board and we took advice from the FSA on how best to form one at Derby County. The model we have chosen recognises that established supporter groups represent fans already: groups that are open and democratically elect and consult members already provide a vehicle for supporter representation. At the same time, we recognise there are fans who could contribute significantly to a Supporters Board who are not (and do not wish to be) an officer of an existing group.

#### **6. Why have RamsTrust been named as one group for the Supporters Board but not the others? How will the others be selected?**

Supporter Trusts - such as RamsTrust - are established for the purposes of promoting that Football Clubs be run in the long-term interests of supporters with a particular focus on governance issues. This is recognised in the Government White paper which notes that a Supporters Board should include a Club's Football Trust.

We have not yet identified the criteria for selecting the other groups but are liaising with the FSA and SCG on that. It is likely that groups would be expected to at least obtain affiliate status from the FSA.

#### **7. Why are there not similar selection requirements for the SCG? How does a group apply to join the SCG?**

While a SB needs to be relatively small, reflecting the access to some financial information, the SCG can be a larger body and we do not see a need at this stage to impose formal

selection requirements. A fan group is able to approach the Club and enquire about joining the SCG. We would revisit this issue should size become a problem.

### **8. Will a Supporters Board be involved in football matters?**

No. Its role is limited to those identified in the working document.

### **9. What skills are required for Supporters Board members?**

There will be a role description developed setting out the skills and criteria required in due course but, first and foremost, members of an SB must be passionate about the Club and be prepared to spend the necessary time to perform the role.

Different members will bring different skill sets to the table and it is more important that the SB, as a whole, has the right skills than every member is expert in every area. That said, generic criteria are likely to include an ability to collaborate and communicate with others with differing viewpoints, an ability to read and be comfortable in challenging a financial statement and other typical Board documentation.