



# SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS CLUB TRUST LIAISON MEETING November 24th 2004

---

---

## 1 Present

Geoffrey King (GK), Derek Wilshire (DW), Helen Giles (HG), Paul FitzGerald (PF) Paul Yeomanson (PY) and Terry Jeffreys (TJ) were present.

## 2 Matters Arising from the Meeting held on October 20<sup>th</sup> 2004

GK said that he had tried to contact Bill Garner about the Friday Night Legends but Garner would not answer his calls.

## 3 Shrimpers Bar

GK said the club had put in a selection of hot pies and the new Wizard Dogs but not enough was being sold. He said that it was not being wasted as it was being moved to other catering outlets in the ground for sale at half time. He asked that the Trust pass the word that hot food was available in the Shrimpers Bar. PY said that the attendant selling the Wizard Dogs was used exclusively for that and it was felt that she could help serve drinks when trade was slack.

PY asked if there was any progress on the proposed classroom in the Shrimpers annexe. GK said that the Study Support Group had agreed funding and that there would be a joint press release issued. However this had not happened due to the tardiness of the council. HG said that the front windows of the annexe would be double-glazed and that the toilets would be refurbished. She said that the work had to be done so that the pilot scheme could start in February 2005.

PY asked if it would be possible to showing the Orient game live in the Shrimpers as a number of fans had not been able to obtain tickets. The club could make money by charging an entrance fee and by opening the bar. Gk said the coverage of live matches is covered by an agreement between the Football Association, the Football League and Sky TV. He said that he would raise the matter again with the Football League to see if live coverage was possible.

## 4 West Stand & Racist Chanting

PY said that at the Luton game there was a lot of objectionable racist chanting directed at the Luton supporters. He said that it was absolutely terrible and was being carried out by young and old people and by new faces. He said that there was a new steward that seemed to be known to the fans in the old "F" block that were too familiar with him and he was moved at half-time.

PF said that it would be very difficult to eject people and not create further problems. GK said that the stewards would not go into a crowd and get some one but would wait

until they went to the toilet or to get a cup of coffee and then would pull them out quietly.

PY asked if the club had given any more thought to the away fans standing. He added that the Trust had asked for some consistency in dealing with the standing issue. GK said that it was difficult getting away fans to sit in the North Stand. TJ that our experience at away matches was that stewards keep a very tight leash on standing but at our home matches, the fans see the away fans standing freely and may feel a need to stand in order to demonstrate.

GK said that the Football League Authority (FLA) ask us to monitor the standing of home fans in seated areas. He said that the FLA know that there is a problem getting away fans to sit down. However they are able to punish the home fans by closing home seating areas and by reducing the away capacity for the fans of the home club. He added that some clubs will soon lose some home seating areas because of persistent standing and he did not want that to happen at Southend. It was agreed that the Trust would write a piece outlining the situation and how it affects the home fans for publication in its newsletter and website.

## **5 Centre of Excellence**

PY asked if the funding for the Centre of Excellence (CofE) had been finalised. GK said there was still nothing from the Ron Martin connection. However a couple of parents whose sons were in the CofE wanted to put a five figure sum in to the scheme as did One Railways. PY said that it was a pity that things were taking so long as they had been prepared to donate £5K for shirt advertising before the start of the season. GK said that the point wasn't lost on him.

He said that a committee consisting of Derek Wilshire, Michael Markscheffel and Ray Osborne were assisting Ross McClaren with fundraising etc.,

## **6 Mark Gower Interview**

PY handed over a list of questions to be put to Mark Gower so the answers could be published on the Trust website.

## **7 LDV Cardiff**

PY said that he and Chris Berry had met the club accountant and a final figure of £5975.25 for the Trust had been agreed. However it has now come to light that the club did not process £765 of coach travel money that had been paid by credit card. PY asked that the club pay the agreed balance of the money owed to the Trust now and to settle up their share of the money raised once those missing credit card payments had been processed. GK said that he would talk to the club accountant and make arrangements to pay the Trust the money that was owed to them.

## **8 Any Other Business**

PY asked what the regulations were regarding the searching of minors at football matches. After taking advice from Dave Jobson, GK said that there were no official guidelines on this. The club policy was not to search minors unless it was in the presence of two adults.

PY said that the stewards at Yeovil had been very heavy handed with regards to searches and continued to insist on searching minors even though the minors protested that they could only be searched in the presence of their parent or guardian. DW said that he thought that the treatment of Southend fans had been unfair by making them standing in the heavy rain despite seating accommodation being available. PY said that Yeovil would only allow 30 seats to be made available and that was only for people with children. He said that a letter of protest had been sent to Yeovil Town FC. HG said that she would also write to Yeovil Town and asked if she could have a copy of the letter that had been sent.

TJ said that it was unfortunate that our fans had been treated so poorly. Some Yeovil Town fans had contacted the Trust and the club thanking them for the wonderful hospitality that they, and especially their disabled supporters, had received in the Shrimpers Bar and in the ground and had praised both parties on their website and in the Yeovil Town programme.

PF spoke about the principles behind the Shrimpers Trust Army Fund and handed out draft Terms and Conditions to the club. GK said that he liked the idea and would raise the matter at the board meeting tomorrow.

GK said that Ron Martin may call Nigel Rickard about his article regarding Friday night football in the last Trust newsletter. Nigel had used the word "fraudulent" and that was not acceptable. PF said the Trust committee was split about Friday football so have no official view on the subject. He felt that Nigel thought that he personally was cheated out of his football when the matches were changed from a Saturday to a Friday, as he had to work Friday nights.

## **9 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting would be on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2004 and would be held at Roots Hall commencing at 1600. GK said that he would not be able to attend

After the Liaison meeting finished, Ron Martin (RM) entered to talk about Fossets Farm and other issues.

RM asked if we were happy with the team at present and we said that we were. He said that he speaks to Tilly regularly often more than once a day regarding the team. He was happy with Tilly and felt that Paul Brush was good support also. RM confirmed that the purchase of Fredy Eastwood was an important purchase and has encouraged Tilly to continue to look and strengthen the team where Tilly feels there may be weakness. If Tilly spots someone that he wants, Ron will listen to what Tilly says and support him.

With regard to Fossets Farm (FF), the take up of the Option to purchase land at FF had been held up as one of the Lansbury partners had died and there has been a delay in the transfer over of affairs to his daughter. There had also been a delay as Lansbury needed to fulfil all their conditions and which in turn were a requirement under the Option. However the Option was completed on October 18<sup>th</sup>.

He said that he had been poring over the plans for the proposed purchase of FF. When you only have an A3 plan, the width of a pencil line could be significant. The relief road would take 2 acres out of the site but there will be enough to accommodate the football ground and enabling development. He said that under the Option they now have 20 acres whereas RM would have preferred the original 50 acre proposal.

He was asked if his plans included a super casino and he said that it was unlikely, as the return on super casinos was only £12 per square metre. He said that the Diagnostic & Treatment Centre was put into the equation as a make weight to the B&Q proposal. However there is little money to be made in PFI projects and felt that the Centre may or may not go ahead.

He said that he wanted the new stadium to be able to be increased to about 22,500 capacity and feels that in an "immediate" catchment area of 300,000 and 750 within 15 miles, gates could be greatly improved. He said that he had had meetings with the council and who remained supportive of the proposed stadium relocation.

RM said that he had placed a Fully Funded proposal to Delancey to acquire their 50% shareholding in SEL. Delancey have said they want out and were carrying out an appraisal to see if they are getting value from the proposed buy-out. He said that he had spoken to Colin Wagman that day and had told him that he was meeting the Trust in the afternoon and once RM advised of the offer Colin may expect a call.

He said that that was the deal he was proposing to Delancey and although it is not confidential it is important to achieve a resolution in order to move forward. He said that if and when the deal happens he may form a new co. or keep it as SEL UK Ltd.

He said that if and when the deal was done with Delancey he wanted to discuss fully with the Trust what the supporters wanted at the new stadium. He said that he looked forward to our input.

He said that the finance required at the Club hasn't been provided by from SEL for nearly two years. PF said that if RM owned all of SEL, it was at his discretion what he took for himself and what he gave to the Club. RM said that there was no conflict between Ron Martin owning Martin Dawn and Martin Dawn/SEL owning 100% of the Club. He said that he wants to return the stadium to the supporters and also wished to remove the debt.

He said that he would like to see the Club back in the Championship and though SUFC has the potential to achieve this and sees the Club similar to the potential of Millwall with crowds of 10,000. He would love to get the Club into the Premiership and even if the Club only got the money for a season and then two seasons payments of £6M parachute money this would allow the Club to strengthen and grow.