



SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED LIAISON MEETING



Thursday, 25th February 2016

1. Present and Apologies

Steve Kavanagh (SK); Shane Chapman (SC); Kay Fogg (KF) and Clare Chapman (CC) in attendance.
Apologies from Paul FitzGerald (PF) and Paul Yeomanson (PY).

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 26th November 2015:

Follow up on actions:

- Pie and Pint Night – ongoing, with PY. KF to approach Steve Tilson to see if he would be interested.
ACTION – PY/KF to progress
- Family Excellence Survey – ongoing, with PY.
ACTION – PY to progress
- Friends of the Academy – PF still has this in hand but is getting little response.
ACTION – PF to update
- Fairfax Drive entrance – SK reported this had been locked for a couple of games recently due to Police requests. He noted when possible it will be open but safety issues will over rule this as and when required. KF continuing to monitor.
- Shrimpers Bar exterior lighting – SK reported there is an on off switch which seems to be at the root of problems. It's now been isolated and should now mean the light is left on.
- Charges for parking at away games – it was noted SK has not yet been given a list and we are running out of games, however a list is to be compiled and given to SK of all clubs who charge for parking for consideration next season.
ACTION – CC to take over responsibility for this
- Online ticketing issues – KF to raise with DM and PF to see if issues raised have been resolved
ACTION – KF to follow up
- Seat numbering, specifically East Greens – SK reported that the Stadium Manager advised that they are currently undertaking checking and re-painting where necessary. They are moving on to other parts of the ground too.
- Oldham away – SK advised that the club are still waiting to hear from the Football League on this and has chased them up. They had said the League are considering the whole structure for local promotions as a result of the issues arising from this game, and are sympathetic to our concerns.
ACTION – PF to continue in seeking to lobby Oldham Supporters Trust.

3. Club Finances

SK reported that finances were much as normal. Wages and HMRC payments are up to date as far as possible. The Commercial Department within the club has been much enhanced and concentrating on looking to drive revenue, which is key to the continued development of the Club.

4. New Stadium

SK advised that he had nothing new to add at this stage. He suggested that, as before, PF speaks directly with RM on this subject.

It was acknowledged that there had been a good response from supporters to Councillor Woodley's article in The Oracle.

5. Junior Blues

KF reported concerns about the forthcoming JB match v Chesterfield as there is also a community day. SK said ideally we would do separate days but there is also a lot of synergy and as such he was confident that the Junior Blues would be a prominent feature of the day.

There was discussion about the logistical issues of getting the Junior Blues from the East Stand to the designated collection area in Block X of the West. KF and SK to continue discussing this.

KF asked if the face painters she had provided contact details with had been acceptable. SK said KF to speak to DM on this point.

KF added that we are still waiting for a date on Marsh Farm.

ACTION – KF to continue to liaise with SK about the children for the “walk”, and DM on other matters

6. Season Tickets/Ticketing

CC and SC raised this matter as a result of conversations between supporters at recent away games. The assumption that “price freeze” for season ticket prices was presumed to refer to the “early bird” price for last season, whereas, the price referred to was actually the published price for 2015/16. There had also been complaints from supporters about the £5 admin charge levied in the ticket office.

SK acknowledged that some supporters had misinterpreted the prices, but felt this was an unfair assumption. He said the literature was clear last year’s early bird price was exactly that and at some point prices have to rise as we climb the Leagues to enable the Club to be competitive on the pitch. He explained that the £5 admin fee is to encourage supporters to use online services to renew season tickets. SK noted the Club are naturally happy to assist people with forms and inputting details etc., but this is labour intensive compared to online applications hence a charge is levied if we complete this work.

SK reported that the average home gate is now around 7,000, which is a 1,500 or so increase in the last three years. He noted the club needs to continue this upward trend and SK asked the Trust for their help in identifying the role that supporters can play in achieving this rise. He wants the Trust to consider creating a target group whereby we target an average home crowd of 8,000. This, with good away attendances, would see Roots Hall filled. We can then start to have a vision beyond this.

SK noted this requires strategy and vision and the supporters, especially The Trust, can play a significant part in this and the development of their Club.

He also noted with recent data gathering exercises being undertaken, it has been discovered that it appears only 200 or so people have come to three or more matches on a match by match basis this season. One underlying issue may be people not recording purchases under their own names, another reason for engaging with online and setting up your accounts properly to assist the Club in understanding trends and data to allow us to use that to grow the Club.

Supporters to be encouraged to do more online ordering, with season ticket holders soon to have the option of auto purchase for away games.

ACTION – Trust and Supporters Group to take on board and to consider ways in which to continue to “grow” the support and to drive this initiative.

7. Away Shirts

SC noted that the club has rarely made use of the away kit this season and felt this was unfair to supporters. It was suggested that the kit be viewed as a 2nd kit, rather than specifically an “away” kit.

SK noted that if possible the team will play in the our Blue kit as we are “the Blues”. SC said we should have changed kit for the recent Scunthorpe away game and SK noted that when Scunthorpe played at Roots Hall they played in their “home” kit so clearly no clash existed.

8. Changes to fixtures

SC raised the changes to several games and the inconvenience to supporters of having changes, CC added that many Sheffield United supporters had booked to come to Southend for Easter weekend ahead of the planned match on Easter Monday, only for this to have been moved to two days later to be on Sky.

SK noted that, while many supporters consider Sky to be an unnecessary evil in football, clubs benefit financially from their involvement, and without it, many clubs would fold.

SK also noted that he had looked to challenge the recent Port Vale away change but it was made clear that the written regulation supported the change, as the Police insist Port Vale don't play on the same day as Stoke and as the higher team, Stoke have priority. Therefore he was unable to alter that change but the Club are aware of it and do everything within the regulations to ensure this doesn't happen. He also explained the Sheffield Utd situation was very unusual and suggests their fans take it up with their Club as it was not a situation that SUFC created!

SK confirmed that he had had no notification of any date change for the away game at Wigan on 23rd April at this stage and if they do, they will inform people at the earliest opportunity.

9. West Stand Ladies' Toilets

KF advised that at both most recent home games, the ladies' toilets had been out of water before the matches kicked off. Whilst that may have been expected with the larger crowd against Colchester, this should not have been the case against Burton.

SK responded that someone is now mopping the floor in the toilet a couple of times before and during the match and that a new water tank has been purchased. He agreed that this should have meant that the toilets were functioning properly for the Burton game and said he would refer this to the stadium manager.

ACTION – SK to discuss with DJ

10. Any Other Business

- PF would be driving a proposed fund raiser, thought likely to be a bucket collection, at a designated match for SUFC's record appearance holder, Alan Moody, following on from recent double amputation.

ACTION – PF to progress

- Joe Elliott is running a half marathon on a running machine for charity, with the idea that the last leg is around the pitch.

ACTION – DM progressing

- Tom Leggett, who recently ran from Colchester to Southend is, apparently returning for the home game against Chesterfield to take the opportunity to thank the Southend supporters.
- KF expressed frustration at two recent Guards of Honour (against Coventry and Colchester) where the children's kits were the same as our away opponents.
- Those present discussed the recent incident at the Colchester game. SK explained that police intelligence had not indicated there would be trouble inside the ground, and that the stewards had acted in accordance with their directives for the game.

The reason Mr Coshever was allowed back into the stand after the assault on the Colchester supporters was that that was the safest place for him to be. He had already been identified and to have sent six or seven stewards in to evict him at this point, and with the mood the crowd was in, would have been counter-productive and could have caused further issues and removed stewarding from where it was needed most.

The stewarding operation on the day worked, with the exception of Mr Coshever, and there were 25% more stewards on duty that day. The steward who Mr Coshever ran past to gain access to the pitch could not leave the exit gate unguarded to try and personally deal with the one person and remained at his post, and whilst he may have been criticised on social media, this was the correct thing, as, had he left his post, other supporters may also have followed and again a more significant incident could have occurred.

SK felt that the stewards were to be commended for carrying out their duties so well during this game and in accordance with procedures in what were difficult circumstances that were not envisaged in any of the police intelligence

11. Date and Time of Next Meeting

7th April 2015 at 4.15 p.m.