

FSSB Members' Forum – Meeting Summary

Date: 30 July 2026

Location: Starkies, Gigg Lane, with members also joining online

Chair: Tina Newall

Opening

The Chair welcomed members attending in person and online and introduced the board members and department leads present.

Members were reminded that the forum was being recorded and that questions would be taken at the end. Attendees were asked to focus on issues rather than individuals and to conduct the discussion respectfully and constructively.

Stadium and Operations

Casey Lynchey provided an update on the stadium and operations to the Forum. Significant investment has been made in maintaining and improving the stadium.

Key work completed included:

- Fireproof painting beneath the Main Stand, costing approximately £135,000.
- Replacement of water tanks and the electrical switchboard.
- Annual recrowning of the pitch.
- General painting, maintenance and stadium improvements.
- Upgrades to the club's medical and first-aid facilities.

Nearly £200,000 has been invested in the stadium during the period discussed. The work of the stadium staff and volunteers was praised.

The club's recent Safety Advisory Group (SAG) inspection was positive. Representatives from the council, police, ambulance and fire services were complimentary about the condition of the stadium, the safety arrangements and the club's supporting documentation.

A Medical Advisory Group (MAG) has also been established to focus specifically on medical provision for matchdays and other events.

3G Pitch and Events

The 3G pitch continues to be one of the club's most important assets.

Pitch hire generated just under £200,000 during the year, while usage remained within the recommended weekly limits to protect the playing surface.

The stadium and pitch have hosted a range of activities, including:

- Junior and community football.
- Corporate events and competitions.
- Visiting international and youth teams.
- A business event involving Real Madrid coaches and Adobe.
- The Angry Ginge football match.
- The club's first corporate football cup.

Following the success of previous events, a league has indicated that it would like to stage all of its club cup finals at the stadium next summer.

Lessons were identified from the operation of larger external events, and these will be applied when planning future occasions.

Matchday Experience

Improvements have been made to catering and security arrangements.

The upgraded food offer, particularly the introduction of improved pies, received positive feedback. Security procedures have also been made more professional, although the club acknowledged that some changes have not been universally welcomed and will continue to be reviewed.

The contribution of volunteers was recognised as essential to the club. It was estimated that volunteer time represents approximately £1 million in annual value, excluding the wider social impact of their work.

Commercial Performance and Sponsorship

Chris Watts provided an update on commercial performance and progress on sponsorship to the Forum

Commercial performance continued to improve.

Compared with the previous period (24/25):

- Season-ticket sales (25/26) had increased by approximately 20%.
- The value of commercial partnerships had risen by approximately 68%.

The refurbishment of the 1885 hospitality area was funded entirely through sponsorship and resulted in hospitality selling out from November until the end of the season.

The stadium gym has also been refurbished following approximately £6,000 of sponsor funding. The equipment will be available to the first team, women's team, under-21s and education programmes.

Thirteen new commercial partners were expected to be added during the summer. Newly announced or forthcoming partners included PHCS of Bury, PM+M Accountants and Focus Rider Training.

Looking forward sponsorship income will support further improvements, including a planned digital advertising screen. The screen is expected to improve both sponsorship opportunities and the matchday experience.

Ticketing and Club App

The club has moved to a new ticketing platform.

Although transferring existing accounts presented some initial difficulties, the new system is intended to make future season-ticket renewals easier and offer better value by addressing previous concerns about fees.

The platform now provides more than ticketing and includes:

- Club news.
- Video content.
- Season-ticket information.
- Away-match details.
- Junior Shakers memberships.

- Links to interviews and YouTube content.

It is increasingly functioning as a dedicated Bury FC app.

Environmental Improvements

Ian Pearson provided an update on the solar initiative and electronic vehicles.

The club has introduced several measures aimed at reducing costs and improving environmental sustainability.

These include:

- Solar panels installed through a power-purchase agreement, with no upfront installation cost to the club.
- LED lighting across the floodlights and club buildings.
- Playing shirts made using recycled plastic bottles.

The solar agreement runs for 11 years and is expected to produce a substantial six-figure saving over its lifetime. These savings can be reinvested elsewhere in the club.

The measures form part of the club's longer-term ambition to move towards carbon neutrality.

Media and Communications

Chris Watts continued by providing an update on Media and Communications.

The club's combined social-media impressions increased by approximately 30 million across Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Interest from external content creators and football vloggers remains high. One visiting channel recently rated the club's hospitality as the best value among the grounds it had visited.

The volunteer-led media operation has undergone a significant restructure. Changes include:

- A new social-media manager.
- Three new matchday content creators.
- A new video editor.
- A new matchday highlights producer.
- Additional graphic designers.
- More platform-specific content rather than identical posts across every channel.

Members were advised that these improvements will take time to become fully visible.

The current website remains a challenge because of technical and automated-content issues. Work is continuing to update areas such as videos, league tables and general information.

The club is also reviewing whether the existing website remains suitable for its future needs. In the meantime, members were encouraged to use the ticketing app and social-media platforms for the latest information.

Community Trust and Grassroots Football

Casey Lynchey continued by providing an update on the Community Trust and Grassroots Football.

The club's Community Trust was formed towards the end of the previous year, supported by the appointment of a Community Development Officer.

Grassroots provision has grown to 45 teams, ranging from two-year-olds attending Baby Ballers sessions to walking-football participants, including players in their eighties.

The club has received the highest level of FA grassroots accreditation: **three-star accreditation**. This recognised the breadth and quality of its football and community provision.

The club has also received a **She Belongs Award**, recognising its commitment to women's and girls' football and confirming that this area is central to the club's future development.

Disability and Inclusion

Football provision for children with additional needs is expanding into teenage age groups.

The club intends to introduce an adult disability section after Christmas, subject to the continued development of the programme.

The Fans for Diversity group is also working to improve participation and the matchday experience for supporters from underrepresented groups, particularly disabled supporters.

The club acknowledged that further work is required to improve stadium accessibility. A recent fundraising collection for the group raised more than £1,370.

Community Programmes

Several community initiatives are being delivered at the stadium.

These include:

- Healthy Hearts, an exercise and nutrition programme for people aged over 50.
- Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programmes for children from lower-income families.
- The provision of football boots for children whose families may otherwise be unable to afford them.
- Participation in the Bury 10K.
- Educational plans linked to the club's heritage and Legends Wall.

The club applied for five external grants and successfully secured four. Work is now underway to deliver the funded projects.

Legends Wall

The Legends Wall has officially opened following a two-year development process. It celebrates the history and heritage of the club along the route to the South Stand. The next stage will explore how the material can be connected to school education and curriculum activities.

English National Opera Partnership

The club reflected positively on its collaboration with the English National Opera through the Pitch Perfect project.

The project brought together football, music and community participation and concluded with a major event at Salford Quays involving footballers, opera performers and hundreds of choir members.

Although the connection between football and opera was initially questioned by some, the project was considered highly successful and introduced new audiences to both activities.

The club is open to further collaboration with the English National Opera and other major cultural organisations.

Season-Ticket Update

Chris Watts then provided an update on Season Tickets (26/27)

At the time of the meeting, season-ticket sales were reported to be approximately **1,620**, which was more than 100 ahead of the equivalent point in the previous year.

The club expected the final total to reach approximately **1,750**, representing an increase of more than 200 compared with the previous season.

A trophy appearance and junior season-ticket giveaway were also planned at The Rock for the following Thursday.

Financial Transparency and Reporting

Tina Newall then provided an update to the Forum on a range of FSSB issues and initiatives.

The Board reaffirmed its commitment to openness and accountability as part of a member-owned club.

Members were advised that the club must balance transparency with the need to protect commercially sensitive information, including:

- Player and staff contracts.
- Sponsorship negotiations.
- Confidential financial arrangements.
- Information that could place the club at a commercial disadvantage.

To improve communication, the club will introduce quarterly financial and operational reports.

These reports will:

- Summarise the club's financial position.
- Highlight significant developments.
- Explain material changes.

- Report progress against strategic objectives.
- Provide members with a clearer view of the club's overall performance.

The club's full financial position will also be reflected in its next published statutory accounts.

Where a significant development affecting the club's future occurs outside the quarterly reporting cycle, the Board intends to communicate with members where appropriate.

Reasons for the Previous Year's Financial Loss

The Board acknowledged that reporting a loss for the previous year was disappointing.

Several unexpected but essential costs contributed to the result. These included problems with the water supply in the Main Stand, which had led to occasions when running water was unavailable.

Corrective work included:

- Repairing the water flow.
- Replacing and installing new water tanks.
- Securing a reliable water system.
- Repairing areas of the car park to remove trip hazards.

Together, these works cost more than **£40,000**. They were considered necessary to maintain supporter safety, regulatory compliance and the continued operation of the stadium.

Investment in the Football Operation

The club also invested in strengthening its elite playing squad and management team ahead of the new season.

Several player contracts were changed so that payments are now made on a pro-rata basis over 52 weeks rather than 44 weeks.

This change is intended to provide greater stability for players and staff.

Budgeting and Financial Controls

The club has introduced a new bottom-up budgeting process.

The four heads of department now have increased responsibility and accountability for their individual budgets. The departmental budgets were reviewed by an independent panel drawn from the Finance and Risk Committee.

The budgeting process will be revisited quarterly, with the objective of ensuring that income remains higher than expenditure.

The finance team has also been strengthened, and revised terms of reference have been agreed for the Finance and Risk Committee to improve oversight and transparency.

Operational Restructure

The club's operational restructure is progressing.

Greater responsibility has been delegated to heads of department, who now have ownership of their budgets within clearly defined authority levels established by the Board.

Improved management information will provide better visibility and control. Financial and operational performance will be reviewed monthly.

Lower Gigg Training Facilities

The club is in discussions with the council about resuming the use of Lower Gigg for training.

The facilities could be used by both elite and grassroots teams, providing greater flexibility and a wider range of development environments for players.

No final agreement was announced during the meeting, members will be kept updated.

Club Policy Review

A full review and standardisation of club policies is underway.

The review reflects the growth of the organisation and is intended to improve:

- Consistency.
- Compliance.
- Clarity.
- Accountability across all areas of the club.

Membership Programme Review

Rod Peters updated the forum on the project to renew the membership system

The current membership system was described as increasingly difficult to administer.

Following the merger, the society inherited a number of different membership groups and data sources, including:

- Bury FC Supporters Society members.
- Shakers Community Society members.
- Lifetime members.
- New FSSB members.

This has resulted in separate and inconsistent membership records rather than one reliable central database.

An Football Supporters' Association governance audit conducted in September strongly recommended the creation of a single central membership database.

The current arrangements rely heavily on manual administration, making reporting slow and increasing the risk of errors.

Approximately 600 members can currently access and update their information through the society website, while around 1,200 cannot. The system was therefore described as no longer fit for purpose and potentially falling short of relevant Community Benefit Society and Financial Conduct Authority requirements.

Move to Fanbase

A review of the membership system was carried out by members Alistair Rowe and David Helms, with recommendations presented to the Board in May.

The principal recommendation was to move membership management to **Fanbase**, which is already used as the club's ticketing platform.

The proposed system will provide:

- A single central membership database.
- More accurate membership records.
- Fewer administrative errors.
- Faster responses to member enquiries.
- Stronger governance and access controls.
- Improved self-service facilities.
- Greater flexibility for future membership options.
- A more joined-up relationship between club services and society membership.

Members who already use Fanbase for season tickets or match tickets may be able to use the same account for their society membership.

The platform is also expected to support communications such as:

- Society news.
- Event information.
- Payment reminders.
- Renewal notifications.
- Membership updates.

Membership Migration

The transfer to Fanbase will take place in phases.

The first phase will focus on transferring the existing membership arrangements to the new system. Members will receive instructions explaining how to create a Fanbase account or use an existing account.

Personal and financial information cannot simply be transferred automatically because of GDPR requirements and banking rules.

Members will therefore need to reauthorise their membership payments through Fanbase. The society acknowledged that this will require action from members and committed to providing clear instructions and support.

A test environment has already been established. Work is underway to:

- Test the system.
- Agree how membership data will be entered and managed.
- Establish reporting arrangements.
- Define who will have access to membership information.
- Complete the implementation plan.

Membership Migration Timetable

The intended timetable is:

- **By the end of September 2026:** New members will join through Fanbase rather than the society website.
- **By December 2026:** Monthly-paying members will be contacted about migration.
- **On a rolling basis:** Annual members will be transferred as their memberships become due.
- **By the end of 2026:** The main migration is expected to be completed.
- **Over the following 12 months:** Remaining rolling annual renewals and transfers will continue.

Members were encouraged to support the transition, as the new system is intended to strengthen and protect long-term fan ownership.

Future Membership Benefits

The society recognised that members understand their contributions help protect 100% fan ownership and support the club's work.

However, some members have reasonably asked what direct benefits they receive from membership.

A future phase of the membership review will therefore explore:

- Possible membership or ownership tiers.
- Additional member incentives.
- New benefits and services.
- Ways to improve the overall value of membership.

Any new benefit must comply with society rules and FCA guidance. It must also be consistent with the society's community-benefit purpose.

Business Process Mapping

Tina Newall updated the forum on the project to map key business processes.

The club has started mapping the key processes required to operate effectively.

These include areas such as:

- Matchday operations.
- Finance.
- Safeguarding.
- Communications.

Each process is being documented to show:

- What happens.
- Who is responsible.
- When each step takes place.
- The required inputs.
- The expected outputs.

The documented processes are then being checked with the people who carry out the work to ensure they reflect actual working practices rather than assumptions.

The next stage will identify risks, gaps, dependencies and opportunities for improvement.

This work is intended to:

- Reduce compliance and safeguarding risks.
- Improve consistency.
- Support succession planning.
- Allow operations to continue smoothly when people change roles.
- Provide a stronger foundation for future strategic planning.

The first stage was expected to be completed within seven to ten days of the forum, although further work would continue after that point.

Website and Internal Communications

Brad Seymour provided an update on websites, internal comms and about the Youth Advisory Board

The Board intends to integrate the existing club and society websites into one website.

The aim is to provide members and supporters with a single, clearer source of information that connects the club, the society and the new membership system.

The proposed website would include:

- Regular Board updates.
- Clear explanations of the Board's role.
- Information about how the Board works with staff and other committees.
- Board meeting minute summaries.
- Financial information and plain-English financial explanations.
- Society and membership information.
- Club news and media content.
- A monthly newsletter.

Board meeting minutes would remain available online rather than being removed after a limited period.

A discovery meeting has taken place, and a proposal is awaited. Alternative providers are also being considered.

One platform under review is specifically designed for football clubs and is reportedly used by around 50 other clubs. Its potential advantages include:

- A mobile-first design.
- Improved presentation of sponsors.
- Greater commercial exposure.
- Fully managed maintenance and support.
- Costs broadly comparable with the current website arrangements.

Further discussions with potential providers were expected to take place during August.

The website project is being coordinated with the Fanbase membership migration and was described as a Board priority.

Youth Advisory Board

The club plans to establish a **Youth Advisory Board** in partnership with the Football Supporters' Association.

The first group will initially be aimed at supporters aged approximately 15 to 17, with possible engagement beginning at age 14.

The Youth Advisory Board will be consultative rather than decision-making. Its purpose will be to provide young supporters with a structured and safe way to offer advice to the club.

Potential areas of discussion include:

- Ticketing.
- Events.
- Stadium development.
- Long-term planning.
- Strategy and governance.
- Matchday atmosphere.
- Sustainability.
- Social media.
- Youth engagement and initiatives.

The group is expected to include approximately eight to twelve members and will operate under formal but straightforward governance arrangements, including a code of conduct.

The club hopes the group will be diverse in terms of age, gender and background. The Community Trust is also expected to be involved.

Wider Fan Advisory Board

Once the Youth Advisory Board has been established, the club intends to develop a wider adult Fan Advisory Board.

This would be open to adult supporters across a broad age range and would provide another structured channel through which fans could advise the club.

Both groups would remain advisory and would not hold formal decision-making authority.

The experience of other clubs was cited as evidence that advisory boards can strengthen communication, engagement and supporter influence.

Advisory Board Application Process

Applications for the Youth Advisory Board are expected to involve a written statement of approximately 350 to 500 words.

Because applicants will be under 18, parental or guardian consent will be required.

The club and the Football Supporters' Association are developing:

- Application criteria.

- Questions for applicants.
- A selection process.
- A timetable.
- Safeguarding and governance arrangements.

The club aims to communicate further details by the end of August 2026, with applications opening shortly afterwards.

The Youth Advisory Board is expected to begin operating during autumn 2026. Development of the adult Fan Advisory Board will follow once the youth group has been established.

Strategy Development

Tina Newall then provided an update to the Forum on strategic development.

The Board has begun work on a new strategic planning process.

An eight-stage framework is being considered, covering:

1. The club's identity.
2. Its long-term ambition.
3. The current position.
4. Strategic options.
5. The desired future position.
6. Strategic priorities and objectives.
7. Operational initiatives.
8. Financial modelling.

The intended outcome is a formal strategic plan supported by a detailed business plan.

The work remains at an early stage and is still being considered and approved by the Board.

Finance and Risk Committee

Rod Peters concluded the update to members by setting out changes to the terms of reference for the finance and risk.

The terms of reference for the Finance and Risk Committee have been reviewed.

The revised approach is intended to create a committee that supports the Society Board in overseeing financial matters and organisational risk without duplicating the work of the club's formal auditors.

The committee's role will focus on:

- Financial oversight.
- Risk management.
- Advice and support to the Society Board.
- Reviewing relevant controls and information.

The Society Board will retain responsibility for all final decisions.

The Board will also retain the authority to appoint or remove the committee lead.

Removing the expectation that the committee perform a continuous audit function is expected to reduce the number of people required and make meetings easier to organise.

The revised terms of reference were approved at the Board's previous meeting.

The first team manager, Anthony Johnson (Jonno) provided update and answered questions on a range of football matters.

Squad Recruitment

The manager reported that he was pleased with the club's summer recruitment and the overall strength of the squad.

It was acknowledged that supporters naturally form relationships with players and may be disappointed when popular members of the squad leave. However, recruitment decisions must be based on whether players can help the club progress to the next level.

The departure of established players was therefore presented as part of the process of continually improving the squad.

Recruitment Approach

Recruitment decisions are based on a combination of:

- Performance data.
- Scouting reports.
- The coaching team's direct observations.
- The requirements of the playing system.
- The experience and character of potential signings.
- Affordability within the approved playing budget.

The club uses Wyscout and other performance data to assess potential signings, but the manager stressed that data is considered alongside traditional scouting and personal judgement.

The club will not sign a player, regardless of quality, unless the deal fits within the available budget.

James Melhado

James Melhado had been identified as a target before the end of the previous season.

His performance data was described as particularly strong, while scouting assessments indicated that he could address areas in which the team had previously been lacking.

The manager was confident that James would provide the qualities required on his side of the pitch and was very pleased to complete the signing.

George Glendon and Anthony Dudley

George Glendon and Anthony Dudley were recruited primarily to add experience to the squad.

The manager felt that the previous season's team lacked players with extensive experience of higher levels and successful promotion campaigns.

George had previously played under the manager for several years and served as his captain. His background also included development at Manchester City.

Both players had previously achieved promotions with the manager and were considered to offer:

- Leadership.
- Experience.
- Knowledge of successful teams.
- Understanding of the manager's expectations.
- Familiarity with the standards required at higher levels.

Leo Graham

Completing the permanent signing of Leo Graham required a significant amount of work behind the scenes.

The club had to manage the playing budget carefully and create sufficient space before completing the deal.

The manager described Leo as a high-quality footballer who had already developed a strong relationship with supporters during his previous loan spell.

Leo reportedly turned down an opportunity with a League One club to return to Bury. The manager viewed this as evidence of the player's commitment to the club and the positive experience he had during his loan.

It was emphasised that Leo had not been offered an excessive salary and that the agreement remained within the club's budget.

He has signed a two-year contract, allowing the club to invest in his longer-term development.

The manager believes Leo could contribute to multiple promotions and potentially develop a significant future transfer value.

Other New Signings

John Clarke had recently joined the club but had picked up a minor injury.

The club had also agreed the signing of an additional wide player, Jesurun Uchegbulam. subject to receiving international clearance.

The new signing was described as:

- Quick.
- Sharp.
- Dynamic.
- Skilful.
- Capable of providing a different attacking option in wide areas.

The manager had followed the player for several years and believed he could become an exciting and successful signing.

Current Squad Position

The manager considered the squad to be strong and was satisfied with the recruitment completed.

Competition for places was expected to make selecting both the starting team and the matchday squad difficult.

The club was not actively targeting a specific position at the time of the meeting. However, the recruitment team would remain open to suitable players becoming available before the start of the season.

The manager explained that players who have been unable to secure contracts at higher levels may become available as the season approaches.

Any further signing would be assessed according to whether the player:

- Improves the existing squad.
- Fits the team's style.
- Represents good value.
- Can be accommodated within the budget.

Longer-term injuries could also influence whether the club enters the market again.

Injury Update

The squad had experienced an unusually high number of injuries during pre-season, with eight or nine players unavailable at certain points.

The manager did not describe the situation as an injury crisis but acknowledged that it was the worst period for injuries he had experienced as a manager.

There was no single identified cause. Injuries had resulted from a variety of circumstances, including:

- Tackles.
- Knee problems.
- Muscular issues.
- General pre-season demands.

Questions had been raised about whether the 3G playing surface was responsible. The manager said he was not aware of conclusive data showing that artificial pitches cause more injuries than grass surfaces.

Several players were beginning to return to training, and the manager hoped that more positive news would follow during the week before the opening league fixture.

Aidan Walker

Aidan Walker had suffered a second injury during pre-season.

His recovery would be monitored over the following weeks. The length and seriousness of the injury could determine whether the club needs to recruit another central defender.

No decision had been made at the time of the forum.

Season Objectives

The manager stated clearly that the principal objective for the season is promotion. He said Bury could not realistically portray itself as an underdog because of the club's history, support and expectations.

Opposing teams are expected to treat matches against Bury as major occasions. Many teams may adopt a defensive approach, particularly at Gigg Lane, by sitting deep and attempting to make themselves difficult to break down.

The manager experienced this during the previous season and expects the challenge to increase as the team faces stronger opponents.

Despite bookmakers reportedly making Bury short-priced favourites for the title, the manager stressed that this did not guarantee success and should not create unrealistic pressure.

Promotion remains the target, but the club must pursue it in a financially responsible and realistic manner.

Playing Style

The manager wants the team to achieve results while playing entertaining and positive football.

He expressed a strong dislike of overly cautious or unattractive football and said his philosophy closely aligns with that of the wider coaching team.

The aim is to play in a way that:

- Excites supporters.
- Creates attacking football.
- Encourages players to be brave.
- Produces positive results.
- Reflects the expectations of Bury Football Club.

Winning remains the priority, but the manager wants victories to be achieved in a manner that supporters enjoy watching.

Cup Competitions

The club intends to take cup competitions seriously.

In the FA Trophy, the manager plans to select the strongest available team and make a genuine attempt to progress.

He noted that a relatively small number of victories could take a club to Wembley and said that the possibility of reaching the final should provide motivation.

The target in the FA Cup is to reach the first-round proper.

The manager acknowledged that previous decisions regarding cup selections may not have pleased every supporter but said the approach would be different during the coming season.

Opening Fixtures

The manager described the opening league schedule as particularly difficult.

The first match was due to be away at Redcar, a club expected to be among the leading promotion contenders.

This would be followed by matches against teams including:

- Guiseley, recently relegated despite recording a comparatively high points total.
- Warrington Rylands, who had narrowly missed promotion.

The manager said his attention was entirely focused on the first fixture rather than on longer-term rivals.

Rivals and Opposition

A question was asked about AVRO, who had achieved several promotions in a relatively short period.

The manager praised the club's progress and described it as a well-run organisation with a different operating model from Bury.

However, he said he would not focus on individual rivals or become distracted by other teams.

The approach will be to concentrate on Bury's preparation and address each opponent only when the relevant fixture approaches.

Development-Squad Loans

Players from the development and emerging-talent groups may be sent on loan to gain regular senior football.

The club places recall provisions in its loan agreements, although the exact terms vary depending on the length and structure of each arrangement.

For longer-term loans, a player may not be recalled until after an agreed period, such as the first half of the season.

For other loans, players can generally be recalled after the first 28 days.

The manager said the club aims to protect its position while also ensuring that young players receive meaningful playing time.

Most development players sent on loan are expected to have recall clauses.

Leo Graham's Fitness

A question was raised about whether Leo Graham's fitness could decline after moving from a full-time professional environment to part-time football.

The manager did not expect this to be a problem.

Graham is able to structure much of his life around football and continues to undertake individual gym and fitness work throughout the week.

The manager said Graham had completed a series of full matches during pre-season without appearing to suffer physically.

He also appeared stronger than during his original loan spell.

It was acknowledged that the transition should continue to be monitored, but the manager was satisfied with Graham's current condition.

Moving Towards Full-Time Football

The manager was asked when Bury may need to become a full-time club.

In his view, there is no immediate requirement to move away from the current part-time model before reaching National League North.

However, the step between the current level and National League North was described as extremely significant.

A large proportion of National League North clubs operate either:

- Full-time.
- Under a hybrid model.
- With additional daytime training sessions.

The manager suggested that, following promotion, the club should first assess the requirements of the new division.

A possible progression could be:

1. Remain part-time during the first season.
2. Introduce a hybrid model with additional daytime sessions.
3. Move towards full-time football when financially and operationally appropriate.

No fixed timetable was proposed.

The decision would need to be made by the Board following detailed discussions about finances, facilities and the club's competitive position.

Full-Time Teams at the Current Level

The manager was not aware of any clubs operating a fully full-time model at the club's current level.

Macclesfield was discussed as an example of a club that had previously introduced daytime training rather than immediately moving to a fully professional structure.

Other clubs such as South Shields and Buxton had also used more intensive training models during successful promotion campaigns.

The discussion highlighted that Bury's current part-time status is broadly consistent with most clubs at this level.

Part-Time and Full-Time Performance

The manager reflected on his previous promotion with Radcliffe, which was achieved with a part-time team competing against clubs with full-time or more intensive training arrangements.

He stressed that success remained dependent on recruiting good players and creating an effective team.

However, full-time clubs may gain an advantage during the second half of a season because they have:

- More contact time with players.
- Greater recovery opportunities.
- More control over fitness programmes.

- Better capacity to manage fatigue and injuries.

These differences can become more noticeable during the winter months and towards the end of a demanding season.

The club will therefore need detailed discussions about its future training model if it reaches National League North.

Long-Term Football Ambition

The manager's personal ambition is for Bury to return to the English Football League.

He acknowledged that achieving this within three years would be extremely difficult, but believes the club should set ambitious long-term objectives.

Progress must be sustainable and based on responsible use of members' and supporters' money.

The club's football model will focus on:

- Recruiting the right players at the right age.
- Avoiding unsustainable spending.
- Developing players with future value.
- Creating opportunities for young players.
- Reinvesting any transfer income.
- Building a squad capable of progressing through several levels.

Player Development Model

The manager described a longer-term model in which young players are recruited, developed and given opportunities before potentially being transferred for a fee.

Income generated through player sales could then be reinvested into further young talent.

Leo Graham was used as an example of the type of player who could contribute on the pitch while also developing future value for the club.

Young players have received significant minutes during pre-season. Some will continue training with the first team, while others will go on loan to gain competitive experience.

The intention is to ensure that suitable replacements are already developing when senior players eventually leave.

School of Excellence

The club plans to establish a stronger School of Excellence pathway over the next 12 months.

The manager reflected on his own experience in Bury's former School of Excellence and wants the club to become a leading destination for talented young players from the local area.

The existing boys' and girls' junior structure was praised as a strong participation programme.

The proposed School of Excellence would introduce an increased focus on identifying and developing high-potential players while maintaining relationships with local junior clubs.

The club intends to work constructively with grassroots teams and avoid simply removing players without providing support or opportunities in return.

Club-Wide Football Identity

The School of Excellence will aim to create a consistent style of play across the club.

First-team coaches will support the development of junior coaches so that boys' and girls' teams from the youngest age groups learn principles like those used by the senior team.

The objective is to establish a recognisable Bury football identity or "DNA".

Players progressing through each age group should therefore understand:

- The club's playing style.
- The tactical principles expected.
- Technical standards.
- Behavioural expectations.
- The pathway towards senior football.

Under-21 Development

The under-21 side will be used primarily for player development rather than results.

The squad is expected to be significantly younger than in the previous season, with an average age of approximately 17 or 18 rather than 20 or 21.

The manager said promotion should not be the principal objective for the under-21s.

The team's purpose is to:

- Prepare young players for senior football.
- Introduce the first team's playing style.
- Provide a pathway into first-team training.
- Allow coaches to assess players in a competitive environment.

Several under-21 players had already trained with the first-team squad during pre-season.

The manager stressed that these opportunities were based on ability rather than being offered simply to demonstrate that a pathway exists.

Desired Player Qualities

The club has developed a blueprint for the type of young player it wants to recruit and develop.

The key areas include:

- **Technical qualities**, including confidence using both feet.
- **Physical qualities**, appropriate to the player's age and position.
- **Psychological qualities**, including resilience and willingness to learn.

- **Character**, including attitude, personality and professionalism.
- **Social qualities**, including the ability to work within a team and represent the club appropriately.

This framework will guide both recruitment and coaching within the proposed School of Excellence.

squad and clearer route into senior football are intended to reduce future recruitment costs, create potential transfer value and support the club's eventual return to the English Football League.

Q&A

Tina Newall introduce the final session of the Forum

The formal question-and-answer session included:

- Questions submitted in advance.
- Questions from online attendees.
- Questions from members attending in person.

Approximately 75 questions had been submitted before the forum. Similar questions were grouped together so that the Board could respond to the main themes efficiently.

3G Pitch Usage and Revenue

Members asked who uses the 3G pitch, how much revenue it generates and whether professional clubs can hire it.

The pitch is currently used by:

- Bury FC teams.
- Grassroots teams.
- Schools.
- Community groups.
- Private and corporate bookings.

The club continually reviews the pitch's usage, pricing and long-term management.

Revenue from the facility supports:

- The club's financial sustainability.
- Community programmes.
- Stadium operations.
- The future cost of replacing the pitch.

The club remains open to suitable external and professional bookings where these can be accommodated.

Benefactors and External Investment

The benefactors were described as valued supporters of the club.

Some continue to contribute through their professional knowledge and experience. For example, one benefactor serves on the Finance and Risk Committee and participated in the recent budgeting process.

Individual financial and commercial arrangements involving benefactors will remain confidential.

The club and the benefactors participate in a shared board for the stadium company, Bury FC 2019 Limited. This board includes:

- Four FSSB directors.
- Three benefactor-appointed directors.

The stadium company board meets quarterly.

The two groups have also worked together on a grant application intended to improve and expand changing facilities for the women's team.

The benefactors do not have any involvement in elite football operations or first-team decisions.

The Board remains open to discussions about external investment. However, any proposal must protect the club's fan-owned model.

The immediate priority is to develop the strategic, operational and financial options required to support the club's continued growth.

Communications and Engagement

The Board acknowledged that communication remains a recurring concern and needs to improve.

Planned improvements include:

- Refreshing the club website.
- Updating the communications plan.
- Increasing the frequency of member updates.
- Developing structured supporter advisory groups.
- Continuing to hold members' forums.
- Introducing additional ways for members to engage with the Board.

The club has also developed an organisational chart in collaboration with the benefactors.

This will explain how the society, club companies, stadium company and associated organisations fit together. The Community Trust still needs to be added before the chart is shared with members.

The Board hoped to publish the completed structure within the following few weeks.

Fan Consultation and Decision-Making

Members requested greater clarity about when supporters will be consulted on club decisions.

The Board explained that routine operational and financial decisions are the responsibility of the elected Board and club staff.

Consultation or a formal member vote may be required for:

- Major strategic decisions.
- Significant policy changes.

- Governance matters.
- Issues covered by the society's rules.

The Board will consider developing a formal decision-making framework explaining when and how member consultation will take place.

This proposal will be discussed at a future Board meeting.

Matchday Experience

Members raised concerns and suggestions relating to:

- Stadium atmosphere.
- Fan zones.
- Catering.
- Away-supporter facilities.
- Matchday operations.

The club is reviewing these areas and considering improvements to:

- Fan-zone provision.
- Catering capacity and capability.
- Atmosphere across the stands.
- Facilities and arrangements for visiting supporters.

Any changes will be introduced in phases and will depend on:

- Cost.
- Practical feasibility.
- Available space.
- Volunteer capacity.

Potential South Stand Fan Area

The stadium's location limits the club's ability to create a large conventional fan zone.

One option being explored is the development of space beneath the South Stand into a modern, usable supporter area.

The area currently contains a significant amount of earth and material that would need to be removed before development could begin.

The work could not realistically take place during the playing season.

Any project would therefore require:

- A full business case.
- Detailed planning.
- Cost assessment.
- Formal approval.
- Completion during a future close season.

The proposal is not included in the current season's plans.

Financial Reporting

Members again raised questions about the previous season's financial position and the amount of detail made available.

The Board confirmed that the full financial position will be set out in the next published accounts.

The club remains committed to transparency but must protect confidential and commercially sensitive information.

Structured quarterly financial reports will be introduced during the season.

Promotion Celebrations

Members asked why celebrations had not been arranged in advance of the club securing promotion.

The Board explained that promotion could not be confirmed until the final match of the season had been completed.

A conscious decision was therefore taken not to make advance arrangements for celebrations before the result was certain.

The Board acknowledged that this had disappointed some supporters but maintained that it had been the correct approach.

Elite Development and Emerging Talent

Questions about the elite development squad, emerging-talent programme and School of Excellence had been addressed during the manager's earlier presentation.

The club intends to strengthen the pathway between junior football, development teams and the first-team squad.

Stand Naming

The club is exploring possible naming arrangements for the Main Stand.

Options may include:

- Commercial sponsorship.
- Heritage-based naming.
- A combination of commercial and historical recognition.

No final decision had been made.

Over-65 Concessions

Concession arrangements are reviewed annually.

Pricing for supporters aged over 65 will be considered as part of the **2027–28 ticketing review**.

The new ticketing provider is expected to supply improved data, allowing the club to analyse the financial effect of potential changes more accurately.

During the online Q&A, the Board clarified that concession pricing would be **reviewed**, rather than automatically revised.

Disabled Parking

A number of parking spaces are available for disabled supporters, and these will remain in place.

General stadium parking will continue to operate on a pay-at-the-gate and first-come, first-served basis.

There are no current plans to change the overall parking arrangements.

Ticket Instalment Plans

Season-ticket instalment plans have been successful and will continue.

The club will seek to maintain options that allow supporters to spread the cost of season tickets.

Priority Windows for All-Ticket Matches

Members and season-ticket holders can only receive a priority purchasing period for away or all-ticket fixtures when the opposing club allows Bury to sell its own allocation through the club's ticketing platform.

As Bury progresses through the leagues, this arrangement may become less common.

Where tickets are controlled and sold directly by the home club, Bury cannot independently introduce a member or season-ticket priority window.

Under-14s Admission Policy

The admission policy for supporters under the age of 14 generated the largest amount of advance feedback.

The club had already published a detailed statement and did not intend to provide a further substantive update.

It clarified that Football Association and National League guidance requires supporters under 14 to be accompanied by a responsible adult at Step 2 and above.

This would become a mandatory requirement if the club progresses to that level.

Veterans' Tickets

The club was asked whether veterans' season tickets could be purchased online.

The Board agreed to explore whether an online verification process and discount-code arrangement could be introduced.

No commitment or implementation date was given.

Membership Income and Growth

A member noted that membership income had fallen compared with the previous year and remained relatively low compared with match attendance.

It was suggested that increasing membership to approximately 3,000 or 3,500 people could generate substantial additional income.

The Board agreed that membership growth represents an important financial opportunity.

The immediate priority is to transfer membership administration to Fanbase. Once that has been completed, the next phase will consider:

- Improving the membership experience.
- Introducing compliant member incentives.
- Developing different membership tiers.
- Encouraging more supporters to join.
- Increasing the direct value offered to members.

The club acknowledged that supporters often ask what they receive personally from membership, alongside their contribution to maintaining fan ownership.

Any benefits must comply with society rules and community-benefit requirements.

3G Pitch Lifespan

The 3G pitch has an expected maximum lifespan of approximately ten years.

At the time of the forum, the club estimated that around eight years remained, although the actual lifespan will depend on:

- The level of use.
- Regular maintenance.
- Annual testing.
- The condition of the playing surface.
- Future league requirements.

The club limits usage to approximately 50 hours each week.

The pitch is subject to an annual FIFA-standard bounce test because of the level at which the club competes.

Some artificial pitches fail the required tests before reaching ten years, while others remain usable for their full expected lifespan.

Regular maintenance—including brushing, dragging and replenishing the infill—is intended to extend its useful life.

3G Replacement Fund

The club has established a sinking fund for the future replacement of the 3G pitch.

At the current contribution rate, the fund is expected to contain approximately **£600,000** by the end of the ten-year lifecycle.

This was described as broadly equivalent to the original cost of the pitch.

Future decisions will also depend on the league in which the club is playing. Artificial pitches may not be permitted if the club returns to the English Football League, while different rules or limited flexibility may apply in the National League.

Forum Attendance

A member asked how many people had applied to attend the forum.

The figures reported were:

- Approximately 78 applications.
- 50 initial invitations following the ballot.
- 17 invited attendees subsequently withdrawing.

- Vacant places offered to members on the reserve list.

A small number of people were still unable to attend because of the capacity limit.

There were also some late non-attendances, which the organisers described as disappointing.

Proposed Memorial Clock

A supporter asked whether the club would consider installing a clock above the Manchester Road Stand as a tribute to his father, a long-standing member of the Bury community and supporter of the club.

The supporter indicated that he would be willing to contribute towards the cost.

Club representatives responded positively and agreed to hold further discussions about the proposal.

No formal approval was given during the meeting, but the club was willing to explore the idea.

Playing Budget

Members asked whether the club still applies a fixed percentage of revenue to the playing budget.

The Board explained that publishing a fixed percentage would make it possible for competitors and player representatives to calculate the approximate playing budget using publicly available income figures.

This could weaken the club's position during:

- Player recruitment.
- Contract renewals.
- Salary negotiations.
- Discussions with agents.

The club therefore does not intend to disclose the playing budget or a fixed percentage of revenue.

The Board stated that extensive work had been undertaken to develop a budget that:

- Is competitive at Step 3.
- Honours existing contractual commitments.
- Supports the manager's recruitment requirements.
- Remains financially sustainable.

At the time of the meeting, recruitment remained within the approved budget, although the club was approaching its limit.

Further recruitment might therefore require one player to leave before another could be signed.

Additional Employment Costs

The Board explained that, as a Community Benefit Society, the club must process all player payments formally through its accounts.

It cannot use informal or undeclared cash payments. Therefore we have employment costs, including National Insurance and pension contributions.

The club estimated that it pays approximately **£1.18 for every £1 of player salary**, placing it at a cost disadvantage compared with clubs that may operate differently.

Member Influence over the Playing Budget

A member argued that publishing a target percentage for the playing budget would allow supporters to express a view on whether the club should spend more or less.

The Chair responded that decisions about the playing budget fall within the responsibilities delegated to the elected Board.

The budget is also informed by the requirements of the appointed manager.

No commitment was made to introduce a formal member vote on the playing budget.

Financial Safeguards and Losses

An online question asked what financial safeguards were in place, when the club would act to stop losses and what level of loss would be considered unacceptable.

The Chair stated that the desired position is for the club not to make losses.

New safeguards have been introduced to avoid repeating the previous year's result, including:

- Improved budgeting.
- Stronger financial oversight.
- Greater departmental accountability.
- Regular reviews.
- Better management information.

The precise red lines and future financial requirements will be developed through the club's strategic planning and financial-modelling work.

Cost of Moving Full-Time

The Chair said discussions with the manager had challenged the assumption that moving from part-time to full-time football would necessarily lead to a very large increase in player costs.

Full-time training may allow the club to recruit and develop players differently because increased coaching and contact time can improve their fitness and ability.

However, a significant cost may arise from coaching and support staff needing to leave other employment and take full-time roles with the club.

The financial implications of full-time or hybrid football will be considered through the strategy and business-planning process.

Attendances

Average attendance was reported to have increased from approximately **3,200 to just under 3,700**.

This growth was attributed to:

- Strong results on the pitch.

- Attractive football.
- Promotion.
- Community engagement.
- Wider efforts to reconnect people with the club.
- Supporters who may not previously have attended regularly.

Increasing attendance year on year remains an important strategic objective.

Ticket Pricing and Affordability

A member asked how the club intends to balance affordability with the higher operating costs associated with moving through the leagues.

The club benchmarks its ticket prices against comparable teams in the same division.

It was noted that Bury had previously charged similar prices to clubs with much smaller grounds, despite having significantly higher stadium costs.

For the current season, the club aligned its pricing broadly with FC United of Manchester.

The objective is to keep admission as affordable as possible while recognising:

- The cost of operating Gigg Lane.
- The prices charged by comparable clubs.
- The need to fund a competitive team.
- The importance of remaining sustainable.

The club already develops indicative ticket-price ranges based on whether it remains in the current division or earns promotion.

Although no future price was guaranteed, the commercial team did not expect increases over the next two years to be as large as those experienced following the club's recent consecutive promotions.

Long-term pricing will form part of the wider strategic and business-planning work.

Fund the Future and Budget-Boosting Schemes

A member asked about a possible "Fund the Future" scheme based on approaches used by other fan-owned clubs such as Darlington.

The club has developed a potential fundraising plan that could be introduced if required.

However, no launch date has been agreed.

The Board has discussed whether such a scheme is appropriate and when it might be introduced.

For the time being, the focus is on improving and growing the society membership scheme.

There may be overlap between the incentives offered through membership and those that could be included in a playing-budget fundraising campaign.

The prepared fundraising model will remain available should the Board decide to use it later.

Pound for the Ground

A supporter asked for greater transparency about how money raised through the Pound for the Ground scheme is distributed.

It was suggested that clearer communication could address supporter concerns, encourage more participation and increase income for the club.

The Chair confirmed that the Board was already considering how the scheme could be improved.

The matter would be placed on the agenda for the next Board meeting.

Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked members for attending and requested constructive feedback on the format and content of the forum.

As this was the first forum of its kind, the Board will consider holding similar events more regularly if members find them useful.

The next formal member event is expected to be the Annual General Meeting.

Thanks, were also given to the volunteers who supported:

- Online access.
- Technical equipment.
- Registration and check-in.
- General organisation of the event.