

Minutes of Meeting to launch the Grimsby Town Disabled Supporters Association

Held in the Trust bar, Blundell Park, 6pm Friday 30th August 2024

Present – Dave Roberts, Paul Roberts, Jane Stephenson (GTFC DLO), John Stephenson, Paul King, Jane Hyldon-King, Thomas Jones, Thomas Portus, Denise Portus, Sarah Hodgson, Hayley Carver-Smith (GTFC Family Co-ordinator), Sand Stewart, Mollie Cox, Michael Cox, Deon Suddaby, Susan Dodd, “Dick” Dodd, Dave Arnold, Joy Penwarn, Caroline Ball, Mark Ball, Brian Howie, Maurice Blake, Brian Nicholson, Dean Wingate, Jayne Smith, Sue Carter, Dave Shearsmith (Disability sports forum), Polly Bancroft (GTFC CEO), Jason Land (GTFC Foundation Disability & Inclusion lead), Kristine Green (GTFC SLO and Foundation Projects Manager)

DR made a presentation to explain the history of the GTFC Disabled Supporters Club and the reason for wanting to move to a Disabled Supporters Association

Key Points

First founded in 1979/80 season the disabled supporters club is one of the oldest in the country and still going strong which is a fitting legacy in memory of Daphne Farquharson who ran in for over 40 years following the untimely passing of her husband Don in the early 1980's.

Mainly focused on away travel and social events we now want to widen the focus to cover things like improved facilities at Blundell Park hence the move to a DSA.

There are 40 other DSA's across all the leagues and this will give a great opportunity to network and understand best practice.

Level Playing Field are the governing body for DSA's and provide expert help and guidance. The club commissioned an audit by LPF earlier in the year at a cost of circa £3k which shows great commitment to the inclusion. The result was a significant list of actions needed, some easy to resolve and others less so. The report was very complimentary regarding the attitude of the staff and management of the club.

The biggest issue, which is no surprise, is the overall deficit of wheelchair places and that ideally 75% of the places should be elevated.

Jason and Kristine explained the work that the Foundation are already doing with disabled people in the community. It was acknowledged that there are number of groups in the area such as Foresight and Rock Foundation where stronger links can be developed.

It was highlighted that currently there are 16m people in the UK with a disability (source – Scope) this represents 24% which is a huge number. DR emphasised the numbers with hidden disabilities and the need for more understanding and training in this area.

DR explained the way the communications and meetings would work.

DSA Committee – Every 6 weeks.

Open meeting with members – 3 times per annum (inc AGM)

Meet with Club & Foundation – 3 times per annum – first meeting in October 2024

Next Steps are to form the committee and then committee will agree roles. Agree future meeting dates and begin operating by October 2024. DR will register with LPF.

People who volunteered for the committee are:

Dave Roberts, Jane Stephenson, Dean Wingate, Sarah Hodgson, Thomas Jones, Maurice Blake, Caroline Ball, Mark Ball, Hayley Carver-Smith, Jane Hyldon-King, Paul King, Michael Cox,

Others not present – Kevin Donovan, Mike Rowell, Phillip Ireland.

Great so many want to be involved, slightly more than ideal but we will see how it goes.

Polly explained to the meeting the priorities she is working on regarding improving commercial revenue, improving the men's and women's teams and ongoing improvements to the stadium. She absolutely buys in to the disabled issues discussed and looks forward to working with the DSA committee.

AOB – Date for diary. This years Christmas Party will be at McMenemy's on Thursday 12th December 2024

DR communicated that we had received two very generous donations. Firstly Pete Rose sold his box for the Sheffield Wednesday game and raised £500. Thank you to Ben Newman of New Glaze Ltd for buying the box . Also the Kings Head at Waltham dedicated the raffle and other activities at their recent "Kingsfest" event raising around £700. Since the meeting we have had a further donation of £250 from Paul Chalk of Made to Measure who makes an annual donation to us. We are lucky to have such fantastic support from local businesses. Thank You.

Dave Arnold suggested that when possible we organise to meet up opposition disabled supporters when we travel away. Jane will cover this when she contacts the clubs we are visiting.

DR finished the meeting by showing the new website for the DSA. This will show all the latest news and events as well as minutes of meetings, important documents etc. There is a section for people to make donations which will be much easier when we are doing campaigns. The website can be found at www.grimsbytowndsa.com

Thanks to all attending.