



SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS CLUB TRUST LIAISON MEETING JUNE 21st 2006

1 Present

Geoffrey King (GK) Helen Norbury (HN), Derek Wilshire (DW), Paul Yeomanson (PY), Bryan Woodford (BW) and Terry Jeffreys (TJ) were present.

2 Matters Arising from the Meeting held on 10th April 2006.

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

3 Disabled Supporters

GK said that the success of the club had increased the attendance of both able and disabled supporters. In previous seasons, the club had provided free places for supporters claiming the medium and higher rate of the Disabled Living Allowance (DLA) and their carers.

However the National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS) had recommended that disabled supporters should pay a concessionary rate. The club then amended their policy to charge disabled supporters but not the carers and also to withdraw the season ticket facility for disabled supporters. Due to the dramatic rise in demand for disabled places, the club had decided to limit places to those claiming the higher rate of the DLA.

The club had sought the advice of NADS on their revised policy and NADS considered that the withdrawal of season tickets was unfair and asked the club to reconsider which it did. NADS advised the club to set out its criteria and take applications on a first come, first served basis. They also recommended that the club set up a disabled supporters section.

The availability of disabled facilities is as follows –

20 spaces for wheelchairs of which 15 are available as season tickets

4 spaces for the blind of which 2 are available as season tickets

40 ambulant spaces of which 30 are available as season tickets

GK said that the club had taken season ticket renewals from those disabled supporters who were previous season ticket holders and had also set up instalment plans for the purchase of those tickets should they be required. He added that there had been criticism from some disabled supporters affected by the revised policy but the club had done its best to meet the recommendations from NADS and to be fair to all.

TJ said that the club should be praised for their sensitive handling of a very difficult issue. He said that the Trust had a committee member who was responsible for disabled issues, and added that the Trust had been approached by a disabled member who was willing to become involved in organising a section for the disabled within the Trust.

4 Season Tickets/Ticket Office

PY said that when the season tickets were on sale before June 1st, there were many stories on the message boards about severe delays with phone queries, difficulty to find out which seats had been allocated and of fans wandering lost around the stadium looking for

prospective seats. He added that one of our committee members had arranged for three different people to ring the ticket office at one time and they were all told that they were "Number 7" in the queue! He said that in future the Shrimpers Trust would volunteer to show season ticket applicants to their prospective seats and any other tasks to lighten the load when there was a rush on for ticket applications.

5 Youth Dept./Lottery

TJ asked if there was any progress on the Southend United Youth Development Association (SUYDA). GK said that nothing had been organised. TJ handed out copies of an organisation chart showing the present set-up for the Youth Department committee and the SUYDA committee and mention that there seemed to be a lot of duplication within the two committees. He handed out a copy of a suggested organisation structure for the whole of the Centre of Excellence and asked that the club considered it. GK said that he would study the proposal later.

6 West Stand (rear of Block V)

PY said that towards the end of the season, the toilet block at the rear of Block V was jammed solid with people trying to get in and out of the toilets at half-time. He said that the situation was chaotic with people blocking the gangways etc., He asked that another entrance be provided to ease the load, adding that reversing the opening of the doors would not help the situation. GK said that he would investigate the situation adding that from the coming season the club would prevent people from standing at the back of the West Stand by erecting an advertising hoarding so that they couldn't see out. He said that the club's aim was to get every one sitting in their seats during the games to keep the gangways free.

GK said that part of the North Bank would be used as a home Family Stand with the entrance and exit off Fairfax Drive. He said that it had been cleared with the new Police Superintendent.

7 Centenary

PY asked how the club thought that the planning for the Centenary Celebrations was going. GK said that the Portsmouth match was not necessarily the Centenary game. He added that the club had contacted every single Premiership club and no-one wanted to know except Portsmouth. PY pointed out that last November, he had contacted the Bermudan FA who were very keen to come over to play Southend United as part of the Centenary Celebrations. However he felt that the club had dithered on the offer and then finally made a late decision that it would not be practical due to various issues. He then said that he was then amazed that the club had seen fit to travel to Bermuda to play their national team!

GK said that he could understand why PY was vexed, adding that Ron Martin had said to Steve Tilson, that if the team won the league, he would take the team out to Bermuda to see Shaun.

HN said that she had noted in the Trust newsletter that the Trust would be producing the official Centenary enamel badge on behalf of the club and wondered why as the club's Centenary badges had been delivered to the shop the day before! PY said that at the last Liaison meeting, the Trust had been told that the club would not be producing a badge and that the Trust had been invited to produce the official Centenary enamel badge. TJ said that he had asked for permission in writing from the club before the Trust placed an order with its supplier but despite promises, the letter had not been handed over yet! He said that he hoped that the club had produced a hard enamel badge for the Centenary and not the usual plastic fronted stuff that the shop usually produced. He said that he had continually suggested that badges were made from hard enamel as there was a big market for them from collectors but not so for plastic fronted.

8 Shrimpers Bar

PY asked if the club were happy for the Trust to continue its arrangements in the Shrimpers Bar as last season. GK said that he was very happy for things to continue. PY said GK will have noted how hot the Shrimpers Bar was on the Trust POTY and asked if the club would consider providing air conditioning. GK said that the club had looked into the costs of this and found that they were prohibitive adding that the club would be gone from Roots Hall by 2008.

PY asked if the Trust could use the Shrimpers for Committee meetings. GK said that the Trust would have to at least cover the cost of wages and would speak to Brian Dear. GK said that the club were looking at the possibility of providing a fast beer pourer system with an automatic keg changer which automatically changes barrels in 9 seconds!

TJ asked if the club's agreement with Coors meant that they provided all the beers sold within the club. GK said that it did. TJ said that there were still requests for real ale to be served in the Shrimpers and suggested that the Trust provides a polypin of a local real ale for sale in the Shrimpers, standing any loss. GK said that this would not be possible.

9 Any Other Business

PY asked if the club would consider giving free tickets to young fans of visiting teams. He said that in the past, some clubs had given free tickets for children when we had travelled to away grounds and Southend had reciprocated. GK said that there was some conflict within the club about the number of tickets that it gives away. He added that if opposing clubs approach the Trust with free tickets for children, he will consider it on a match by match basis.

PY said that the Trust hold a letter from Adam Pearson, the chairman of Hull City, offering us 100 free tickets because of the coach vandalism that happened up there a couple of seasons ago and intended to exercise the option.

PY asked if the Trust could have a free car parking pass on match days for the delivery of goods to the Shrimpers Bar and GK said that he would allow one.

PY said that he had heard that the new plans for the Fossetts Farm stadium had been viewed and asked when the fans would see them. GK said that new plans had been drawn up but had not been seen outside the club yet. He said that there were meetings planned with the local authority, their architects and the club's architects and another planned next week to discuss the revised plans.

PY asked that HN provide a list of dates for future Liaison meetings.

10 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 19th July at 1600.