



SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED LIAISON MEETING



Tuesday, 19th October 2021
Blues Lounge, Roots Hall Stadium 17:00

This was a less formal gathering of representatives from both the Shrimpers Trust Board and Southend United FC.

Present and Apologies:

Those in attendance were, from SUFC – Tom Lawrence (TL), Matt Mundy (MM), James Ball (JB), and Jordan Groom (JG), and from the Shrimpers Trust – Paul FitzGerald (PF), Paul Yeomanson (PY), Clare Chapman (CC), Simon Dodd (SD) and Kay Fogg (KF).

Apologies for absence received from Rhys Ellingham (RE) and Shane Chapman (SC).

PF introduced parties present and explained the purpose of the gathering, which was to help further the co-operation and understanding between ourselves, particularly with Trust business needing to be discussed away from the supporters' group zoom calls and in a more formal manner, as well as representing members' concerns and issues such as the installation of a bike rack and ticket refunds. He added that whilst it had been almost unanimously decided after the last supporters' group Zoom call with Ron, that participants no longer wished to entertain his taking part in them, the Trust has always maintained a reasonably healthy relationship with him, which we would seek to continue.

The Trust has recently helped with funding towards new equipment and improvements at Boots & Laces, and it is envisaged that a news feature will be released on this once everything is in place. It had been disheartening therefore, to hear that players had had no hot water with which to shower at the training ground recently. TL explained that the old oil-fired boiler had broken down, and, at a cost of circa £15,000-£25,000 to replace it, a decision made to install different types of gas boilers which would service different areas. There were two weeks where there was no hot water for showers.

ACTION:

TL/MM to arrange for a media story at the appropriate time.

Youth Team sponsorship

The Trust's long running sponsorship of the youth team is well known and something many Trust members actively support. The Trust logo has not been on the youth team's shirts so far this season, particularly with two excellent results in the youth cup so far. TL advised that this is being rectified and the logo should be in place for the next youth cup game, if not before.

Junior Blues

KF ran through a number of issues as follows:

- The launch of the "new" scheme at Meet the Blues Day, and since, had had not met with the Trust's expectations.
- Gifts are still outstanding for those who have signed up. The Club (Jordan) confirmed that they had spoken with Macron about producing either a scarf or a t-shirt for the JB sign up gift.

- The database has become unmanageable, the replacement that is being produced is long overdue and needs a lot of work.
- Meet the Players Day will be moved from October half term to the Easter school holidays.
- Christmas Party – figures obtained from Mr Mulligans are too expensive. As we still have an outstanding booking with the Mega Centre at Rayleigh from Easter 2019, it was suggested that we speak with them to see if we can take the Christmas Party there.
- New flags have been bought, unfortunately these are all only the small size and some of the older JB's are now more reluctant to do flag bearing as they feel a bit daft with these and prefer the large flags. KF had not been consulted on what to order in.
- Junior Blues dedicated social media accounts to be looked into.
- Junior Blues dedicated match to be identified.
- The old JB gallery on the website needs to be archived and a new one started.

TL suggested that SUCET should be promoting the Junior Blues every time they go into schools – KF replied that this was supposed to be happening. KF suggested that we look to our supporters for a volunteer with Excel spreadsheet experience to put together the database as soon as possible, which was felt to be a good idea. She also requested that the Club put out an announcement to Junior Blues/Parents to say that the “Meet the Players Event” had been moved.

Finally, she said she'd been approached by the grandfather of one of our Junior Blues who had signed up in the summer and whose family was disappointed at the lack of anything from the Club, and whose name had been missed off the donation wall.

ACTIONS:

PF/PY/SD/KF to come up with wording for a volunteer to produce the Junior Blues database for the Club to then advertise

JG to liaise with RE and Macron over the gifts for the Junior Blues. It is hoped this will be a scarf, but cost may be higher than normal so may need some contribution from the Trust and the Club.

JG to liaise with the National League over Junior Blues dedicated game, as rules about discounted offers such as the “Kids for a Quid” we would normally run for this game, are not allowed.

KF to liaise with the Mega Centre and RE over the Christmas Party and date.

JB to liaise with RE over the Junior Blue missing from the wall.

RE/MM to put out news story about Meet the Players Day being moved.

MM to arrange for the social media account and to archive the old Junior Blues gallery.

Social Inclusion:

The Trust is keen to continue with the current plans for social inclusion, with maybe three or four visits from guests per season. This would allow for a variety of different needs to be supported in offering them an invite.

It was acknowledged that this is a good thing for the Club to be seen to be supporting, as inclusivity is an important aspect of providing a good fan experience. Whilst Karl Lansley has been the liaison point for this on the Trust's behalf up till now, he had recently expressed a wish to step back from Trust duties but was happy to continue with this. It was agreed that he would liaise with JB on the subject. PF emphasised that the Trust do not want to take away opportunities for revenue from paying guests to use the facilities and we will work with the Club to identify suitable games. JG asked if we would like to use some “1st time fan” badges that he had recently found in the ticket office for these guests? The Trust welcomed this suggestion.

ACTION: *JG to provide badges to Trust to be used for these events.*

SUEPA

Andy Leeder had sent a note through asking for the Club to commit to their support of the ex-players' association. TL assured those present that the Club is in favour of it, but that attendees might be called upon to do a bit more in exchange for their visit, more along the lines of the Q&As

held in either the Shrimpers or the Far Post. It was noted also that again, these visits should not detract from the Club's opportunity to gain revenue.

Ticketing

TL advised that the Club is looking into a "print at home" option for tickets – its on the road map..

PF advised that Darren Posnack is still awaiting a refund from the offered i-player refunds last season.

ACTION: Darren to be asked to contact the Club

Away Ticket Scheme – Whilst the scheme itself has been generally well received, CC suggested that there is no need to prioritise for games where there is ample away allocation.

ACTION: JG to update scheme to reflect this

Any Other Business:

- **Thank you** – KF wished to record her thanks to MM for promptly sorting out a request for a video message for the 21st birthday of a former Junior Blues member with special needs. It had been much enjoyed and very much appreciated by his family.
- **Matchday Programme** – PF advised that he had received a number of criticisms that the quality and quantity is not as good, yet it is the same price. He also noted that Trust member, Dave Bishop, had taken the time at a number of matches recently to man the programme hut in the main car park, which had been well received by supporters TL said that costs had had to be cut (we are in the National League and need to cut our cloth). TL mentioned that he had thanked David Bishop for manning the programme hut.
- **Night bus service to Hockley** – PF had been lobbied by Trust members who had found difficulty in getting back to Rochford and Hockley after Tuesday night games by bus as the bus they used to catch has been cut. TL agreed to speak with Ron Woodley at Southend Borough Council.

ACTION: TL to speak with Ron Woodley and report back

- **Bespoke shirt for Season Ticket donations** – TL updated those present that he was in discussion with Macron over this, it would still be going ahead, but not before Christmas.
 - **Council Planning Meeting** – this will be going ahead on Monday, 25th October. TL advised that everything seems to be looking favourably in this regard.
 - **Club AGM** – the auditors are currently in at the Club going over the accounts, but it is not yet known when the next AGM will be held.
 - **Bike Rack** – as alluded to earlier, the suggestion of a bike rack at Roots Hall is being looked into, and an application has gone in for a grant towards this.
 - **Entrance to the Shrimpers Bar** – the condition of the entrance to the bar was raised by CC, it is unpleasant and unsightly. TL replied that he is aware of this and has asked the maintenance team to look into getting something done, even if it is a method of shielding it on match days.
 - **Trust Programme Fair, 7th November** – During conversation, it transpired that Stuart has now left the Club, and he would normally have let us in for events like this. TL suggested that PY speak with Patrick.
 - **Promoting Trust fund raising** – KF introduced TL to a copy of the Trust Christmas Quiz and asked for as much support as possible in promoting this, and other fund raising.
- ACTION: MM to arrange***
- **Shrimpers Trust AGM** – this will be being held on Monday, 15th November. TL agreed to attend along with the new "manager".

- **Alcohol in the stands** – it was noted that at the last two league games, people had been drinking pints in the West stand immediately in front of stewards without censure. In both cases, they had even gone and got further drinks at half time!
ACTION: TL to discuss with stadium staff
- **New Stadium Revenues** – TL suggested, following an action from the supporter group call that revenue should be 5 to 6 times those achievable at Roots Hall. TL added that we are not going to see any profits while we remain at Roots Hall, it is a case of damage limitation.

And finally...

TL gave us some insight from his perspective, that the interview process for the new management team had been robust and professional, with some stand out candidates. He accepted that finding the “fans of the future” is a priority and that the Club must engage with support of the Junior Blues.

The Zoom calls with supporter’s groups would continue every 6 weeks or so, but the suggestion of these informal get togethers with the Trust every other month would be good practice moving forward, allowing others to become involved. It was noted that the supporters group Zoom call representatives lacked some representation of young adults.

Date of next Meeting – Scheduled for mid-December