

Dear Leadership, Executive, Councillors and MPs of Southend-on-Sea,

As we are sure you are aware, on Friday, the Chairman Ron Martin announced he has initiated the process of selling, or seeking new investment in, Southend United Football Club and has appointed General Sports Worldwide LLC to act as the club's agent in this process.

The Chairman's departure message states that he'd ideally like to have sold the club by July. However, staff salaries remain unpaid for December (although obligations for January and February have been met) and numerous suppliers have not been paid, including the Shrimpers Trust and the coach company used to provide team and staff travel to games. We cannot help but think this timing is convenient. The debts are mounting and Roots Hall is falling rapidly into disrepair. You will also be aware that the club's debts to HMRC are not fully settled and we thus remain under a transfer and registration embargo.

Roots Hall was built by the hands of Southend United supporters and residents of the city. It is a community asset in much more than just name. It was gifted to the club in good faith by the supporters who built it, truly in the spirit of our great city. It feels incredibly wrong that the Chairman can use Roots Hall to broker his development deal, but the only benefit of the new stadium to the club is the opportunity to play in it, not to own it. As we see it, the club should own its ground, not the Chairman, who is simply a custodian of the club at any given time.

We urge you in the strongest possible terms to make it a condition of planning approval that the stadium at Fossetts Farm is returned to Southend United's ownership. If you don't, then there is a very real possibility that there will no longer be a football club left to play in that stadium. If you do, then it gives the football club an asset it rightfully owns, which might in turn help to attract a buyer who could secure the club's short- and long-term future.

There are strong recommendations in the recently-published UK Government White Paper for football governance and regulation that would preclude any club from being in this situation ever again. We have met with multiple Parliamentarians and understand the weight of cross-party support this document has. A quick sale by July is a potential method to bypass future regulation and this must not happen on your watch.

We look forward to meeting with General Sports Worldwide LLP and showing them what a wonderful asset they are bringing to market. A club that, historically, has walked hand-in-hand with its local community. A club with passionate fans all over the globe, in all industry and from all backgrounds. We welcome new custodians; ones who will listen to us, respect us and see us as the asset to the club that we are.

The landscape for the future changed with Ron Martin's announcement on Friday. This is a matter of huge public significance and we believe the new plans submitted for the Fossetts Farm stadium must ensure the prospect of long-term sustainability for Southend United Football Club. Those in public office still have a huge role to play, representing thousands of the city's residents, and we would like to meet with you to discuss this matter at your earliest convenience.

We look forward to hearing from you in a manner that acknowledges the urgency of this situation.

The Shrimpers Trust Board.