



SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED LIAISON MEETING



Thursday, 26th September 2024
Roots Hall Stadium 16:30

1. Present and Apologies

Those in attendance were Tom Lawrence (TL) and Rylee Doe (RD) from SUFC, and Paul FitzGerald (PF), Shane Chapman (SC) and Kay Fogg (KF) from the Shrimpers Trust.

Apologies for absence received from Paul Yeomanson (PY).

2. Actions Carried Forward and Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th July 2024

- New Junior Blues flags were already in use and of much better quality than the previous ones. They are slightly heavier. Data regarding information being correctly captured at the ticket office was reported as now being done so correctly. Action closed.
- Items to adorn the corridors and Board Room relating to the Club's heritage and history had been discussed and were now being dealt with direct, by Justin and Andy Leeder. Action closed.
- Four tickets had been supplied by the Club to the Shrimpers Trust to be distributed on a match by match basis to fans as the Trust see fit. Action closed.
- Plush Sammys – TL didn't see any issue with the Trust sourcing their own plush Sammy toys to sell, but said he would call them immediately after the meeting to confirm.

ACTION – TL to confirm with Macron and advise

3. Update Post Takeover

TL reported that things were going ok, there is much less legal business to deal with and fewer grumpy creditors! Everyone seems to be on board with the new regime and pleased to be involved.

COSU are working on various areas within the ground that need urgent improvement. Work is underway in the North-West Quadrant (NWQ) to bring it back into use. The toilet block has already been made water-tight. TL explained that bringing this area into use is an important factor in being able to start work on the feasibility study for the East Stand development and involving architects. Originally, the plans to begin work on the East Stand were for the end of this season, but, realistically, this is likely to be May 2027 (earliest). The current plan is to convert the North-East ticket collection point to an outward facing bar, and a retail collection point. The bar will service the away fans. TL shared some diagrams with those present to show the planned changes for the area over the next few years, while work progresses. Home fans would enter via Fairfax Drive, with away fans and their vehicles moved from this area to the bottom of the main car park.

A container is planned to be brought in at the back of the West Stand which will become a licensed premises to improve the availability of alcohol for home fans in this area – this is subject to obtaining a liquor licence.

There were reported to have been 100 applicants for the new Fan Advisory Board. The deadline for this is the end of September. PF raised an issue with the wording surrounding the Shrimpers Trust representative. This had always been intended as being appointed by the Board and not by the members, as the Club had reported. TL and RD agreed to change the wording of this on the website.

ACTION – TL/RD to amend the website

QR codes are now up and functioning around the ground, along with a dedicated feedback email address - feedback@southend-united.co.uk – for fans to communicate problems within the ground.

Anit-fox barriers are currently going up around the ground, and pigeon deterrents proving successful.

The Club is currently trying to sign a defender on loan, and has some targets for when the transfer window opens in January. The Club is also looking at permanent transfer targets in the forward areas.

4. Shrimpers Bar

It was agreed that, whilst a new dishwasher and glasses had been purchased, more resource should be directed at the Shrimpers' Bar. KF requested that new toilet seats would be installed in the ladies' toilets by SC, who would also look at the water temperature (dangerously hot) and the boiler cupboard door which had become unsecure.

PF raised the matter of coffee machines within the ground, and how nice it would be to be able to offer the non-drinkers a decent cup of coffee as an alternative in the bars. RD had been meeting with representative of Rijo42, who currently supply Wembley and Old Trafford, to investigate the feasibility of having coffee machines in the ground. It was felt that they wouldn't be practical at the outlets within the ground area, because of the time involved in producing a drink, but the Club hope to use them in hospitality areas.

There is still the Trust urn which can be brought into use in the Shrimpers Bar on matchdays.

5. Stadium Issues

KF advised that there are toilets in the South East corner which seem to have been overlooked. One is just inside the turnstile areas, to the right, and the other is the men's block on the gangway between the turnstile and the South Stand itself. RD said he would make sure these are reported to the cleaning company for immediate attention.

ACTION – RD to ensure the cleaners know to include these

TL confirmed that it is the Club's intention to have the FanZone up and running for next season, though the siting of this is still up for discussion at present. Some

criticism had been noted on social media about the quality of food on offer in the ground. TL confirmed that external advice on Food and Beverages has been sought which will inform the Club on the best way to uplift this area.

6. Shrimpers Trust Sponsorship

Dale Spiby and Danny Heath had recently shared an informative presentation with the Trust Board, and PF confirmed that the Shrimpers Trust will be the official sponsors of the Youth Team, continuing the long relationship which had existed with the Academy. It was noted that it was unfortunate that their shirts had been supplied with c2c on but that this would be rectified in due course

A presentation for this sponsorship would be made at the home match on 28th September.

7. Junior Blues

KF said numbers were steadily increasing with over 400 now. It is now quite urgent that plans are put in place for the October half term event.

ACTION – RD to discuss date with Kevin Maher and report back asap

8. SUEPA – Micky Stead Benefit Match

This will be taking place on 20th October, Justin and Tom Arnold are both playing for the opposition team. It was noted that the Club had recently put out information regarding this event, but any further help that the Club can give in promoting this event would be very gratefully received which TL agreed they would be happy to do.

ACTION – TL/RD to discuss with the media team

9. History & Heritage Project Group

PF advised that things seem to have gone quiet on the planned museum. TL said that Justin was leading on this from the Club's perspective.

10. Discussion about gambling sponsorships

TL confirmed that the Club is not actively seeking any partnerships with gambling companies, however, they are planning a re-launch of the Blues Lottery with improved prizes, which could be seen as a form of gambling. A meeting to discuss furthering this is due to be held early next week.

11. Social Inclusion Feedback

PF reported almost entirely positive feedback although there had been an incident with one of the guests recently.

The Trust budget will be exhausted by the end of this season, and the recent promotion had not yielded any donations outside of two of the main supporters from within the Trust. TL and RD agreed to try and seek some sponsorship and it was agreed that the excellent brochure which PF had produced, would be forwarded for them to circulate.

ACTION – PF to forward brochure to RD & TL

12. Any Other Business:

- TL was pleased to advise that a “testimonial year” was due to be announced imminently, for Kevin Maher.

- RD advised that the End of Season Awards would be held on Tuesday 29th April at the Cliffs Pavilion. The Sponsors' Night is TBA.
- RD said the Club were deeply apologetic about the delay in getting sponsors' shirts out from last year. This is currently in hand.
- TL reported on the planned Fan Engagement Strategy, sharing the draft documents relating to this.
- TL also reported that the Club audit for end of year 2023/24 would be commencing next month.
- SC asked what the Club's plans are for the 16-18 year old supporters who aren't represented very well, and TL responded confirming that this age category would be included in a new Membership offering which the Club is aiming to launch later in the year/ early part of next year.
- SC also asked if there would be some crossover between the different planned group meetings but TL assured him that this wasn't seen as an issue. Our Liaison meetings were seen as tactical, and also covered some things which were Trust exclusive – like SUEPA and the Junior Blues.
- TL asked for the Trust to provide some support in promoting their inclusion in the Football Content Awards for their "Every Club needs its threads" kit launch promotional video. PF agreed that the Trust would engage other Clubs and Trusts for their support.

ACTION – PF to discuss with other Trust members asap

Meeting Closed 19:00

Next Meeting – Date TBA