STAND UP FOR THE DONS

Christmas is coming – and so are the elections to the Dons Trust Board. Some vacancies will arise as long-serving members stand down. Have you thought about doing your tour of duty? We asked the board's newest recruits about how they found their first term in office.

Elections to the Dons Trust board will take place in the New Year. Seven of the current members are coming to the end of their terms of office. For Matt Breach, David Cox, Ivor Heller, Nigel Higgs, Paul Jeater, Sean McLaughlin and Iain McNay, this will be the end of their two-year tours of duty. Some of them have done more than one stint on the board.

In accordance with the trust's constitution, all seven must stand for election if they want to continue to serve on the board. Over the holiday period they will be considering whether they wish to stand again. All seven retiring members, along with the five members who are continuing – Tom Adam, Dean Parsons, Aideen Rochford, Erik Samuelson and Kris Stewart – would like to invite all their fellow members of the trust to give some thought over the holiday period to the idea of standing for election.

Over the past six years we have all worked together to secure the future of our club as one that is owned and controlled by us, the fans. There is no clearer way of showing our commitment to our principles than by returning a democratically elected board to oversee the running of the club on our behalf. The board has made it one of its priorities to "seek a vibrant election with a full set of candidates in the forthcoming election". The timetable proposed by the Election Steering Group has been approved by the board and it is set out below.

So, is 2009 the year you would like to stand up for the Dons? Please do think about it.

Naturally, you are going to want to have an idea of what is involved in being a member of the Dons Trust board. How much time does it take? What skills do you need? And perhaps most importantly, how do you know whether it is a job for you?

One of the current board's priorities is to make sure that we get an election that puts forward good candidates, whether they are standing for the first time or for re-election, so that we will have a contest that is genuine and will encourage as many members as possible to vote.

To help trust members decide whether to give it a go, and to explain to non-members why joining the Dons Trust is a good thing (since it entitles you to vote – and/or to stand!), we spoke to the two most recently appointed board members, Aideen Rochford and Dean Parsons, about their roles on the board and how they feel about it, nine months after their election. Ladies first:

Why did you stand for the Dons Trust board?

Aideen Curiosity was a part of it: what was it all about? And someone on the board convinced me that I didn't need to be a legal or financial genius. And also, why not? I felt I had enough time. And

Thursday 1 January	Nominations open
Monday 12 January	Nominations close
Thursday 15 January	Manifestos published on the official website
Monday 19 January	Voting forms and candidates' manifestos sent to members
Saturday 24 January	Hustings at home game against Braintree Town
Saturday 14 February	Closing date for voting Sunday 15 February and
Monday 16 February	Count and announcement of the result
Tuesday 24 February	Preliminary report on the by-election in the Worcester City programme

finally, I felt that out a sense of duty to my club I should put something into it.

Dean Good question. I wanted to be more involved with the club, to give a bit more and be a part of it. Also, there was no-one under 35 on the board and I thought I'd try to put that right while I was (just) still young enough!

Has it turned out to be what you expected?

Aldeen No, it's been better than I expected. I thought I'd be given a whole load of work that I was out of my depth with, and that hasn't happened. I also thought that it would be much more time-consuming, and it's been a pleasant surprise how relatively little time it takes.

Dean It's been a lot more than I expected. I must admit, I was nervous about standing and I wondered if I was capable of doing the job. But I've never been nervous about speaking my mind. The last board meeting was the best we've had, and it was great to have the kind of insight into the club that you can get in detail only by taking part in the meetings.

How much time does it take?

Aldeen There is one meeting a month. A lot of discussion takes place by email between meetings, usually during the day, but it isn't the end of the world if you can't communicate at that time.

Dean Not a great deal. A meeting once a month on the first Monday of the month. It's nowhere near as much as time as I thought it would take.

What don't you like about the job?

Aldeen I hate it when I know the facts and I hear or see people repeating rumours as if they are facts when you know they are wrong. But if it's about something private, like a player's wages, we can't comment. And there is some stuff we can't publish because doing so would give away our negotiating position on something that matters to the club.

Dean I can't say there is anything I've disliked about it.

"I'm able to take responsibility and be involved in something that's a big part of my life"

What do you particularly like about the job?

Aldeen I love seeing the big overall view, like the building project on the stand extension from the very beginning to the vote about taking on the debt – democracy in action – and seeing it finished. Let's be honest, I love getting the gossip from the horse's mouth. But also I feel that I'm able to take responsibility and be involved in something that's a big part of my life. And it is a friendly board – no-one makes me feel stupid for asking questions when I don't understand.

Dean It's the insight, knowing about what's happening and having my say. Also, being able to help and make decisions about the club. Oh, and the food!

Would you stand again?

Aldeen Yes, definitely. I didn't enjoy doing the manifesto but if that's the hardest thing you have to do, that's fine.

Dean Yes, definitely, if I'm allowed!

What is the hardest thing about the role?

Aldeen There isn't really anything hard about it. What is hard about sitting at a table and offering opinions on things you really care about, and asking questions? OK, you need to spend some time before the meeting thinking about what you believe is best, but I do a lot of thinking about the club anyway, so why not do it constructively?

Dean Agreeing with everyone! When decisions have to be made I sometimes have to set aside the view that I take as a fan and try to think about what is best for the club overall and look at the sensible options. But there's nothing that I would call overly difficult.

Have you had to take on a specific role?

Aideen I didn't have to take it on – I volunteered – but I am on the board of the AFC Wimbledon Ladies limited company. People seem to think that you get allocated specific responsibilities, but actually your main responsibility is to ask questions and not just sit there holding your opinions back.

Dean As a board member, I also volunteered to join the Ladies board. We don't meet too often and I feel that I can contribute. I've also taken on the buy-a-brick campaign, which I guess I do as a board member, but actually I'd have been glad to do it even if I hadn't been elected to the board.

Would you recommend standing?

"A meeting once a month . . . it's nowhere near as much as time as I thought it would take"

Aideen Yes. I think that some people don't stand because they're afraid of standing and not getting elected, but even if that happens there's no shame, because what you'll actually have done is make it a bit more democratic by forcing the members to think a bit harder about what they want.

Dean Yes, definitely. There's no question about it. A lot of our fans have a lot to give and I wish they would step forward. I think I shouldn't stay the youngest board member, and I'd love to see another woman join Aideen on the board. And if anyone would like to know more, then please feel free to approach me before or after a game. I can be a little bit difficult to get hold of during the game – but before or after would be just fine.

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