



SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED LIAISON MEETING



Thursday, 10th June 2021
18:00

Tap Room, 19 Haltwhistle Road, South Woodham Ferrers

1. Present and Apologies:

Those in attendance were Tom Lawrence (TL), Patrick Van der Waag (PVW), Paul FitzGerald (PF), Shane Chapman (SC) and Kay Fogg (KF). Apologies were received from Paul Yeomanson (PY).

Meeting chaired by PF, it was agreed that, the objective was to familiarise TL with the purpose of the meetings and to “catch up”, therefore not following the usual format. PF explained that there are certain things which are under the Trust remit, and would be covered at all meetings, and that sometimes things cross over with the Supporters Group Meetings – a lot of supporters report issues with the ground to Trust members, for instance.

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the last Meeting held on 27th February 2021:

It was agreed that there was little relevant from our last Meeting that was not going to be covered elsewhere in discussions.

3. General Catch Up:

Financials & Stadium News:

PVW advised that the progress with planning at the council will enable money to be released to the benefit of the Football Club and that the new stadium will allow the Club to generate more funds for its own benefit and would be a game changer for the benefit of the Club.

TL explained that the Club’s inability to generate revenue from non-footballing activities was inhibited by the infrastructure and physical space available at Roots Hall. By way of example, if we had conferencing and banqueting facilities, we would be able to increase income significantly, both matchday and non-matchday. At the new ground, there will be significant conferencing and banqueting space which will enable us to increase both matchday and non-matchday income.

TL confirmed there is a re-structuring going on at Roots Hall at present and that he is encouraging a more positive approach to the working environment, with the objective of raising standards and setting the culture for all employees.

Roots Hall has suffered a fair bit during the lockdown period, and the West Stand roof will be having some significant replacement. There may be an opportunity for supporters to help with some work/repairs in and around the ground and KF advised that a large number of people had already said they would be prepared to help with this on a thread on ShrimperZone.

TL wants to encourage people into the ground earlier, make them feel more welcome, with improvements to catering across the board. He confirmed that they are also looking into

having cheaper beer options. PF and SC said that this is something the Trust have long advocated in these meetings.

Junior Blues:

PF gave some background to the Junior Blues, how the Trust have always run their own "Junior Supporters" membership – the Junior Shrimpers, and that the Club had asked the Trust to take over their own dwindling Junior Blues 20 or so years ago. Since KF's involvement, the Junior Shrimpers had become successful enough that the Club had proposed a joint Junior Blues initiative, which KF had run on behalf of both, since 2013.

KF explained that numbers have reduced significantly as there hasn't been anyone at the Club with any involvement since the Ticket Office Manager left in October, with the database not having been touched since November 2020. She had hoped to be able to discuss plans with RE moving forwards.

TL advised that the Community Trust had been showing an interest in involvement in junior supporters, discussing flag bearers. KF said that flag bearing was an exclusive privilege to existing Junior Blues members and that the Community Trust had never had any involvement before other than offering a discount on soccer schools to Junior Blues members. She added that the majority of organisation is usually done by herself, although Matt Mundy and Callum Bishop are responsible for the Junior Blues page in the programme.

TL explained how Gillingham give a free programme to youngsters and there was some discussion on programmes. Our programme sales are based on sales of 800 physical copies, but it is expected that numbers of hard copies of programmes will be reduced and the Club is currently looking into pricing around digital copies. It was noted that there is a lot of wastage in programmes across hospitality.

SUEPA:

PF reported that the SUEPA organiser, Trust board member, AL, had been disappointed with the proposed number of events from the Commercial department for the coming year. He explained that these events create a huge amount of goodwill and generate a lot of interest. Our ex-players' association is one of the biggest in the country.

Fans' Fundraising:

PF advised that the Shrimpers Trust was in receipt of fund raising from around the time of the most recent court cases to the sum of £3,300 which had been offered to Mark Molesley. TL advised that he is intending to have some major refurbishment undertaken at Boots & Laces – it needs new flooring in particular – and that they are going to be looking for some new equipment as well – two bikes and two running machines. This money would help towards these costs.

Season Tickets:

Proposals are with the Chairman, and awaiting approval before announcing. There will be a compensation package.

The Club is looking at a system with a loyalty scheme attached, with links to approved partners, and a chip to pay. This is some way off at present.

4. Any Other Business:

- **Meet the Blues Day** – there are plans for this to go ahead, just before the start of the season. TL is keen to make it more appealing to supporters with a variety of stalls, and possibly some 5-a-side games.
- **Social Inclusion** – PF explained the Social Inclusion project and in particular his hope that the monies promised recently from 12 Companies would materialise (currently only 1 has) so that the project could be resumed as soon as possible and on a bigger scale.
- **Diversity** – PF mentioned the potential tie up with April Smith – meeting outstanding.
- **Thursday Forums** – The Supporters Group will continue with the Zoom meetings which have been well received by supporters generally. It was noted that there is some cross over with some members. Different personnel from the Club will be included.
- **Shrimpers Bar** – TL and PVW confirmed that the Shrimpers Bar is in good order.
- **Away Ticket Priority** – SC had been working on this idea with RE and Gavin in the Ticket Office. RE had confirmed that we have an upgrade due on our ticketing system which would make this kind of priority easier to arrange.

5. Date of next Meeting – It was agreed that these meetings would follow a 6-8 week schedule.

Proposed date for next Meeting - Thursday 29th July, venue TBC.