



SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED LIAISON MEETING



Thursday, 19th October 2017
Roots Hall Stadium 16:00

1. Present and Apologies:

Those in attendance were Steve Waggott (SW), new Head of Operations; Patrick Van der Waag (PvW); Paul FitzGerald (PF); Shane Chapman (SC) and Kay Fogg (KF). Apologies were received from Geoffrey King (GK); Danny Macklin (DM) and Paul Yeomanson (PY).

This being SW's first meeting, Trust Chairman PF outlined the background to the meetings, the Trust's role at the club and agreed to chair the meeting.

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 31st August 2017

Follow up on actions not otherwise covered in Agenda items:

- **Local Promotions** – the action still remains with the Trust as there has not been a Meeting since the last Liaison.
ACTION – Trust to raise this item at their next Board Meeting
- **Youth team mini bus** – the club is now in possession of the mini bus, the lease being in place and with the art work currently in the process of being prepared by the Commercial team, and estimated to cost approx. £600.
ACTION – PF to liaise with Ricky Duncan regarding a press launch, to include some of the current crop of youth players
ACTION – SW/PF to finalise the trust's Youth Contract
- **Alan Moody** – PF reported on how well the whole appeal process had gone, and also Alan's visit to the ground, meeting up with fellow players etc. The appeal totalled the fantastic sum of £11,600, with a final anonymous donation of £5,000. Middlesbrough had provided a signed shirt and PF requested the same from Southend United, to be sent on to Alan.
ACTION – SW to provide signed shirt
- **Frankie Banks scrapbooks** – some progress to report here – they have apparently gone home with Frankie! April Smith, from SUCET has kindly agreed to try and get them back. The Trust will continue to monitor this action.

3. Club Finances

PvW reported that wages, PAYE and VAT are all up to date. The chairman continues to support the club as appropriate.

SC commented that the poor numbers in attendance at Tuesday night's home game could not be considered sustainable, and it was agreed that the numbers were less than would have been budgeted.

4. New Stadium

PvW advised that we are still looking at the Council's meeting in December to have the outline planning for the new stadium approved. PF advised that he had contacted RM about Trust members and supporters canvassing the Council and that he had been receptive to the idea of individuals doing so.

SW commented on the vital nature of the new stadium to the club and to the Community Trust. It will be a multi-purpose stadium offering much more than just matchday usage. He explained about software available from the Home Office which produces data to give value to schemes such as ours and the outreach potential of SUCET, and that all the data surrounding the proposed plans is favourable.

PvW added that, 11 years ago only two clubs in the EFL had broke even or even made a profit, and now, that figure is up to 15, with new stadiums being key impact on these figures.

The club will be leasing the stadium at the cost of £450,000 per annum under the current agreement, with the stadium being available to use in its entirety throughout the week – unlike Coventry's Ricoh or Oxford's Kazam, proceeds and profits would return to the club on events outside of football. Both of these Football Club were paying in the region of £1m per year rental.

5. Junior Blues

KF gave SW some background to the Junior Blues and the Trust's role, and advised the current situation regarding the membership, with numbers of new members continuing to climb. All members who have not renewed or who are still on the old Trust scheme are to be contacted.

The forthcoming match on Saturday 21st, against Bury, has been designated as the "Junior Blues" match for this season, and KF expressed concerns at the lack of activities in place to enhance the Junior Blues' experiences. A pitch walk is to take place at half time, however, this seems to be the only thing arranged.

6. Shrimpers Bar Entrance Hall, Ladies Toilets & Stadium Facilities

The ongoing issues with facilities around the ground were highlighted for SW's benefit, he said he had undertaken a two hour tour prior to the Tuesday night match to see things for himself. PvW advised that approx. 1500 seats were partially or entirely replaced over the summer and that some concrete had been replaced on steps – in addition to all the other remedial work which had taken place. A recent visitor to the Trust's board meeting had complained about the toilets at the back of the West Family stand.

ACTION – PvW/SW to assess and address concerns

PF advised that the marks on the flooring in the entrance to the Shrimpers Bar had now been removed, however, there are still issues with SUCET using the bar area and leaving things out. This has apparently been denied by SUCET but, with doors not locked, other people can get in there. On Tuesday night, however, presentation materials of theirs had been left on tables when the bar opened. Tables have also gone missing and are being moved.

ACTION – SW to discuss with DS. PY to draw up and laminate a floor plan for the bar

KF advised that there had been no hand driers working in the ladies toilet in the Shrimpers for about a month. SC asked if the heating in the Shrimpers bar could be checked ahead of the Winter period.

ACTION – PvW/SW to look into and rectify

Recent concerns raised about the congestion at the back of the West stand with people standing in gangways, particularly where wheelchairs are present have been eased, although the club are currently investigating options surrounding the siting of our wheelchair users.

7. Away Travel Reciprocal Parking Charges & issues

The situation surrounding this was explained to SW, who was entirely sympathetic. To illustrate, SC advised that, at the recent away game at Wigan, coaches had been charged £20 each to park and had been approx. ¼ of a mile away from the ground which several of the more elderly supporters had found difficult. It was noted that Rotherham charge £35 per coach.

SW agreed to email Walsall ahead of our next away game to specifically address this issue with them and to ensure that both Trust and TravelZone coaches are not charged. He also intends to make the subject of charging away coaches for parking an agenda item at the next EFL meeting, clubs should want away fans to feel welcomed and to encourage them to spend money – charging the coaches starts their visit off in the wrong way.

SW also suggested he and SC set up a working group for away games.

ACTION – SW to email Walsall; SW/SC to co-ordinate working group

8. Roots Hall pitch

PvW advised that the has been better in some areas, though the South end of the ground is proving more problematic – as it does with frost – as it's more shaded. Major treatment is planned for Wednesday, 25th, in addition to that already undertaken.

9. iFollow

SC and PY had both had personal problems with this recently whilst trying to use abroad, although both had followed the correct procedures. Matt Munday, in Commercial, acknowledged there were some problems and that the club needed to investigate further.

SW agreed that this requires further investigation amongst supporters. PF offered to canvas Trust members and KF offered to canvas opinion on supporters' forum, ShrimperZone. KF also suggested the club tweet out for supporter responses, which was felt to be a good idea.

ACTION – KF to canvas ShrimperZone; PF to canvas Trust members. SW to discuss with MM.

10. Any Other Business:

- **Shrewsbury Crowd Funding for Safe Standing** – PF raised the fact that Shrewsbury had recently raised £65k. He felt that this was impressive fund raising and raised the issue as to whether it was something that might ever be considered for us.
- **Aviva Scheme for Employees** – With his son, and fellow Board member being an employee, PF outlined the scheme and how the Trust will be seeking a grant towards helping to reach out and involve particular disadvantaged groups in the community with football. These include: “Looked After” children; People with disabilities and Lonely People.
ACTION – PF to update
- **Ex-Players Association** – With the success of the Alan Moody campaign, PF advised that the Trust would be keen to help set up an ex-players association at the club. SW confirmed that Charlton and Coventry, two of his previous clubs, already do this and he felt it would be a good idea. A working party of Trust members and other supporters has been set up and is due to meet soon.
ACTION – PF to report back
- **Programme Notes** – SC raised concerns over some changes to programme notes produced for the Trust’s pages. It was unclear if these changes had been made in censorship or due to space. SW suggested it would be a good idea for the club’s Media Officer to meet with CC and SC to discuss the parameters going forward.
ACTION – SC to arrange meeting with CC and MM
- **Fixture list cards/Programmes** – SC raised the size and “usability” of the current fixture list and compared it with Fleetwood’s. It was agreed that the club colours do not make a credit card size fixture list ideal for people to read. The club will consider options for next year. Discussion was also had over the viability of producing a smaller and much cheaper programme in the same way Fleetwood do. SW mentioned that he felt programme sellers should visit the main club bars.
- **ACTION – Commercial to consider option next season**
- **Cost of drinks** – SC pointed out that the cost of drinking in the club’s bars is putting more and more people off and that local pubs are benefitting. Apparently the Cricketers offers STHs £1 off a pint. PvW said that “Happy Hour” hadn’t worked when tried, the uptake had increased in volume but not in the value of the sales to the club. Discussion followed about various ideas to try to entice people back.
ACTION – SC to talk to some former regulars

11. Date of next meeting – TBC