



SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS CLUB TRUST LIAISON MEETING 5th February 2014

1. Present and Apologies

Steve Kavanagh (SK), Paul FitzGerald (PF), Shane Chapman (SC) and Kay Fogg (KF) were in attendance.

The Meeting was chaired by PF.

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st November 2013

The survey discussed at the last Meeting was referred to and is now classed as “urgent”. It is needed to help plan for next season, in particular with regard to Friday night games as attendance figures this season do not back up the previously held theory that attendances are normally good on a Friday night. SK added that the Newport game had been well attended because of initiatives to get “Future Blues” in from local schools but that he would like to have a clear strategy on the way forward in regard to Friday night games. It was agreed that a few Friday night games during the season would be the recommendation for next season.

ACTION – PF to chase with PY

Paul Yeomanson had provided the required information in regard to Blues Player which SK had forwarded to the relevant people.

SK advised that he had recently spoken with Chris Powell who has agreed to gift the Trust some memorabilia and also to take part in a Q&A at a mutually convenient time. PF wondered if this could be run in conjunction with SUIA to allow as much exposure as possible to supporters.

ACTION – PF to liaise with all parties concerned about progressing

3. Club Finances

SK advised that things financially are “extremely tight” but he hoped that we had noted the accounts had now been filed and that he would be pressing for the current accounts to be submitted on time. The Club is up to date with payments to HMRC and all wages are up to date.

As always, the Club is looking at new sustainable revenue streams.

4. New Stadium

The group discussed the current situation, with PF reporting that he had spoken to the Chairman following a planning inquiry immediately before the Trust AGM on 31st January. Ron was, as usual, reluctant to be drawn on precise timings and explained the complexities of dealing with so many parties. Nevertheless, it was clear he remains positive with expectations that visual progress would be apparent soon.

The group discussed the "Safe Standing" idea currently being promoted. SK explained he had met with the Safe Standing groups and also discussed it with the architects for Fossetts. He explained that he supported the idea but the angle of the stands don't permit the current "rail seats" that, if passed, would be required for "safe standing". The consultation has a long way to go, so, whilst in principle SK supports it, he wants fans to understand that, as plans are – and re-designing these would mean going back for planning etc – the current designs would not work for the rail seats.

5. Trust Representative on SUFC Board

PF reported that the Trust had met with Supporters Direct in November and that a vote had been taken at the Trust's recent AGM, with those attending unanimously in favour of continuing to pursue this objective. SK suggested that Supporters Direct ought to be encouraged to be taken a more high profile lead on this as it was a "hot topic" across the Football League, not just at Southend United.

ACTION – PF/PY to follow up with Supporters Direct

6. Away Match Tickets

Lesley Hicks had asked for this matter to be brought up on behalf of Paul Bale, a Northern based supporter, who had tried to buy tickets for the Mansfield game and have them sent to him. He was told by the ticket office that they no longer post out away tickets.

SK said he would look into this as he was not aware of this change of policy, and he was also intending to take the subject of away match ticketing to a Football League meeting the following day. Some clubs do not sell advance tickets, some don't even have ticket offices, and this is obviously to the detriment of other clubs, such as ours.

ACTION – SK to follow up and report back

7. Trust Fundraisers

Race Night, 1st March – SK advised that Phil Brown will not authorise player attendances for 48 hours before and after a match so player attendance at a function on a Saturday night is extremely unlikely.

Bowling Night, date tbc – This has more likelihood of being supported being likely to be a midweek event. The players have been back to the Kursaal on a team-bonding session with Phil Brown since the Junior Blues' Christmas Party which had been a great success.

8. Player Memorabilia

PF repeated the problems the Trust has with getting items donated by players. He had noted that Chris Phillips currently has a pair of football boots signed by John White which he is auctioning on ebay for Havens Hospices. PF said that the Trust have no complaints about what players do with their donations but asked that we be considered occasionally. SK agreed to think about ways to encourage players to think about providing more support of this nature from the players and it was agreed that a formal meeting should be set up with Phil Brown.

ACTION – SK to facilitate meeting between Phil and the Trust

9. Perfect Pals

SK thought this had been agreed at the last meeting. The information is to be shared with Ryan Murrant and SUCET who would establish a link between Perfect Pals and the club and make whatever arrangements are necessary. PF suggested the Trust's annual use of a box might be offered to them.

ACTION – PF to speak to Ryan Murrant and SUCET

10. Any Other Business

PF brought up the subject of the car park and how difficult it is now to get out of the car park after matches with the gates shut in the middle section of the car park.

ACTION – SK to speak with Dave Jobson to clarify reasoning behind the gates being closed

PF said that the fixture list card which the Trust had sponsored this season was not considered a viable prospect for sponsorship next season. Criticism duly noted by SK.

SK said we had had 500 children from schools at the Newport game, all as a result of SUCET initiatives. This is an investment in the Club's future, children get a free tickets to a game, then heavily discounted ones by which time it is hoped they will enjoy it enough to want to come along regularly. SUCET control a database with the children's information on to track their "journey", and also ensure children are given promotional material for the Junior Blues.

SC and KF brought up the matter of refreshments and counter service, particularly at the recent FA Cup game against Hull. SK advised that the outlets are working at full capacity and at maximum Health and Safety levels. The outlets at the back of the South stand and in the lower South West corner are no longer able to be used as they do not conform to regulations. The ground has limitations and the Club is working within them to the best of their ability. Supporters were not able to cross into the segregated area at the back of X block at the Hull game due to segregation policies enforced by the police.

PF brought up the subject of the youth policy at the Club and how impressive Ricky Duncan, Dave Huzzey and Ted Smith had been, representing the Academy at the Trust AGM. SK responded saying both he and RM supported the Youth Academy and that Phil Brown is also very supportive. We are now getting boys who are choosing to remain with us rather than accepting offers to go to Arsenal. SK reiterated the importance of promoting initiatives that support the youth set up, for example the Blue Lottery, and discussed how some quite big clubs have failed to meet the audit required to be a Cat 3 (which is what we are aiming for) Academy and are subsequently dropping their youth development.

KF returned to the subject of the ladies toilets in the West stand which have been appalling recently with water running out of light fittings, and the floor awash.

ACTION – SK to follow up again with Dave Jobson

SK congratulated the walkers from the Trust on their recent walk to Dagenham and agreed to chase up the agreed donations from within the Club.

KF passed on thanks to the Club for the way in which recent visitor from Australia, John Wilmot, had been looked after.

PF added thanks for the hosting of Garry Warren and his wife in the Directors' Box recently, as a result of the Mac book donation.

SK is proposing a Fans Forum in the very near future with a key discussion point being ticket prices for 2014/15.

ACTION – PF to email Dickie Spooner's email contact

11. Date of next meeting - tba