Exeter City AFC Supporters' Society Limited

Trust Board Meeting – Part A

Meeting held in Boardroom and on Zoom.

Date: Monday 13 April 2026

Trustees present: Tony Badcott, Julen Beer, Nigel Edwards, Pete Ferlie, Debbie Marrable, Neil Le Milliere, Debra Noble, Gary Quick.

On Zoom: Nick Bryant, Greg Newcombe, Matt Phillips,

Apologies: Doug Gillard

Officers Present: Dean Matthews (Secretary), Sarah Ford (Membership Secretary), Keith Mason, (Finance Officer) Pete Cordwell (Minutes Taker)

On Zoom: Cameron Ward, (Trust Media and Communications Officer)

Apologies. Elaine Davis Nelson Taylor.

Trust members present. Listed in Appendix

SECTION 1 — OPENING, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair welcomed those attending in person and online and explained that, due to a commercial booking, the meeting was being held in the Boardroom rather than the usual room. He also advised that the following week's Fans' Forum would take place in the Heritage Lounge, again because of commercial use of the usual space. He noted this as positive news, reflecting increased use of club facilities.

The Chair gave his usual declaration of interest as an employee of **Exeter City Community Trust**. No further declarations were made.

SECTION 2 — CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair referred to the productive discussion held in Part B and noted that further detail on the supporter survey would be provided later in the meeting by **Matt Phillips**.

An update was given on **VAT** relating to membership income. **Keith Mason** reported that legal advice had confirmed the Trust did **not** currently need to register for VAT. He explained that this potentially saved the Trust between **£60,000 and £70,000 per year**, although the position would need to be monitored closely against the turnover threshold. The Chair thanked Keith for the work undertaken on this matter.

The Chair reported that progress was being made on a review of the **Trust website**, with further work to be undertaken with **Cameron Ward**.

An update was given on the reduction in **standing order payees**, with the number now below **600**. Members who had not yet changed payment method were encouraged to contact **Sarah Ford** for support in doing so.

The Chair reported that he had met with **InExeter** and that discussions were underway on how the Trust could work more closely with city centre businesses, including increasing **corporate membership**, promoting member discounts and strengthening links with the local business community. He added that, through **Nick Baxter-Sibley**, the Trust was also beginning discussions with the **Exeter Chamber of Commerce**.

The Chair also confirmed that progress was being made on **Trustee training**, with **Deborah Noble** identifying suitable e-learning packages to support Trustee development.

He further noted that there was encouraging activity around the Club's **125th anniversary**, including discussions about an anniversary event.

SECTION 3 — MATTERS OF ACCURACY / APPROVAL OF MINUTES / MATTERS ARISING

No matters of accuracy were raised, aside from a point already submitted by **Josh**, which was noted for amendment.

The minutes of the previous meeting were then approved.

Proposed: Neil Le Milliere
Seconded: Nigel Edwards
Approved.

The Board then reviewed the action log.

It was confirmed that **Sarah Ford's** hours had increased and that a new **work experience student, Duarte**, would be starting the following day to support Trust operations.

Membership remained at around **6,000**, which was described as encouraging given the recent membership fee increase.

Work to strengthen **corporate engagement** was noted as ongoing.

SECTION 4 — ECFC VOLUNTEERS

The Chair invited **Phil Wright** to update the Board on volunteer activity relating to post-match clearing and recycling at St James Park.

Phil explained that he had first become involved at the Club many years earlier and had gradually taken on responsibility for recycling and waste management. He outlined how the current team now undertook extensive work after matches and other events.

Phil explained that supporters generally did an excellent job in leaving the stands tidy, particularly the **Big Bank**, and thanked them for this. However, he described the substantial work still required on Monday mornings, including:

- collecting and sorting waste from around the stadium,
- separating recyclables,
- managing food waste,
- preparing bins for future use,
- and clearing up after a range of other stadium events, not only first-team matches.

He reported that the team had contributed **593 hours** so far that season, equivalent to more than **£7,000** at national living wage rates. He also highlighted the mileage and commitment involved, especially from volunteers travelling significant distances.

Phil noted that while the current team worked well together, future succession planning would be important, and he suggested it could be useful to have a small reserve list of people willing to help if needed.

The Chair thanked Phil and the volunteer team for their outstanding contribution, noting the importance of making members aware of the scale of this work.

SECTION 5 — TRUST DISCOUNTS REVIEW

Nigel Edwards introduced the review of Trust discounts, referring back to issues raised at the January Fans' Forum.

He explained that, with assistance from **Ray Storey**, work had been undertaken to identify the actual cost to the Club of discounts provided to Trust members. He cautioned that the figures involved a degree of estimation because the till system did not separately identify all categories of discount clearly, particularly where season-ticket and Trust discounts overlapped.

The current estimated annual figure was reported as approximately **£15,577**, made up broadly of:

- around **£14,320** from shop discounts,
- around **£1,806** from bar discounts,
- and around **£450** from hospitality discounts.

Nigel stressed that this should be seen as an indicative figure rather than an exact one, with a likely margin either side.

He noted that staff discounts and inconsistent till usage also complicated the data. One clear action arising was that the till system should be improved so that different discounts could be identified more accurately in future.

Nigel concluded that the review had at least disproved some of the more exaggerated figures previously suggested and had produced a more reliable indication of the true cost.

Further discussion took place on the review of Trust member discounts. It was noted that while the January figures previously quoted had now been disproved, the paper did not recommend any immediate financial compensation by the Trust to the Club in respect of the cost of those discounts.

It was acknowledged that, although there may be an argument for such support in future, the Trust had already committed to increasing its annual contribution to the Club and needed first to ensure that this increased commitment was affordable as the revised membership fee structure bedded in.

It was also noted that, if any support were to be provided in future in relation to the cost of discounts, it would need to be structured as a **donation** rather than as part of the Trust's loan to the Club.

The general view of the Trust Board was that no action should be taken at this stage and that the position should be revisited once the financial impact of the revised membership model was clearer and once till reporting had improved.

Agreed: The position on Trust discount costs would be reviewed again in **six months' time**.

SECTION 6 — TRUST SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Tony Badcott introduced the draft Trust Safeguarding Policy and thanked **Sarah Ford** for her work in producing the initial draft, noting her previous safeguarding experience.

It was proposed that the draft policy be circulated for a period of consultation, including:

- Trustees
- Trust members
- the Club's safeguarding officer
- the Football Supporters' Association

It was agreed that comments should be returned via **Dean Matthews**, Trust Secretary following which a revised draft would be brought back to the Board.

Agreed: The draft safeguarding policy would go out for a **two-month consultation period**, with a revised version to return to the Board for consideration at the **July meeting**.

SECTION 7 — MATCHDAY PROGRAMME

Tony Badcott raised concerns regarding the future of the matchday programme. He noted that references had appeared in Supporter Experience Committee reporting, but that no formal proposal had yet come either to the Trust Board or to the Club Board.

It was reported that recent operational decisions had reduced the number of sales points for the programme, with supporters in some locations being directed instead to the Club Shop. Concern was expressed that this had happened without consultation and risked reducing accessibility and sales.

Trust Board members noted that no published outcome had yet been seen from the supporter questionnaire on the future of the programme.

The Trust Board agreed that no decisions about the future format or continuation of the matchday programme should be taken without proper consultation and without Trust Board involvement.

A broad show of hands in the meeting indicated strong support for the continued existence of a **matchday publication** in some form.

Action: The Trust Secretary to write to the Club to state that the Trust Board expects to be involved in any decisions regarding the future of the matchday programme, and that no final decision should be made without consultation.

SECTION 8 — TRUST REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION

The Chair reported that implementation of the Trust Review recommendations remained ongoing.

It was noted positively that the **Audit Committee** had now met prior to the completion and publication of the accounts, representing progress against the recommendations.

Trustee training work was also continuing, with further development being taken forward through the work of **Deborah Noble**.

The Board agreed that implementation of the recommendations should continue to be monitored on a rolling basis, with items revisited regularly to ensure progress was maintained.

SECTION 9 — FINANCE & GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Before the wider Finance & Governance update, **Keith Mason** gave a brief update on Trust finances.

As at the end of March, the Trust current account balance stood at approximately **£92,300**, an increase of around **£8,500**on the previous month.

Subscription income for the month had risen by around **£2,000**, and income was now over **£11,000 higher** than in March 2025, reflecting the positive impact of the revised membership fee structure. It was also noted that the number of members still paying less than the new minimum had reduced significantly, with the loss of income from underpayments now down to around **£1,500** for the month.

The only notable expenditure reported was the cost of **SurveyMonkey**, although it was noted that this had already effectively been offset by donations received.

Gary Quick then provided the Finance & Governance Working Group update.

He confirmed that the **Audit Committee** had met and that the Club accounts had been signed off in time to meet the statutory deadline. Tribute was paid to **Ray Storey** for his work in bringing the Club's financial reporting up to date and managing the audit process. It was also reported that the finance team was now fully staffed and that Ray was satisfied with the structure now in place.

Gary confirmed that weekly cash flow reports continued to be received and that financial operations were now running more smoothly.

An update was given on the recently announced **£600,000 loan facility**, which had now been completed. It was clarified that this was a drawdown facility secured against the **Cliff Hill Training Ground**, and that funds would only be drawn as required.

On the **rights issue**, Gary reported that there was still no substantive update. Now that the accounts had been signed off, the next stage would be for the Club's accountants to determine a share valuation. Only once that process was complete could the Trust begin to assess the options and consider any proposals.

Gary also advised that valuations had been undertaken on both the **Cliff Hill** and **St James Centre (OTR)**, although the valuation report for St James Centre had not yet been received.

With regard to the **Jungle Path**, it was reported that the matter remained with **Network Rail**, following further work by **Andrew Rothwell**, and that the Club was awaiting their response.

On the **fire insurance claim**, the assessor had now visited following the rearranged Burton fixture. However, additional work was still required in the Medical Centre before the final value of the claim could be determined. As a result, a final settlement figure was not yet available.

Gary concluded by reminding the Board that a number of linked decisions remained outstanding, including those relating to the rights issue, Trust loans, possible forward funding of transfer fees and potential external investment. He stressed that no firm recommendations could yet be made until all valuations, legal advice, tax advice and financial advice had been obtained.

Section 10. Community Working Group

In Doug Gillard's absence, Debbie presented the Community Working Group update.

She reported that the Group had discussed a proposed new structure to support:

community engagement; advocacy; charity work; football-related activity, and volunteer coordination.

She also reported that:

- confirmation was still awaited from **CCT** regarding support for the **Respect event**;
- work with **Grecians USA** was progressing, with further responses still being sought;
- a future **Grecians Aussies** initiative may follow;
- safeguarding arrangements for the planned **young supporters' forum** were expected to be in place in time.

Section 11. Communications & Engagement Working Group

Nick Bryant reported that:

- work had continued in support of the Trust's broader **strategy and engagement activity**;
- attention was also being given to improving the **Trust website**, with Cameron Ward leading that work;
- newsletters continued to be well received;
- there was a desire to broaden the ways in which the Trust communicates with members beyond email alone.

Cameron Ward added that feedback on the newsletters had been positive and that they should continue in their present format.

Section 12. Owners & Members Working Group

The Chair reported that this group had **not met**, but that work was underway to reform and restart it.

13. Strategic Working Group

Matt Phillips gave an update on the membership survey.

He reported that:

- **1,224 members** had fully completed the survey;
- a further **302 members** had completed part of it;
- this represented responses from just over **a quarter of the membership**;
- reminders had been sent to members who had not yet responded;
- work was ongoing to resolve issues around email delivery and outdated addresses;
- donations linked to the survey had now raised approximately **£1,600**, more than covering the cost of the SurveyMonkey licence;

- around **25% of respondents** had said they would like to volunteer but did not know how.

Matt advised that the survey would likely close over the coming weekend, with headline findings to be presented at the forthcoming **Fans' Forum** and fuller results to be published later.

Section 14. Any Other Business

Tony Badcott raised two items:

- the need to promote the forthcoming **Corporate Trust Football Tournament**, provisionally scheduled for **7 June**;
- the need to arrange overdue **Microsoft Teams training** for Trustees.

Gary Quick advised that the Trust had asked the Club to revisit the possibility of installing **solar panels** at St James Park, given the reduction in hardware costs and the availability of grant support.

Phil Wright also commented on lights being left on unnecessarily in the stadium, and members discussed the importance of operational responsibility and energy efficiency.

A question was raised about the previously discussed **three-month reserve policy**, but no substantive update was available at this stage.

15. Close

The Chair explained that no member questions had been scheduled for this meeting because the upcoming **Fans' Forum** would provide more time for fuller discussion.

He thanked those attending in person and online, and closed the meeting.

Next meeting. Monday 11 May