



# SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS CLUB TRUST LIAISON MEETING DECEMBER 14<sup>th</sup> 2005

---

---

## 1 Present

Geoffrey King (GK,) Lis Orford (LO) Derek Wilshire (DW), Paul Yeomanson (PY), Terry Jeffreys (TJ) Bryan Woodford (BW) were present.

## 2 Matters Arising from the Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2005

PY said that Trust had received the Quid a Goal money from the players.

PY asked what was happening about a new match day announcer. GK said that the club may recruit a new announcer or leave Brian Wheeler where he was. PY added that there was a lot of crackling from the speakers in the West Stand and GK said that he would ask Chris Baker to investigate.

GK said that Ron Martin would be very happy to attend a Q&A session and asked that the Trust supply some dates.

GK said that he had spoken to Brian Dear (BD) about the reported serving problems in the South East tea bar and BD had raised the matter with the staff concerned.

GK said that HSBC had always sponsored the mascots. PY said that the Trust had purchased Sammy and were paying for the Eel's head to be repaired. He said that the invoice had been given to the club and the Trust would pay for the repair.

GK said that the club would like to break the record for the attendance of a reserve game at Roots Hall. He said that the local schools could be invited and it just needed organising.

GK said that the club had used up all the old shirts but there were some silver shirts available. However he asked whether the shirts should be badged. PY said that he would find out and come back to GK on this.

GK said that wine was not available in single bottles yet as someone had to go on a course to be qualified to sell single bottles of wine!

GK said that he was very pleased with the performance of the club shop. So far 1650 home shirts had been sold and 980 away shirts.

## 3 Ron and SEL

PY asked how Ron Martin was progressing with his plans to buy Delancey's share of SEL. GK said that "Ron had every reason for optimism."

## 4 Roots hall Lease

PY asked what the situation was regarding the lease of Roots Hall from SEL. GK said that the lease had expired so was rolling over from week to week. He said that the proposals for a new lease including the terms and conditions were being looked at. He added that the club would make sure that the terms are affordable.

GK said that the Government were now funding the hospital development at Fossetts Farm.

## **5 Away Coach Parking**

PY asked if the club charged away coaches to park within club car parks as some clubs are now charging the Trust coaches when we understood that there was a reciprocal deal between clubs over this. GK said that away coaches only park on the public highway and not on the club grounds.

## **6 Home Reserve Fixtures**

PY asked why the club had started to charge for admission to reserve team games. GK said that it cost the club money to open, there were more first team players on show and there crowds were higher. He said that Southend United were one of the very few clubs not to charge admission for reserve team games but added that season ticket holders could still gain free entry on showing their card.

## **7 Stewarding**

PY said that there had been a few problems recently with over zealous stewards and asked how this had come about. GK said that there had been a few incidents in the West and East Stands recently.

He said that there was persistent standing by youngsters in the W and X Blocks of the West Stands and there excuse was that there were people standing in the North bank and in the back row of the East Stand. He said that he understood that there was a lack of legroom in the back of the East Stand which is why people were standing. He said that he had instructed the Stadium Manager to leave them alone. He added that the Police and the Football League were happy with this approach. TJ said that there were rumours that the back row of the East Stand was going to be removed but GK said that this was considered but then discounted because of the loss in revenue.

He said that he had met with representatives on the W and X Blocks to discuss the situation there. After discussing their grievances, it had been agreed that GK would keep these areas open and would allow fans to migrate to this area and create a singing and chanting area but had insisted that fans should sit whilst play was in progress. He agreed that in moments of exciting play, fans would stand but did not expect them to stand persistently. The representatives had agreed to self-police the situation.

GK said that in the long run, he would prefer tickets to be bought for this area rather than the migration and would continue to monitor the situation. He added that if the self policing experiment failed, he would close the areas and disperse the fans as he did not want the situation to arise where the Football league shut the Blocks or even the stand.

GK said that soon all Guards and Stewards would have to hold an NVQ in Stewarding, which was done in house, and a company SIA qualification. He said that it would be very difficult to get everyone registered by the cut-off date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006. He was therefore, from Boxing Day, employing a new set of Guards who held all the necessary qualifications and were trained in non confrontational techniques, from a new company. He added that some old Guards would be used and employed direct and then top up with the new Guards.

PY said that recently, he had great difficulty getting in and out of the toilets due to the congregation of fans in the gangways/walkways. GK said that if everyone went about their business and returned to their seats, it would make his job a lot easier. PY said that it also took longer to get out of the ground due to larger crowds but this was the price of success!

## **8 Racism**

PY said that the recent events in the Bradford City game had raised the issue of racism and in his opinion given the Southend fans an unjustified bad name. TJ said that he was near the front of the South Upper during the game and in his opinion there was no evidence of

racist chanting or individual racist abuse at the Bradford goal keeper. He said that the person ejected from the ground and "accused" in the press of racism, was a Trust member and the Trust would be supporting their member until it was categorically proved that he had committed a racist offence. He said that he was being contacted by fans who were close to the alleged incident who were prepared to stand up in court and state that our member was innocent. He added that it was the general opinion that the goal keeper had played the race card to deflect criticism of his behaviour which led to the reaction of the crowd.

GK said that the fan had been ejected because he had been caught on camera making an offensive gesture. He had been arrested outside the ground by the police due to the allegations of the goalkeeper. He added that the club had also received many letters and e-mails from Southend fans in the South Upper in support of the ejected fan and refuting the racist allegations and the club had made these available to the police. He said that he did not believe that racist comments had been made.

GK said that the fan had been bailed to appear at the Police Station on December 22 whilst investigations continued. GK said that the fan would not be allowed entry to Roots Hall. He said that he expected any charges to be dropped. However he said that as the ejected fan had been warned for making offensive gestures before, he would receive a two match ban.

## **9 Season Tickets**

PY said the Autopay system was not in use for the FA Cup game and he had been told that the new system did not allow it. GK said that the ticketing system seems to work ok but is a little fragile as there have been lots of crashes recently. He had been in discussion with the ticketing company and the system will soon be able to designate, stand, block and seat!

He said that the company had now taken on the ticketing for Chelsea and they will have the latest facilities available from March 2006. Then all the other clubs using the system will be updated with the latest facilities.

## **10 SUFC Website**

PY said that the club website often suffered from inaccuracies. In particular, the website stated that tickets were available up until 1700 and one of our members had driven a long way to buy tickets only to find that they were not available after 1500. GK said that he would check this out as it was important that the clubs fans inconvenienced by inaccuracies.

## **11 Any Other Business**

PY said that the recorded messages for the ticket office were recently advertising games that had taken place. GK said that he was aware of this and the problem had been resolved.

PY said that recently only one heater was working in the Shrimpers Bar. GK said that he had asked the Stadium manager to carry out a survey on heaters and more heaters would be provided for the Shrimpers Bar.

GK said that up until now, ticket collections were from the old ticket office. However from the first match in January, ticket collections would only be available from the new ticket office.

GK said that Simon Bell from extra time @ southend united wanted to put up a curtain in the Shrimpers bar to extend the study area so student could have their lunch there. He said that it was also to shield the bar area off from the Muslims who used the study centre who had difficulty meeting in a bar. The curtain would be funded by the education authority. He asked that the Trust meet with Simon to discuss the practicalities. This was agreed.

## **8 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would be held on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2006 at 1600.