



# SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED LIAISON MEETING



Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022  
Roots Hall Stadium 16:30

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## 1. Present and Apologies:

Those in attendance were Tom Lawrence (TL), Rylee Doe (RD) and April Smith (AS) on behalf of SUFC, and Paul FitzGerald (PF), Shane Chapman (SC) and Kay Fogg (KF) on behalf of the Shrimpers Trust.

Apologies for absence were received from Rhys Ellingham (RE) and Paul Yeomanson (PY).

The Meeting was chaired by PF.

## 2. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022

Follow up on actions not otherwise covered in Agenda items:

- Invoice from the Club to the Shrimpers Trust for their contribution to the cost of buying the Junior Blues scarves for the start of this season is still outstanding.  
**ACTION – TL to speak with RE urgently on this matter**
- The proposal from SUCET to discuss data relating to Junior Blues is still ongoing.  
**ACTION – PF to arrange to meet with PY and Dale Spiby**
- Issues with season cards at the Ticket Office are still ongoing, and, while these have been tried to be resolved by the Club, some of the issues have now been passed on to Talent themselves, to address.
- The surplus stock of clothing is still to be itemised.  
**ACTION – TL to investigate legalities of selling these items on; KF to investigate items further with a view to itemising for sale**
- Shrimpers Bar urn – this item was still outstanding, the one purchased by the Shrimpers Trust having been ruined some years back. TL kindly offered to purchase one for the bar, recognising that being able to sell hot drinks is important, particularly at this time of year.  
**ACTION – TL to order a new urn for the Shrimpers Bar.**

## 3. Club Finances, including New Stadium, Payment of Wages, Embargo and Bridging Loan

TL advised that the new training ground is due to be handed over to the Club by the end of the year and should be ready to use by late February/early March. Once the players move to the new training ground, Boots & Laces can be demolished. A revised planning application is with Southend Council for approval, reflecting the reduction in size and the removal of the hotel, which is deemed to be no longer viable by our preferred hotel partner. On the 25<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup> January, the Safety Advisory Group may be looking at the plans for the new stadium, with the council appointed officer overseeing the project. TL hoped that Trust representatives would be able to meet during this time frame to help with discussions relating to the new stadium, separately from the Safety Advisory Group.

In order to comply with the Club's Safety Certificate, electrical testing and remedial works (if required) need to be taken to the East, South and North stands. Purely to test the East Stand will cost approx. £11k – this is something that has to be done, the East Stand is tested every year, and the other stands every other year. Unfortunately, the situation with Covid has pushed them all together this time. Without this, we would face the East Stand being closed. The testing works have already been commissioned and paid for.

TL explained that when funds are limited, difficult decisions have to be made. Critical operational payments supercede all other expenditure and, as such, this does mean that some salaries remain outstanding. Everyone recognises that this is far from ideal but with a payroll totalling around £200k a month for both permanent and casual staff, it is not hard to see how much of a shortfall there is. Aside from the monies raised from the Shrimpers Trust, PG Site Services and the Go Fund Me, the Chairman had put in another six figure sum last month (bringing his contribution this year to about £1.5m) but this had still not managed to clear the backlog of outstanding salaries.

It is still anticipated that the bridging loan will come to fruition which will help enormously in clearing the backlog of outstanding salaries and, indeed, the remaining HMRC debt.

It was recognised how much the staff's support in temporarily forgoing wages was appreciated and the Club will reward this loyalty when it is able.

#### **4. Memorandum of Understanding**

PF explained why a MOU was important to the Trust movement. But TL/PF agreed that Liaison was already very good between the parties with the exception of timing occasionally.

**ACTION – PF/TL to consider**

#### **5. Rehabilitation Donation**

PF advised that it had been agreed that the Trust would provide finances for some equipment to be purchased to help with rehabilitation and that this had been discussed with Stefano Russo. There seemed to be an issue over the purchase of these items and Trust members were unsure if this was to do with the VAT costs or bringing the items back to Roots Hall.

**ACTION – TL to speak with Stef to clarify. The Trust is happy to pay for the items including VAT**

#### **6. First Team Overnight Stays**

TL dismissed the rumour that the Club had not been able to have overnight stays prior to matches due to cost. One recent one had not been booked in time and they had had to stay a little further away, but the team had been able to stay whenever it had been necessary. The recent trip to Gateshead cost about £3,600 for the hotel and about £3,200 for the coach.

#### **7. South Stand Smell**

It had been recently reported that the South Upper, in particular Block A, had been suffering with fox excrement which had made for a very unpleasant and unsavoury smell. TL accepted that there should be time on the morning of matches for inspections to be carried out to ensure this was removed or washed down.

**ACTION – TL to speak with ground staff**

#### **8. Future of the Academy**

TL advised that the Chairman still has every intention of retaining the Academy. We lose all funding if we don't get promotion this season. Everyone is looking into options and assessing the situation. There are no plans to dismantle the Academy but efficiencies will need to be made to make it viable.

#### **9. Club Shop**

It was noted that the items on offer in the shop were disappointing for this time of year. RD informed those in attendance of some new licensed products which will be coming online soon but, unfortunately, these would not be in time for Christmas.

## **10. Streaming Services**

These work out to £9.50 per game and our Boxing Day game would be our first streamed game. There is, apparently, an issue with being in the Republic of Ireland and being unable to stream 3pm kick offs, a matter which had been brought to the Trust's attention by a member. RD received the following response from the National League when bringing this matter to their attention:

*"Have just spoken to our streaming partners StreamAMG who have advised me that ROI classed as being under the umbrella that Article 48 covers meaning we have to class them as domestic customers. This is in line with what rules the EFL have on the matter also."*

## **11. Junior Blues**

All very positive at present. Membership numbers are good and a new stock of scarves is being ordered. KF thanked RD and AS for taking over the recent Christmas Party when she had been ill on the day of the event. Feedback from parents was all very good, with the players who attended being commended for being particularly good with our youngsters.

There is an issue with membership forms coming into the Ticket Office though. PY had recently found two laying around in there with a date stamp on to say they'd been received on 23<sup>rd</sup> November but there was no money with them and no-one had done anything with them. KF emphasised the importance of having a system in place at the Club so that everyone knows what to do with forms if they are handed in or come in in the post, too many forms have been handed in at the Ticket Office over the last 6 months where the forms and payments have gone astray.

**ACTION – TL to liaise with RE to decide best way forwards**

## **12. Any Other Business:**

AS advised that the Club would be running messages about Suicide Prevention over the Christmas period and would appreciate the Trust's support in promoting these messages further. "Ripple" software would be installed on all SUCET computers and laptops which would trigger an alert based on certain word searches.

Meeting closed at 18:00

Next Meeting scheduled for early February 2023.