

Trust Statement – 16th June 2024

The Shrimpers Trust appreciates the update provided by Cllr Daniel Cowan on 15th June regarding Southend-on-Sea City Council's position in relation to the land transaction deal required to facilitate the takeover of Southend United FC by the consortium led by Justin Rees (COSU).

The clarity provided is welcomed; Cllr Cowan has confirmed the previous deal failed the Council's due diligence, and a revised proposal has now been placed in front of the Martin family, who have been given until Friday 21st June 2024 to respond.

Cllr Cowan has also stated that the Council's continuation in negotiations with the Martins is reliant upon COSU's involvement. In short, the position is clear: the Martins must agree to this deal, or it is off. We concur with the position outlined by the Council and appreciate the work that has gone into setting it out.

We would again like to take the opportunity to thank COSU for their patience and commitment to Southend United FC, especially given they have yet to assume control of the club. They have made a significant investment, and their continued involvement offers the prospect of a brighter future.

In our last statement, we referenced our position regarding direct action. The latest Council update recognises the frustration of supporters but urges restraint and, in our discussions with COSU, they have also disclosed that protests are counter-productive to the process being undertaken.

So, whilst we back any supporter's individual right to make a decision over whether or not to protest, as an organisation the Shrimpers Trust feels the ongoing negotiations continue to be of too delicate a nature for such actions to be helpful at the moment.

The Martin family has been issued with an ultimatum and a hard deadline; it is important they are not allowed to use the distraction of supporters protesting to further risk the future of Southend United. We spent a significant period of time on Saturday in discussions with Justin Rees, the leader of the Council and the leader of the opposition; we do not take this decision lightly. With this in mind, we also urge all politicians to not be distracted too.

We know the finality of the situation will concern fans. The Shrimpers Trust continues to plan for every eventuality. Our priority is ensuring the survival of Southend United FC and we continue to liaise with a range of organisations and individuals to help us in that aim.

Representing supporters can take many forms. As well as maintaining dialogue with relevant stakeholders, we have spoken to national news outlets to highlight the plight of the club and lobbied central government about the dangers of property developer owners ahead of upcoming legislation. As fans we have a degree of soft power in these situations and, in time, we'd like to see that become more formal. Amongst others, we will be meeting with the Football Supporters Association this week to discuss options in further detail.

Southend United has been a beacon of the local community for 118 years. It brings people together, forging friendships and relationships that last for decades. The history and heritage of our club will never die, regardless of the outcome at the end of this week; as supporters, we are Southend United Football Club and this will continue into the future.

It is now down to the Martins to do the right thing; the only thing. At various points over the course of the past five years, the current owner, Ron Martin, has claimed that he loves the club; now is his opportunity to prove that, to accept the deal proposed by Southend-on-Sea City Council and enable COSU to take control of our club.

We would like to conclude by reiterating that anyone who is struggling with anxiety about this ongoing situation is not alone. There are people who can help, and further details about some of those organisations are available via the websites listed below:

SECE Mind: www.secemind.org.uk
Livewell Southend: www.livewellsouthend.com
Mind: www.mind.org.uk