

## Trust & ShrimperZone Meeting with Ron Martin 9<sup>th</sup> October 2012

**Ken Jarvis representing ShrimperZone and I (Paul FitzGerald) met with Ron Martin on Tuesday night to try to clarify the state of the clubs finances and the status of the FF development.**

Not hugely surprising but our meeting with Ron turned into a double act.

Steve Kavanagh came across well, I thought, with clear views on fan engagement - he wants for example to initiate a "Fans Forum" apparently Charlton did originally have a Fans rep on the board but this was replaced with a Fans forum including representatives from the different fans groups. I think the idea is sound personally but I do not think it should replace a push for formal Board representation.

Ron commented that the Trust numbers appeared to be down - it was noted that although Trust numbers are lower than a few years back that in fact the numbers have fallen significantly less than the average attendance. This led us into the main discussion on fans groups and the way forward. Ken detailed the SZ numbers and stated the web member/visitor stats .

Steve is keen to engage in discussion but it will take him time to figure out the "politics" (his words not mine). He wanted a meeting next week (I'm away most of next week) so we're currently trying to arrange a convenient time.

Ken and I put up a united front generally as you'd expect, clearly we represent different fan group structures I think however the format worked well.

Ron spent a lot of time on planning and the status and it is clear they are now very close... as they have been for years (he was reminded). Commenting further he re-iterated how excited he was for the future. When asked about "enabling development" he reiterated there would be some but of course commercially he would not comment. We discussed the rent and the accounting principles behind its existence. It is clear to me he is never going to charge it but unclear to me as to why it's still in the accounts. Steve piped up at this point and talked about the need to clear the balance sheet when Charlton were put up for sale and as that wasn't the plan here, neither saw any specific need to do it yet

As a way of explaining his good intentions Ron mentioned the selling of Roots Hall fixtures and fitting to the fans as we move and explained that contrary to actual ownership (Roots Hall Limited) all monies would go to the football club.

Ron is totally fed up with the continuing extreme losses in the football club on a monthly basis because it means he has to fund it and that of course is not easy as is patently obvious. He stated his frustration at the inability of the two previous incumbents to make much difference to those losses and of course is delighted that Steve Kavanagh's experience is now with us (no pressure there then Steve).

Ron went on to say it's not a problem generally ie he can cope but if he's got to find 200K every 2-3 months you can understand why that would be quite annoying. We did delve into why he doesn't plan better for the expected commitments but the reality is he does not have that cash lying about nor assets that are readily turned into cash, nor probably a suitable ability to borrow further.

Steve's job is to turn these significant losses into a more manageable figure going forward.

We moved on to communication and the fans desire, unlike a super market shopper, to know all about everything. They understood but re-iterated the commercial issues - however Steve and Ron both agreed that more regular communication with real information was key to keeping supporters happy. One aside, they gave an example recently where Internet information has hampered the shifting of players. Apparently ALL Premiership and Championship clubs pay for a service from an internet search company that trawls the web for Player Info. Steve Explained that Chris Powell would not even look at 2 available Southend players because of this information which had been collected from Supporter Forums... that certainly makes you think about the power, good and bad, that social media has nowadays... and in future clearly we need to explain openly and often just how great our surplus players are!



In answer to a Question on how we could afford Steve Kavanagh - both explained that there was no net difference to the club.

Ken Jarvis's post on SZ, covers a fair set of questions asked/answered on behalf of the SZ Members.  
The SUFC AGM will be in November according to Ron.

Bearing in mind the circumstances, I think the meeting was about as positive as it could have been with some pretty tough questions asked AND answered. Ron and Steve both agreed going forward that through the conduit of Fans Representatives they would be prepared to consider any question - they may not answer all but they will not ignore and explain why they cannot.

If you have any questions regarding any of the matters raised please do not hesitate to contact me on [pfitz666@aol.com](mailto:pfitz666@aol.com)