

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

INTRODUCTION – Paul FitzGerald

Do you think that it is possible that our future is safe and we can start focussing 99% on footballing matters and 1% on what's going on in the Essex property market - unlike the other way round, as it has been for far too long?

Since the last newsletter, contracts have been exchanged between Ron Martin and the consortium led by Justin Rees, to takeover Southend United and its related assets, and these have been met with universal applause and approval.



The consortium, have worked tirelessly to rescue our club, demanding, at times, a huge leap of faith, in terms of effort and money without any guarantees. Their event at the Cliffs pavilion, "AN EVENING WITH THE SOUTHEND UNITED CONSORTIUM" was a great opportunity to hear what they have to say and, of course, ask questions.

We thank those who have shown patience and diligence in brokering this deal during a lengthy process. We recognise the complexity of the situation and are grateful in particular to Anna Firth (MP for Southend West) and Southend-on-Sea City Council, led by Tony Cox, for their crucial involvement.

To Justin Rees and the other members of the consortium: welcome to Roots Hall and to your term as custodians of Southend United Football Club. Thank-you for taking on the challenge of restoring this club to the English Football League, whilst providing us with a sustainable future, free from the permanent existential fears of our recent history.

So, it's farewell then (as opposed to Au Revoir hopefully) to the embargo. Kevin and his management team are now free of the shackles put upon them due to the financial mismanagement of the outgoing owner, and we all look forward to seeing what can be achieved.

As fans, whilst delighted that the club is no longer in an embargo, we still have some way to go before we can be completely confident that Ron Martin does not have his fingers on any part of the football club, or its assets. What a fantastic moment that will be, after so long.

Unfortunately, "completion" is not the end of the matter, as the "deal" between the Council and the property associates of the Martin family, will affect SUFC for many years to come. One can only hope that the deal the council strike, has some bodily parts attached very tightly and closely to a sharp implement, so that in the unlikely event that Mr and Master Martin do not adhere to the agreement, appropriate action can be taken.

AGM

The Trust held its **AGM** on 13th December. The formal agenda was followed by a lively Q&A session with Justin Rees, John Watson and Tom Lawrence as our guests answering the questions (Summary later in this Newsletter).

The AGM, strictly speaking, covered our accounting year which ended in June '23, but of course, so much has happened since then, it was impossible to ignore highlighting more recent issues.

For example, outside of the normal "stuff we do", the protracted sale process has kept us on our toes. We have kept in touch with prospective buyers, but never at any point really knew whether any would succeed – a point Justin Rees and I discussed several times. Effectively, we had to continue expecting **no deal** and therefore prepare for the worst.

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024



This led to us applying to central government's community ownership fund for 2 million pounds to buy Roots Hall. The funds available form part of the levelling up funding. The application process is long winded, however, our EOI was accepted and its status is now pending, awaiting further news on the sale.

Alongside this, the work being done by Central government to bring in an Independent Regulator meant a lot of background work for us, some of which provided conflicting challenges.

During the period, we have looked at various models for formal fan engagement and indeed, we've discussed these with Justin, to gauge his thoughts.

To this end, we included questions on this in our monthly surveys and a larger survey, to try and assess the appetite for fan involvement. For anyone reading this who took part in the larger survey, thanks! **Apparently**, as it turns out, this was the largest response to any survey in the city ever!

The survey results led us to the view that there **was** significant appetite and we have continued our analysis by agreeing to run some varied fan focus groups. These will progress when the ownership change is completed.

Social Inclusion / Community

Our Social Inclusion / Community scheme this year has seen guests from Little Heroes, James Walker and Family, The Farke Nights and the Rayleigh Rebels. Two more groups are planned and then I am going out with the begging bowl because this is such a win/win situation for all parties...and on that point we'd like to thank Nigel Groves very much for his significant donation to our funds which will help fund more visits from more deserving causes.

All reported back with thanks and note of a really positive experience.

Rayleigh Rebels is an all-inclusive community club for those with and without special educational needs (SENDs) they were set up in 2018 as a youth project to provide free football sessions for boys and girls. It was decided that sessions would be free so that every child had the opportunity to play football whilst also feeling a part of a team without judgement. As the team grew, they were approached by parents who found there was a lack of teams able to cater for those with additional needs.

The club caters for boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 16-years-old and currently has three teams: two in Rayleigh and one in Great Wakering. The Rayleigh Rebels Inclusive Community Football Club can be contacted via email at RayleighRebelsFC@hotmail.com.



Little Heroes is a small charity support group for parents and family of children with a diagnosis, or potential diagnosis of ASD. They provide activity sessions for the families supported during school holidays and at festive periods.

You do not require an official diagnosis to attend their sessions. They offer a safe place for parents and carers to chat with other likeminded people, in a non-judgemental environment.

Other regular sessions include Dad's Club, Girl's Club, Youth Club, Home Ed Sessions, After School Club and Evening Parent/ Carer Creative sessions.

For more information follow the QR code.



NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024



35 children and 7 players (Jack Bridge, Callum Powell, Harry Cardwell, Jack Wood, Wes Fonguck, Oli Coker & Brooklyn Kabongolo) enjoyed the **Junior Blues** Christmas Party at Kingpins. Everyone had a great time bowling alongside their heroes. At the end of their game, players gave out presents to all the youngsters, who then went on to enjoy a meal. A thank you to Andy Leeder, Wendy Owers and Jackie Smith for helping out on the day. Also, as always, to Kay Fogg for her time in organising these events.

Finally, and as confirmed at our AGM five additional Trust members have been elected to the board and it would be remiss of me not to welcome them to our fold of enthusiastic volunteers. Step forward **Liam Ager, James Schooley, Harrison Lane, Clare Campbell and Michelle Gargate**. Liam, James and Harrison had already been co-opted during the year; all came on-board following our first ever open election process. This might sound like we have previously been “closed”! But the reality is we have never been oversubscribed before in applicants and therefore needed to open up the process to all members to choose. Thanks to all who took part in that process.

The Shrimpers Trust Board try our best to represent the views and interests of all fans, but we accept we will not please everyone. We are an elected group of volunteers who act on our belief on what is best for the Football Club, whilst being accountable to our membership. We are always looking to diversify our board and membership, and should you wish to get more involved or would like more information please contact me at chairman@shrimperstrust.co.uk

We would love to hear from you.

Paul FitzGerald

Stop Press

On Sunday 4th February 2024, the Shrimpers Trust Board will be holding an online surgery with Trust members to explore options concerning the outstanding loan of £40,000 made to Southend United Football Club in November 2022.

The surgery will begin at 1:00pm, lasting no more than 90 minutes, and will provide some background as to how we arrived at the current position, although the primary focus will be to obtain views and opinions about how we move forwards.

At the recent Shrimpers Trust Annual General Meeting, Southend United FC consortium leader Justin Rees challenged the Shrimpers Trust to decide what, as an organisation, we wanted to do with the £40,000 loan.

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

The surgery discussion will be fed back to the next Shrimpers Trust Board Meeting, scheduled for the following evening, and will also help provide options for a forthcoming Shrimpers Trust survey, to ensure we best represent the views of our members.

If you would like to participate in this online surgery, please complete the short form, by following the below and an invite will be emailed to you closer to the event: <https://forms.gle/zFtcYAW3vdihCmYW9>

SHRIMPERS TRUST AGM Q&A

Following the formal business of the Shrimpers Trust Annual General Meeting, members were given the opportunity to participate in a Question & Answer session with consortium members Justin Rees and John Watson, and Southend United's Chief Executive Officer, Tom Lawrence.

The session started with Justin Rees providing an update the current situation concerning the sale of the football club: *"We don't have an exact date," he said. "We are strongly pushing for it to be in the next couple of weeks, but an exact date is hard because it's between Ron and the Council. Other than me ringing and annoying people by saying 'How's this thing going?' we don't have any direct influence on it."*

"We absolutely collectively understand – and when I say collectively, I mean the Council, us, Ron – we need to get this embargo lifted, particularly with the January window coming. There has been a player welfare problem for some time, but there are other complications that come with it the longer we wait."

"Everybody has a desire to get it done asap, but these aren't simple things. I said to someone the other day who asked why we hadn't just got it done, 'We aren't ordering Dominos Pizzas where you demand your money back if it goes over 30 minutes'. It's very complicated, particularly with the properties sitting with different entities."

"I've never bought a football club before, so I can't say last time it took three months, this one will take three months. There's a bit of uncertainty, which is why there's not a precise, exact date we can give you until probably the last minute."

He was then asked if there was ever a time when he doubted if the deal would go through. *"Up until the 3rd October when we announced it, there were a few points where we were not sure we were going to make it," he replied.*

"Since then there's only been one juncture, which was recently – the Thursday before last – where I personally was thinking we were stuck on a point that we might not be able to resolve. I was getting pretty anxious about it all, but John might've been thinking this was normal and it'll get solved, and Ron might've been confident or not confident. I, personally, was very, very worried about it falling over last Thursday, but I feel confident now, but you don't know until its done."

Justin Rees then moved on to respond to a question about the composition of the consortium, and whether the Shrimpers Trust would have a seat on the Football Club Board once the takeover had been completed. Although this was not the case, he was able to reveal that a Fans Advisory Board is to be established.

"We've purposefully structured it so that no-one has 51% or more, so there is no one single person who can do things because they own 51% or more," he said. "As it stands, I have the largest individual portion, but it's below 50% for that exact reason. We've got people with a couple of percent, and a few people with around 10%, so it's quite a range rather than ten people with 10%."

"Every consortium member will be a shareholder in the sense that they'll be a shareholder of this new company we've established which will be a 95% shareholder after the deal is done. We will elect a Board, realistically, on day one, which will be a sub-set of consortium members, but it doesn't strictly have to be that as there are plenty of Boards that have members that aren't shareholders."

"The Shrimpers Trust will not have any involvement on that Board initially, but we want to set up an Advisory Board, which we've talked about. Wrexham have this structure, but they're not alone, involving representatives across all the various groups that are interested in the affairs of the Club."

"Not every investor on the consortium will be on the Board because it would be unruly, so you have to have a sub-set of people. We're thinking about five or six to start with and, like any group, we'll have certain decisions that have to be 51% or more by rule and others that have to have a higher threshold. We haven't figured all that out yet."

"The Advisory Board will run quarterly, like the main Board, but preceding it, so everyone that's on the group will have a voice that then feeds in and affects the decision-making of the over-arching Board."

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

"We won't necessarily copy the structure of that Wrexham Advisory Board, but it's not a bad one and it covers cross-representative groups of the town, so it's a good enough place to start, but if Southend has a stakeholder that's relevant to us and Wrexham doesn't then we'll change our structure to suit."

"You can have autocrats, or you can have a democracy, and if one is agile and they're an amazing person maybe it's good for a while, or indefinitely, and the more you go democratic the more you slow things down and have to have committees, so it's a trade-off, but it's a trade-off we want to have."

"We won't be slowed to a standstill; we won't take every single decision to everybody in the consortium and do votes and ballot papers. We'll have delegated authority that gives Tom as CEO enough control over running the day-to-day without checking in, and it'll give the Board enough control to govern Tom and the group effectively to make decisions within a framework, and there'll be the odd thing that needs to go to a shareholder vote."

"Tom has been brilliant. I was buying a football club for the first time and Tom was instrumental in getting me confident that I wanted to do it, getting me confident that if I did it someone was there that I could trust to run the shop because I'm not the CEO. Tom has been unbelievable for me personally."

There was an appreciative round of applause for the efforts of Tom Lawrence from the room, although he was keen to deflect the attention away from himself. *"It's very kind of you to say that, but there's a whole group of people,"* he said, before answering a question about the involvement of Stan Collymore.

"Stan was exceptional, particularly when we were interviewing the coaches and he gave us the confidence to do that," he revealed *"That was his most important contribution when we interviewed lots of different people and Kevin [Maher] was third-string at Bristol Rovers, but he interviewed the best."*

"I thought he was really good, but Stan stood up and said, 'I want to play for Kevin Maher', and that gave us all the confidence to make what has proved to be a very good decision, so he has to take a lot of credit for that."

"Conversations with Stan are ongoing. He is taking a bit of a break whilst this is all going through. His role in finding players and other bits and pieces has obviously been hampered by the world's longest-running embargo, so it has been a difficult year."

The CEO then moved on to provide an update on the business plan for Southend United FC that had been drawn up, with Justin Rees preceding that by confirming that *"a lot of the plan was that Tom had a business plan with no money or support to execute it for some time."*

"The business plan has been sat there for some time," Tom Lawrence explained. *"We've managed to do some work to try and implement it, but we went into survival mode and the business plan went out the window because we're fighting in the trenches every day. That's still ongoing to some extent, although the consortium have provided some really useful support to slow down the attacks."*

"We've resurrected the business plan and we're checking in on how we're getting on. We've made good progress, but there are some capital expenditure items we need to invest in and I'll take them to the Board and the Board will decide whether or not return on investment is going to mean that it's worthwhile."

"For example, we're looking at a fan-zone to go into what was Community Corner at the top end of the car park. We also need to spend money relocating the players and coaches from Boots & Laces across to the new training ground, so that's another stream that we're working on."

"We need to redevelop the East Stand and we need to refurbish the other three stands. I'm not an architect, structural engineer or surveyor, but it seems to me the other three stands can be refurbished and improved slightly without knocking them down and starting again, but the East Stand is probably a complete start-again job."

"Within that there'll be toilets, improving the bar areas, creating better hospitality facilities and, in particular, once it's all done in, say, five years' time, the facilities here will be improved. In the West I'd like to knock down everything at the back of the West and replace it; I'd take the asbestos roof off and replace it, leaving the actual structure there and refurbishing it would start to get expensive."

"The East will have an all-singing and all-dancing catering facility and there might be an opportunity for some office space, too. That will give us income 365 days a year, which will move us closer to a break-even point, and on our projections that's even in the National League, so if we can get promoted the increase in income is about £2 million, although there are other costs."

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

“That’s the game-plan. The guys need to challenge it and test the business plan, but that’s what I’d love to do. Because of the embargo, spend is tracking considerably less than forecast. We’re in discussions now about the player budget for next year and I think we’re going to have some good support.”

“This is not a normal business. A football club is not a normal business. It’s a community asset,” interjected consortium member John Watson, before Justin Rees moved on to discuss sustainability within the Club.

“We need to move towards sustainability,” he confirmed. *“We’ve had high moments and low moments, but if all of those moments are unaffordable, by definition it’s unsustainable. If your singular owner’s side-businesses go down, the Club doesn’t exist. I think it’s mental.”*

“Clubs are so big and so far-reaching in their communities, for them to be a bad business deal away in Australia or Hong Kong and then everything else shuts down, is unsustainable. It is the owners that choose to pay things.”

“As good as Kev is, he doesn’t walk in, grab a pen and sign his own contract. If we offer contracts to players, coaches, cleaners, chefs, or anyone, there’s no surprise when that money goes out the door or if our financial modelling of how much money we’re going to bring in is incorrect because we’ve assumed we’re going to find the next Declan Rice and sell him for £100 million.”

“We’re in control of what we spend and, to a degree, about what we forecast because we should be able to say our average crowds are around 6,000, so if it’s unsustainable it’s because someone at the top is signing up to things they can’t afford.”

“We have money coming in and money going out, however we choose to do it. If we choose to be huge on scouting South America Brighton-style, if it works, fantastic; if we choose to all be about Gillingham, through Tom’s experience, they have a lot of money through conferencing and banqueting that helps fund their outgoings.”

“We can leave it a bit general as to how we make money, but if we don’t make enough money to pay for what we spend, by definition you’re unsustainable and you’re relying on someone wealthy to decide this is a passion project. My personal view is that you should be able to break even, which we will not be able to do tomorrow, or year one, or year two, or year three.”

“We are structurally in a place at the moment where we’ll lose a million quid-plus for the next few years, guaranteed, and that’s been put in the budget. Our plan is, largely through improving the facilities, to ensure the Club can, there or thereabouts, break-even irrespective of whether it goes up or down in the league, which would be my definition of sustainable.”

The discussion moved onto the catering facilities at Roots Hall currently, and how the group felt they might be improved in future. *“Everybody is working hard in difficult circumstances,”* began Tom Lawrence. *“If ordering is not right from the start, so Linda can’t get her food in time, she’s rushing around because it’s all last-minute.com.”*

“We get rave reviews about the food that goes out in the corporate areas; what happens in the kiosk is basic; it’s burgers, it’s pies, it’s not sexy or exciting food. We’d like to do something to improve that. In terms of the performance of the catering and banqueting department, we’re actually tracking ahead by about 10% on sales, although we’re down on our target per head.”

“Our target per head is £1.90; we’re at about £1.80, so we’re not doing great on that. The reason for that is we’ve got more people coming through the turnstiles, so we can’t service everyone. In terms of the bars, we’re getting about £8-£9 per head in the bar, so it’s not an absolute horror story, but there are improvements that can be made. The fan-zone will have a kiosk; we’re going to redevelop the back of the West Stand and provide other outlets to improve the offering. I absolutely accept the criticism.”

“The matchday experience needs to be a metric we understand and measure – presumably through surveys – and we need to always try and get better,” Justin Rees continued. *“We can do that through going to other grounds and learning from them, for sure, and the best way to learn is to look at someone else who does it well.”*

“We might say things are 12 and we want it to be 15, but is that because there’s not enough people coming in because the toilets are in such a state that no-one wants to bring their family here for a couple of hours rather than the local pubs, or is it that when they get here they don’t like Fosters, therefore they drink less of it, or they love Fosters but there’s not enough staff.”

“We’ve got to make sure we care about the right things. We’ve got to care about sustainability, which means, unapologetically, we have to care about money, but we also have to care about fan experience, not just on a

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

matchday, but do you feel involved and trusted. It starts with what we value and how we measure it and each year, if you've solved one problem, you have to get better."

"The regeneration of Roots Hall over the next five years will clearly solve the facilities, the toilets and those other things – that's pretty much a given – but then operationally we have to continually improve."

"There's something about being a good host. The fact we don't get so many means we're not going to spend too much on away fans, frankly, in the National League, but if 50 or 60 people choose to follow their team and turn up, there's something nice about that, so what we offer will have to be commensurate to the reality that there's 55 people turning up 20 Saturdays a year, but there are always little things we can do to improve the experience for those die-hard fans of their clubs."

There was then a question about the bonus that had been promised for club staff who had stayed loyal during the recent period in testing circumstances. Justin Rees confirmed the consortium are paying wages and they are up-to-date, and Tom Lawrence confirmed he had agreed to a deferment.

Tom Lawrence added: *"Ron has been chasing me for a summary of the staff that have suffered the most significant pain, and we're working on a formula involving salaries times length of service. That's with Ron; it was sent to him over two weeks ago. I don't know what his intentions are, but it is on his mind."*

Justin Rees then continued: *"I don't think anyone should speak for Ron. If he wants to give an update, that should be from Ron. On our side, we haven't spoken about it, however, we have paid a few hundred thousand in salaries to make sure everyone gets paid and not just a certain sub-set, and that's before we own the club."*

"We appreciate everyone, no matter what role they play, and we didn't want to get involved in grouping people due to their significance or their contractual situation. Since we came on the scene on 3rd October we've been making sure we've been paying wages when they're due, all at risk, no personal guarantees our side, no loans or collateral."

"This is the right thing to do and, for as long as we're involved, and that could be for a very long time or, if the deal fell over, it would be something that we did because we felt it was right, month-by-month. We haven't really thought about any grand gestures."

"We're coming into an insolvent club. We're coming in to debt and huge losses, so our first thoughts are to pay everyone when they're due and dig our way out of our plight, which is a structurally loss-making business. It's going to take a helluva lot of work and a helluva lot of investment to change our fortunes eventually."

The group were then asked where any money that is currently being generated is directed, with Tom Lawrence stating: *"We prioritise getting the games on, that's where the money goes. Medical cover is about £3,000 a game, the food and beverage orders is about £10,000-£12,000, then you've got to pay for referees and other bits and pieces. Our PAYE is about £60,000 each month. Salaries is where the majority of the money is directed."*

Justin Rees then took up the response: *"It's not going to Ron; it's going to the Club. Where it gets complicated is if the Club owes someone £15m, or £10m, and they take £100 out, they're still owed £14.9m. The money is going towards the running costs of the Club and the consortium and propping up the shortfall, which tends to be wages, salaries, HMRC, etc."*

"It's been a much greyer area before 3rd October, but it should be clearer now. You can tell by my hesitancy, we're not saying 100% until the deal's 100% done, there's a little bit of grey and the timing of season tickets for the second half of the season is important that it goes from grey to black-and-white."

"I'm sure there are people out there saying why isn't the season ticket for the second half of the season out there now, it's Christmas, and that's been in part because we wanted to get the timing right around that issue."

A question followed concerning a £20m payment from Ron Martin to the consortium to renovate Roots Hall as part of the takeover deal. *"There are a helluva lot of contracts that sit behind any deal and it goes into what-ifs; what if you pay on this date, what if you don't, interest if you don't,"* Justin Rees explained.

"There are legal routes, and that's in any deal. I'm not going to get into specifics, but we know we need £20m to renovate Roots Hall and we need to renovate Roots Hall with the financial sustainability of the Club."

"We've got the money to clear off all the debts and run the operating losses, but we're not sitting there on £20m and, even if we did, commercially as a business model we don't want to have that extra £20m, we got it out of the deal."

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

"We have lawyers that we pay a lot of money to to give us commercial, contractual protections, and they tell us all the what-ifs, and it's up to us to say, in this example, there's a little bit of risk, do we accept it or not, and if we say not, they tell us how they can mitigate it. There's all sorts of ways to do that."

"How someone can sell a business, ostensibly for £1, and then pay £20m for the privilege, sounds odd. It's obviously related to the value that is created from the property deal at Fossetts Farm by not having to build an expensive stadium and consolidating all the planned Council housing which I'll remind everyone we do need; there's a housing shortage."

"Putting all those at Fossetts instead of the split here allows us to stay here. £20m is a lot cheaper than building a £50m stadium, so economically that's the answer of how it works. Contractually it's with the lawyers."

An update was then provided on the progress of the move from the club's current training base at Boots & Laces to a new site close to Smithers Farm in Rochford. *"They're still at Boots & Laces,"* said Tom Lawrence.

"Renovation works need to be undertaken at the Fossetts training ground in order to get it ready, so we need to do some work to the first-team's pitches in particular. The first pitch is the hybrid one and, by the sounds of it, it drains really quickly; the problems we've had with it have been caused by having no electricity on the site and no water on site."

"Without a proper irrigation system in place it's been pointless doing anything up there. We've got some cabins, which we've stored off-site; we can plumb those in as a temporary measure and we are going to get the lads on those pitches for the start of pre-season next year, so the end of June."

"There are four pitches; we're concentrating on the first two at the moment and we will do the others. We're looking at 4G pitches; we've got planning permission for a 4G pitch on pitch four, which is the furthest one away, so we're looking to do that sooner rather than later."

"It's not lost on the consortium. We're waiting for quotes to come in. We've reached out to Slatter Group and White Horse Contractors and others; we're looking at grants and funding. If we do that, we'll have to give up some of the usage; it's at an early stage, but we have a workflow that we're going through."

With the matchday squad having been restricted throughout the 2023/24 season – even before Saturday's fixture with Bromley where Blues could only name one substitute – attention turned to whether the Club would be able to bring any additional players in ahead of the busy festive period.

"The embargo won't be lifted until we pay HMRC," said Tom Lawrence, with Justin Rees adding, *"We'll pay HMRC on day one after the takeover."* Tom Lawrence then said: *"We have a good working relationship with the National League, although we've had some duels with them. They know we'd like to replace someone for Kanu and for Mooney. The guys are out there working on targets; there was one deal that fell through today, which was a bit of a shame."*

"The whiteboard is still there, and it's soul-destroying when you see one's gone, and then another one's gone, and then another one, after all the hard work the scouts have done. The football department and John Still have been brilliant; they're keeping positive and they're ready to go. They have been fantastic."

A question was then submitted about how the Club could still be losing money given that the playing staff had been so restricted under the embargo and attendances had been so high. *"We've seen the numbers; the Club has lost money every year,"* Justin Rees began.

"Say there were 6,000 paying a tanner, £60,000, 20-odd games, £1.2m, that's our playing budget next year, so there's decent money coming in on matchdays, but if you're making money 27 days a year, it's not enough to make money."

"It's in the budget. At the moment we're under-spending on what the playing budget would be because we're running with three-quarters of a squad. It means we're losing a little bit less money, which is a positive thing if you're an accountant, but not if you're Kev."

"The losses for this year are forecast to be around about £2m, so taking a £1.1m playing budget and reducing it by 25% because of the embargo doesn't wipe out a £2m loss. This isn't a case of money going out of the Club, this isn't a case of we're losing £2m but we're paying exorbitant rent to the entity that owns the football club; there's no rent going out, we just spend a lot more than we bring in at the moment."

"You've got two options; you shrink your spend down, play a bunch of kids, sell a player, all that sort of stuff to trim the club down, so you're spending less but it's not the club we're all excited about, or try to grow the revenues."

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

"This club shouldn't be where it's at; we don't want to shrink to the level of the National League; we need to grow the broader business and, by extension, its revenues to get us back up the divisions. That's our strategy to get us back to the level where the money coming in matches where we want to be, not shrink ourselves down."

Conversation then returned to the £20m and how that component of the deal is arranged. *"The £20m will flow over time," Justin Rees replied. "We've structured it in a way that's linked to certain events happening and certain things happening on the other site. We think sufficient will come over the five-year period; we accept that not all of it will come, but that doesn't stop us funding what we need to in the interim."*

"We'll be keeping an eye on the flow of those funds and we'll have a decision to make. If we were really risk-averse and we don't want to do anything here until we've got it all, the problem is we're staying in an unrenovated Roots Hall year-on-year. The over-arching thing is that an unrenovated Roots Hall is a massive contributor to our losses, so it's in no-one's interests to wait."

"We need to start ahead of that money, but there will be a balance in there somewhere which is something that ultimately we've got to decide on as a consortium based on quite a lot of factors; how confident we are about the way the project is developing, cost of borrowing, our own available funds, etc., etc."

Justin Rees was then asked about his impressions of Southend-on-Sea., being a newcomer to the area. *"You've got to start with the people," he said. "Everyone has been extremely welcoming, so it's been quite humbling. I didn't expect as much attention on me, personally, or the ownership structure. Those that have spoken to me more regularly will now that I don't think football clubs should be about its owners, it should be about those on the pitch."*

"Obviously the Southend story has been about the owner for quite a while, so perhaps it's logical that everyone wants to know what the new one's going to be like. My quest, over time, is that it really isn't about the ownership group and the club ticks along and it's about what happens on the pitch. You have good days and you have bad days, but no-one's worried about if you're going to exist next season."

"The people have been amazing and really welcoming, and there's such relief, I think, that the Club is going to exist. Hopefully we'll hang on to that and not just take it for granted because you guys have gone really close to the edge."

"I lived in London for four years in my 20s, so I'm familiar with England and I grew up with English football even though I'm from Australia, so the whole National League isn't new. I hadn't been to Essex before two days after I made the enquiry."

"When I come over for the weekend I'm trying to go in different pubs and walk the different streets and get to know the place a bit more and chat to different people. I hope it doesn't sound corny, but you've got to understand the people you're representing."

"It's not just any club. The whole point of doing this is that it means so much more to the community than maybe people from Australia would understand. I said to my wife that I'm not doing this because I want to go to the football every Saturday; if it was that I'd buy a box at Arsenal because I grew up as an Arsenal fan."

"It's a lot more than that. I've always known that clubs are a lot more important to their communities, they're a lot more than eleven lads on a football pitch running around, so to have the opportunity to step in and help in a way that mattered to me in terms of football was a really good opportunity."

"Southend is such a huge club. I'm pinching myself. If Southend is where we think it should be in five years, the Justin of today wouldn't be able to afford it. It's because it's where it's at, because it's down on its luck and because it's leveraged against a property group that we could bring this group together and play this role."

"It feels like a wonderful opportunity to step into a big club; it's big on every level in terms of facilities, the size of the stadium we can have once it's modified, the fanbase and the history. I'd've thought six months ago that if I was going to buy a club it'd be a small one, so to have this opportunity is quite humbling."

The next question was about Kevin Maher and when he would receive his long-promised testimonial now that the move to Fossetts Farm was off the table. *"Our first focus with Kevin is renewing his contract," Justin Rees responded.*

"A testimonial is something that would be brilliant for Kevin when the time is right, but first and foremost we want to tie him, Darren [Currie] and Mark [Bentley] down to new contracts and we're in those discussions. As a group, we want Kevin to be our manager in the long-term. I think a testimonial for Kevin is a very good idea, but the exact timing of it we'll wait until hopefully he signs a new contract."

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

Discussion then reverted to the structure of the ownership group and how the consortium would own the various components that had been separated under Ron Martin. *“We’ve set up an entity called COSU, which stands for Custodians Of Southend United,”* Justin Rees disclosed.

“When we talk about the consortium as an entity, that’s our singular company. It will have 95% of Southend United as a company after the debt-to-equity swap and therefore a controlling interest in Southend United.”

“At the same level we’ve set up another entity called POSU, Properties Of Southend United, so the real estate – essentially Roots Hall and the training ground – will sit with that entity, so our new entities will have 100% of the properties and 95% of the Southend United operating company. The consortium members sit at the top level and own 100% of this new thing we’ve created.”

“I have a percentage and others have a percentage and no-one has more than 50%. In the future, we don’t know if someone will have more than 50%, but that’s how we’ve set it up at the moment so that no single person has more than 51%, so there are checks and balances.”

“They’re shell companies, they didn’t exist before. For the existing shareholders, if you had three shares in Southend United, you still have three shares in Southend United, but not the land company. The 95% share resolution hasn’t been effected. I would expect Ron to effect that on the day the deal goes through as a closing task.”

Justin Rees was asked if he was surprised by the level of support for Southend United and whether he could understand the explosion there would be when the Club is freed from the shackles of Ron Martin. *“I think we got a glimpse of it with Chesterfield, for example,”* he said.

“Unfortunately, I was 24 hours away, so it was, at most, a glimpse. The momentum has been building since the news of the takeover on 3rd October. I’ve been to three Roots Hall games, so I’m quite happy to be pleasantly surprised when we get there. You guys want the same as me. Even if you think it’s all going to go through, you keep a little bit back until it’s done.”

The next question returned to the property aspect of the takeover and what the new group would own at the current ground. *“We’ve got the curtilage of Roots Hall, which is the boundaries you’re familiar with from Fairfax Drive and the West Stand and the car park,”* Tom Lawrence said.

“The shops of Victoria Avenue are not within the curtilage of the title deeds for Roots Hall; I don’t know what the situation is with those properties at the moment. What was the Community Corner is within the curtilage, then there is a building site next to it and then it goes round to the shop and so on, so that area will be within the title.”

“There’s a lot of space and we don’t need all of it for a stadium car park, so part of our decision is what to do with the whole site,” Justin Rees continued. *“First and foremost there’s the stadium, car park and fan-zone, all the things we need for the matchday experience, and then the secondary thing is whether there is a way to make money off the other bits that we don’t need to chuck back into the Club.”*

“We’ve talked about the £20m a lot, but our view is we’ll spend more than £20m on the entire complex, so if we can make money off the other bits and chuck money into that pot we absolutely will, but we just don’t know exactly what yet.”

Tom Lawrence was asked for an update on outstanding debts to Catapult, who supplied the Club with GPS vests, and whether the Club had explored auctioning off commemorative poppy shirts this season. He stated that they would look at the poppy shirt idea for 2024/25.

“We’re there or thereabouts in terms of clearing our debt with Catapult and we have a contract ready to go, so the relationship with Catapult is good but we’re not using those vests yet,” he added. *“There’s a wish-list from the football department of things they’d like to assist with the work they’re doing; GPS, water and some other bits.”*

John Watson was then asked what his role was within the consortium. *“All the consortium members are standing up to the plate and playing an active part. Each one of us has a different skillset and our active parts will change as we evolve over the course of the next five years,”* he stated.

“Priorities will take precedence, so for me I’m rubbish with the football department. I’m a supporter and I’ve just realised that, over 50 years I’ve only ever watched Southend, I don’t watch the opposition, I think the refs biased in every single game, just don’t ask me any football questions!”

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

“What I see my role is, as part of the consortium, is that I think sustainability is crucial. I don't ever want to see us in this position again. Never, ever, do I want to see us facing winding-up orders and, whilst I am just a supporter, my role is going to be holding this business plan to account.”

“The business plan is first, because if we're not sustainable, we really will be back here. It is a business. I know it's our club, and it's a community asset, but it's a business and ends have gone to meet, so we've got to make it work. I will be playing an active role, and that's the role that I'm going to play.”

Justin Rees was asked if he would like to see more fans, and players, come to Southend United from down under. *“When I think football I don't think Australia,”* he said. *“I don't have a particular preference if we do or don't have Australians coming through. I think we should look for an edge and I think at the moment our edge is John Still's scouting network at a particular level.”*

“How we use data and how we use scouting will always be a topic; today we've got what we've got and tomorrow might be different, but right now I'm really comfortable with the football department. Buying a football club, the thing I'm worried about least is the football because of the nucleus of the players, the management, the guys behind the management.”

“Australian fans, yes; one of my friends has set up an Australian Shrimpers Trust group in Sydney and lots of people are trying to join, apparently, but I'm not fixated on players.”

Justin Rees then fielded a question about whether the Club would continue to play an active role in anti-racism campaigning, and about the effectiveness of five-year plans. *“Anti-racism, absolutely, is a pillar of society and there's no place for racism in football clubs. I don't think you can ever do enough,”* he said.

“A business needs to have a twelve-month plan and a five year plan, and a three year one in between. Irrespective of whether John or Tom or Justin and what their life plans are, there needs to be a business plan and it doesn't waiver because someone changes their percentage shareholding or something changes in their enthusiasm or a Chairman needs to step down and someone else needs to step up.”

“We talk about a five-year plan, but I would encourage everyone not to think that it relates to individuals, it relates to the club. Once the club has executed on that five-year plan, it needs a new plan. If you've got your facility renovated and that's where all your budget's gone into, where does your budget go in year six? Clearly not facilities, so you look at what's next.”

Justin Rees was then asked if ownership of Roots Hall would be returned to the fans under his watch, who had built the stadium in the 1950s and had donated the ground to the football club. *“At the moment, the problem the club has is that it's properties – Roots Hall, ostensibly – is in a completely different world to the football club,”* he explained.

“It has a completely different ownership. Ron, essentially, has the majority to do what he wants to do on the football side of things, but there's a lot of other parties in that property group that means he doesn't have full autonomy.”

“The problem is, if the property group says, ‘We have a strategy in property-land’, and they don't care about Kev or Freddy Eastwood, they care about properties and they say they have an agreement with the Council to move the Club out of the way and knock down the stadium and build flats, why on earth would they renovate that stadium because they're going to knock it down.”

“In the property world, its objectives are completely at odds with the football club, and you've got different owners. What you have in our structure is you have the same people owning both. We have to weigh up the priorities of both under the same ownership structure.”

“Pretty much every football club, every hotel, even significant real estate assets, will separate those assets from the operating company. Day one: the properties and football club are under the same ownership structure, with the same Board, and they have to manage those tensions for the same outcome; there is no ulterior motive where we can let the football club suffer for the benefit of the properties because they are jointly-shared by the same ownership structure.”

“There is no ulterior motive; we want to own the real estate for our club,” added John Watson, before Justin Rees confirmed: *“The £20m commercially has to be spent on the regeneration of the site; it can't be spent on players, to pay us back for operating losses. That £20m goes into this precinct.”*

The final question concerned the £40,000 loan made by the Shrimpers Trust to Southend United FC in November 2022, and whether that would be paid back once the consortium took control of the football club.

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

"I've got a spreadsheet which shows the club owes over £3.5m to people," said Justin Rees. "That's over £3.5m in debt, which is why insolvency is a such a thing, to the point where Ron can't service it and on 4th October the club wouldn't exist or perhaps went into admin for a period. If you go into admin, the administrator says you lose £200k a month, who is paying for that, and if someone said no-one, they sell all your assets and liquidation fast-follows."

"You have a £40k loan which is part of a £3.5m debt. What we did was that we looked at the big ones – Npower, Emersons, PG Site Services – and you try to do a deal. £3.5m was too much for us; it wasn't a game of poker and we did our own numbers and came up with a £2.5m figure; that's what we could clear."

"If we'd've gone into admin, the whole lot of it, including the Trust loan, would've been written off by the administrator and someone could've bought the Club for paying HMRC and football creditors, so that might've been £1.8m. Our view was that it's not a great place to start to represent the community by letting businesses take 100% of the pain."

"Emersons are a great example as a local business that would've had loads of money written off and we'd've taken it for cheaper. We negotiated heavy discounts on the debt to say, rather than admin where you all lose everything, why don't we pay you a percentage of that so you get something."

"For us it's money straight out the door; it doesn't improve our squad or anything. When we take over the club, we will owe you £40k. There's a lot of talk of a personal guarantee from Ron, but if Ron signs the personal guarantee, we're going to own the debt anyway."

"My recommendation would be to move past that and decide what you as an organisation want to do with the £40k. If it's 'Justin's running the Club we want that back on day one', that's a decision, we'll own the responsibility of the debt and pay you back on day one. If it's, actually, everybody's taken a percentage of the pound for their debts as a tribute to avoiding the 4th October, that's a different route."

"I think it's a decision for you guys, and maybe it's hard for you to make it until the Ron era is over. When we own the Club, we owe you £40k, and it'll be up to you whether you want it all back or whether you say, actually, we're happy to pitch in somewhere in between or we'd like it back and then we'll put it back into the Club and reinvest in something else."

MEMBERS SURVEY – JANUARY 2024

The Shrimpers Trust is pleased to release the results from the January edition of its monthly survey for members on matters relating to Southend United FC and the Trust's operations.

The Trust believes engagement with supporters is crucial to being able to represent fans' views accurately, providing a mandate for the Board to make informed decisions, especially when liaising with other key stakeholders.

This is the third edition during the 2023/24 season after a break to allow supporters to complete a more wide-ranging consultation released by the Trust in the autumn, and then the club's own supporters' survey in December.

This edition included the following questions:

Q1 What is your current feeling about the future of Southend United FC?

Q2 Which of the following Shrimpers Trust events have you attended in the past 5 years?

Q3 What factor has the greatest influence on whether you attend a Shrimpers Trust event?

Q4 How regularly do you watch Southend United Ladies?

Q5 How likely would you describe yourself to watch a Southend United Ladies match if one was arranged to take place at Roots Hall?



NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

All adult members were contacted by email on Tuesday 16th January 2024 with the five multiple choice questions for the survey, and were provided with seven days to respond with their answers. A follow-up email was sent to those members that had not provided answers by Saturday 20th January 2024.

With a record 577 respondents to the survey, from 1469 invitations, we have again been able to gain a good understanding of the feeling of Trust members about the questions posed in this survey. The percentage representation of adult Trust members responding to the survey remained at around 40%. Thank-you to everyone that participated in this consultation.

There was a clear indication that the majority of Shrimpers Trust members (over 98% of respondents) were optimistic about the future of the football club. Only 4 of the 576 respondents to this question were pessimistic in their outlook.

In relation to Shrimpers Trust events, there was a clear indication that there is work to do for the Trust Board to engage with what members would like in this regard, with 78.30% of respondents not having attended any of the current offerings in the past five years. There were three key themes in terms of the key factor influencing the attendance of survey respondents at Shrimpers Trust events. These were Distance, Date/Time and Interest.

Over 90% of respondents had never attended a Southend United Ladies match, with only 13 describing themselves as regular spectators. However, there was a clear indication that a one-off fixture at Roots Hall would be better-supported, with 261 respondents (over 45%) stating they would be likely to attend such a match.

The results in full can be found on the Trust website here <https://www.shrimperstrust.co.uk/latest-news/shrimpers-trust-surveys/> along with the results from previous surveys.

XMAS DRAW RESULT - 2023

The Trust Board would like to thank all those who entered this season's Christmas Draw.

We have raised just under £1,700 for Trust funds, which is a great result.

The winning tickets were drawn by Harry Cardwell at half-time during the match vs FC Halifax Town on Saturday 6th January 2024.

The winners were as follows, and we are in the process of contacting them.

	Prize	Ticket Number	Name
1st	£500	238	Adrian Long
2nd	£250	4164	Rex Palmer
3rd	£100	71	Shawne Wilkie
4th	Meal for 2 in the Blues Legends Lounge at a match of your choice including Match Tickets	188	John Boosey
5th	Bottle of Champagne	13	Charlie Rafaelli

MEMBERSHIP

Life Membership (Total 362)

Welcome to New Life Members Stuart Bird, Mark Goodson, Chris Sorrell, Marc Bennett, Dave Bruce, Nick Tiffin, Philip Hood, Jamie Green, Dirk Pilat, Cassie Davies, Peter Moorhouse, David Davies, Martin Todd, Paul Duncan, Daryl Sevenoaks, Adam Middleton, James Hicks, Ann Humphrey, Ian Gray, Luke Nutley, Dave Smith, David Tuttlebee, Perry Gamon, Ian Green, Ian Mitchell, Joe Payne, Clive Collins, Jason Lewis, Nicholas Hutton, Lewis Hobday, Alan John Bacon, Kevin Jones, Tim Allen, Alan Couper, Graham Agambar, Bill Cosgrove, Rob Bellamy, Peter Taylor, Bill Frost, Keith Hall, Mike Read, John

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

Watson, Tommy Watson, Simon Plummer, William Wilcox, Jonathan Brown, Ewan Brown, Peter Pollard, Keith Buchanan, Philip Warburton, Peter Holohan, Stephen Hartley, Steve Clayton, Isabella Martin and Kevin Payton.



Life Membership of the Trust currently costs **£100.00** or £70 if aged **70** or over.
An email account is required for Life Membership.

If you are interested in joining this group please contact our Membership Secretary, Paul Yeomanson via email at membership@shrimperstrust.co.uk.

You can also join up as a Life Member in the Membership Section of the Trust Website www.shrimperstrust.co.uk, and postal applications will also be accepted at **Shrimpers Trust, PO Box 5830, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 9FD.**

Welcome to New Members since the last Newsletter

Neill Adams, Gary Adamson, Graham Agambar, Peter Aldridge, Michael Alexander, Steve Ali, Tim Allen, Roger Andrews, Nikk Angel, Andy Archard, Daniel Armstrong, Laurence Arnold, Richard Arnold, Claire Austin, Graham Avart, Alistair Axcell, Alan John Bacon, Daniel Bacon, Stephen Bacon, Philip Baines, Steve Baker, Mark Balcombe, Robert Baldwin, Charles Ball, David Banks, David Barker, Malcolm Barnes, Wendy Barnes, David Barrett, Sarah Barter, Euan Bass, Murray Bass, John Bath, Matthew Batten, Ian Bedford, Brian Beggs, Rob Bellamy, Stephen Benefield, Martyn Benge, Marc Bennett, Kenneth Benson, Adrian Bird, Joseph Bird, Karen Bird, Stuart Bird, Robert Black, Laura Blenes, Rodney Bloor, Chris Blore, John Boosey, Daniel Bowerbank, Jane Bragg, Louis Bragg, Tom Breakey, George Brown, John Brown, Jonathan Brown, Lewis Brown, Raymond Brown, Richard Brown, Simon Brown, Dave Bruce, Stephen Bryans, David Bunt, Mark Burges, Gary Burton, Stephen Bushell, Darren Byerley, Christine Byford, John Byford, Dan Cable, Sean Caldwell, Chris Callaghan, Scott Campbell, Duncan Cannon, Simon Carter, Martin Cass, Sam Chapman, Peter Chatterton, Brian Chester, Craig Childs, Charlie Clark, Daniel Clark, Daniel Clark, Josh Clark, William Clark, Jason Claydon, Tommy Clayton, Andrew Close, Jody Cockerill, Clive Collins, Kenneth Conley, Alan Cook, Alison Cook, Jamie Cook, Andrew Cooper, Daniel Cooper, Jennifer Cooper, Ken Cooper, Malcolm Cooper, Mike Coote, Martin Copass, Tim Coppen, Bill Cosgrove, Alan Couper, Ryan Courage, Daniel Cowdrey, Tricia Cowdrey, Ian Creek, John Crowder, Mark Cubitt, Tracy Cullen, Alaric Cundy, Steve Dadds, Chris Daniels, John Darkin, Harley Davidson, Ben Davies, Cassie Davies, David Davies, Matthew Davies, Ed Davis, Paul Davis, Peter Davis, Mark Day, Rob Dennis, Matt Dent, Diarmaid Doherty, Jamie Dolphin, Tommy Dominguez, Ricky Donald, Justin Donovan, Steven Donovan, Jamie Dorey, Andrew Dorrington, Jonathan Douglas, Thomas Doyle, James Driscoll, Lisa Driscoll, Scott Driscoll, Luke Druggan, Paul Duncan, Chris Durham, Carol Eastwick, David Eastwick, David Eddington, David Edwards, Mike Edwards, Scott Elder, James Ellis, Lauren Ellis, Louis Ellison, Ricky Ellison, Nicola Emberson, David Emerson, Nick Emmerick, Luke Emtwistle, William Eva, Mitch Evans, Frank Eve, Simon Eve, Rob Eves, Simon Eves, James Falkingham, Ian Farquhar, Jamal Fayyad, Nicholas Fewster, Sarah Fielding, Alistair Fisher, Michael Fitzgerald, Freddie Fossett, Rob Fossett, Samantha Fossett, Dave Foxall, Robin Francis, Katherine Fraser, Steve French, Bill Frost, Richard Fry, Dean Furnell, Robin Furnell, Geoff Galer, Iain Galpin, Perry Gamon, Rachel Gibbons, Tom Gibson, Baylee Gold, Tony Golding, Mark Goodson, Diane Gray, Ian Gray, Stephen Gray, Tony Gray, Ian Green, Jamie Green, Tony Greensmith, Jack Griffin, Chris Hak, Melvyn Hales, Keith Hall, Andrew Halling, Bob Halling, Keith Halton, Tracy Hamilton, Daniel Hammond, Dan Hankin, John Hanks, Sue Hanks, Geoffrey Harding, Kian Harding, Nick Hardy, Mark Harforth, Richard Harrington, Chris Harris, Kevin Harris, Stephen Hartley, Alan Haywood, Terry Hazlewood, Simon Hearn, Kevin Hellenbrand, Richard Helson, Daniel Heron, Guy Hetherington, Chris Heyburn, Terry Heyburn, Paul Heywood, John Hickey, Wayne Hickey, James Hicks, Darren Hickson, Jo-Anna Higson, Richard Hill, Mike Hogg, Duncan Holland, Raymond Holland, Kevin Hollands, Richard Hollands, Connor Hollington, Aaron Holmes, Bill Holmes, Linda Holohan, Peter Holohan, Finley Howard, Jonathan Howell, Gareth Hughes, Ann Humphrey, Chris Hunt, Ricky Hunt, Nicholas Hutton, Lydia Hyde, James Jackson, Paul Jarvis, Brian Jeffrey, Tom Jeffs, Callum Jenkinson, Kevan Jenkinson, Anthony Johnson, Glen Johnson, Kevin Jones, Michael Jones, Scott Jones, John Judge, Simon Kenton, Kevin King, Martin King, Paul Kitchener, Colin Kitson, Sidney Knott, Joanne Laing, Mark Lancaster, Alan Langton, Nick Lapwood, James Larbey, Mark Lawrence, Michael Lawrence, Sam Leatherbarrow, Tom Leftley, Nicholas Le-Mon, Mike Levi, Simon Levi, Jack Lewin, Jason Lewis, Adrian Lilley, Mandie Longbottom, Angela Longley, Trevor Lovell, Ross Lunniss, Justin Macal, Alex Macdonald, James Macdonald, Scott Macdonald, Karen Mace, Mark MacIver, Ashley Macklin, Miranda Maguire, Ian Malcolm, Stephen Mansfield, Raymond Mason, Bryan Matthews, Joshua Mayhew, Clive McCarthy, David McDermott, Chris McNeil, Ritchie Merrin, Steve Michaels, Robin Michel, Adam Middleton, Mandy Milchard, Andrew Milne, Aaron Mitchell, Ian Mitchell, John Moltino, Andy Moorhouse, Peter Moorhouse, Lesley Morgan, Luke Morrison, Matthew Moyse, David Mullett, Richard Neil, Harry Newman, Alan Nolan, Lee Nolan, Paul Nolan, Luke Nutley, Sean O'Donovan, William Oldham, Jonathan Oliff, Simon Osborne, Mark 'Ozzie' Osgood, Charlie Owen, Karyn Owen, Phil Owen, Tony Oxby, Peter Oxley, David Palmer, Mitch Palmer, Neil Parish,

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

Daniel Parker, Andy Pasquale, Trevor Paterson, Robert Patman, David Patten, Benedict Paul, Laurence Pawley, Danny Paxman, Joe Payne, David Payton, Kevin Payton, Matt Petts, Angus Petty, Anthony Philpott, Dirk Pilat, James Pilcher, Martin Pilcher, William Pilcher, David Pink, Stewart Pink, Chris Piper, Simon Plummer, Peter Pollard, Deborah Potts, Kizzy Quick, Harry Ranger, Daniel Rayner, Mike Read, Keith Richardson, Darren Ridgeway, Simon Ridgwell, David Rix, Emma Rix, David Robinson, Sam Robinson, Amber Rodgers, David Rodgers, Paul Rogers, Tony Rolfe, Toby Roper, Simon Rothman, Bradley Rowe, Steven Russell, Michael Rynn, Daniel Salmon, Dean Salmon, Lewis Salmon, Richard Salmon, Thomas Salmon, Brian Salmons, Liam Salmons, Alan Sambridge, Mark Sambridge, Julie Samuels, Gary Sanders, John Sargant, Daryl Savage, Mark Sawyer, Anthony Scarfe, Mick Seal, Jon Seigel, Daryl Sevenoaks, Adam Sewell-Jones, David Sexton, Graeme Shaw, Peter Shaw, Colin Sheehan, Ian Sheeky, Ken Shorto, Mark Sibthorpe, Matt Simper, Joseph Sims, Seb Sims, Steven Sinclair, Brenda Smith, Clive Smith, Dan Smith, Dave Smith, Fred Smith, Keith Smith, Maria Smith, Steve Smith, Chris Sorrell, John Sorrell, Philip Sorrell, Rob Spooner, David Spriggs, Benjamin St Ledger, Darren St Ledger, Hannah Stacey, Jevon Stammers, Carole Stamp, David Stamp, James Stevenson, Joe Steward, Lee Stone, Michelle Stone, Edwin Stonestreet, Sophie Stranks, Howard Studd, Holly Summerfield, Lee Summerfield, Karen Summers, Laurence Summers, Paul Tanner, Richard Tanner, Mark Tatam, Emma Taylor, Peter Taylor, Ross Taylor, Zach Taylor, Alan Thacker, Wendy Thacker, Ian Thomas, Mark Thomas, Grant Thompson, Stuart Thurlow, Caroline Ticehurst, John Ticehurst, Peter Ticehurst, Grace Ticehurst-James, Nick Tiffin, Martin Todd, Chris Toop, James Trott, Deison Luigi Tuni, David Turner, Terry Turner, Jane Turnpenny, Chris Tuttlebee, David Tuttlebee, Michael Tuttlebee, Stuart Tyler, Alex Wakenham, Paul Waldron, Craig Walker, David Walker, Michael Walker, Sean Wall, Scott Wallace, Philip Warburton, Ben Ward, Mark Warner, Peter Warner, David Warren, Judy Watkins, John Watson, Tommy Watson, George Watts, Gary Webb, Mark Webb, Richard Webb, Eric Weller, Rob Wheeler, David White, Keeley White, Alex Whitney, Lee Whittick, Denys Wilcox, Michael Wilding, Lesley Wiles, Nigel Wiles, James Wilson, Rob Wilson, Sam Wilson, Stephen Wilson, Lee Witton, Darren Wooderson, Simon Woolmer, David Wordley, Chris Wright, Jack Wright, Paul Wright, Sarah Wright, Steve Wright and Tom Wright.

***Please note that the Shrimpers Trust would like to know if any of its members' addresses change, or if they have a new email address so that newsletters and other correspondence can be sent to the correct address. Please send any change of address details to **The Shrimpers Trust, PO Box 5830, Southend on Sea, SS1 9FD**, by email to membership@shrimperstrust.co.uk or alternatively fill in our on-line contact details form which can be found in the Membership Section of the Trust Website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk ***

FUNDRAISING

100 Club

The latest winners in the scheme, pulled out of the hat during weekly draws since the last newsletter were **John Clench, Simon Dodd, Valerie Fane, Tim Roberts, Donna Stone, Graham Hilder, Coral Perry, Neil Whitehead, Jack Bond, Graham Hart, Teresa Perry, Gary Crowe, Paul Yeomanson, Robert Wright, Steve Gutteridge, Mike Paterson and Richard Harrington.**

Congratulations also to Shane Chapman who won the £375 Christmas Draw.

The nature of the 100 Club means the more people that sign up, then the bigger the weekly prize.

100 Club Application Form and Standing Order Form have been included with this newsletter so why not join up and put yourself in with a chance of winning the weekly prize.

For further information, you can contact Alan Perry at alanperry4@hotmail.com or by calling 07901 845012.

Remember, the more people that sign up to the scheme, then the higher that prize will be. By setting up a standing order for just £5 a month (or just £60 a year), you put yourself in with a chance of winning around £31 per week at the present time.

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

Quid A Goal

Our Quid a Goal scheme is now up and running for the 2023/24 Season.



The total after the game vs FC Halifax Town played on 6th January is £3,485.00.

This is how it works. Those who support the scheme with a pledge have their name displayed in the United match programme on a regular basis.

We ask you to pledge £0.25, £0.50, £1.00 or more, under various headings such as clean sheets, various players scoring goals, or team goals (you can choose anything reasonable!). This does not have to cost you a fortune, as you can easily judge in advance, how much your pledge will cost you come the end of the season.

For example, the Blues rarely manage more than 70 goals in a season from 1st team matches (21/22 League goals - 45).

A £0.25 per goal pledge would therefore most likely, not cost you more than £15.00, come the end of the season. If funds are tight, how about £1 for every goal scored by our full backs? If you chose to do £0.50 per point and we finished up with 80 points. At the end of the season, we will write to you thanking you for your support of this initiative asking you to send us a cheque for the amount of £40.00.

If you would like to join our Quid a Goal scheme please complete and return the enclosed form and we will do the rest.

DERELICTION AND DECLINE

The Shrimpers Trust have published a paper, 'Dereliction and Decline: The Story of Southend United under Ron Martin'.

This paper was published to coincide with a session at the Conservative Party Conference entitled 'Playing by the Rules: The Governance of English Football', is the culmination of years of work from fans of Southend United Football Club and highlights both the importance of the club to its community and the plight of being subject to the 'Martin Model' of football club ownership.

Under the tenure of Ron Martin, Southend United has suffered:

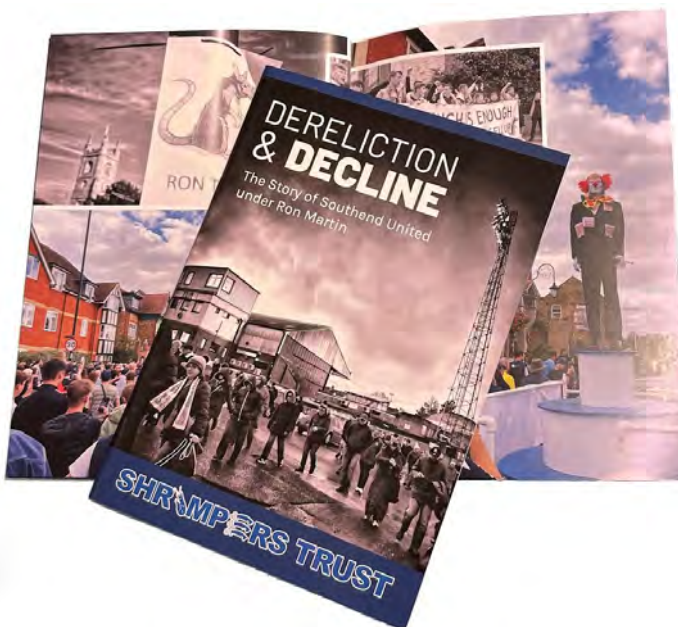
Numerous winding up petitions from HMRC. Multiple relegations, including dropping out of the English Football League for the first time in 100 years.

Accounts being filed late on multiple instances, and suppliers going long periods without pay, including players and staff.

The stadium, built by the fans and donated to the club, was asset stripped from the club by Ron Martin and neglected, mothballed and allowed to fall into an unacceptable state of disrepair, with only to hard work of supporters and local tradespeople ensuring it was ready for the 2023/24 season.

We believe the experiences of Southend United fans align with those at Scunthorpe United, Reading, West Bromwich Albion and countless others over the years. We ask that the Government take this paper into account when looking into how proposed regulation may take shape and continue to monitor our current situation, as it hopefully transitions out of the 'Martin Model' into a fit-for-the-future ownership structure.

The paper concludes with the following for the football regulator:



NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

Conclusions

Fans are not customers; we are the key stakeholders in the football clubs. Grounded by the past, obsessed with the present, concerned for the future. Fans have been considered a nuisance and a financial tap for too long.

Football clubs are not businesses, they are cultural heritage assets born of and represented by their communities in a sport invented in England, a country regarded as the home of fair play.

Ron Martin is a symptom of a broken ecosystem. His actions could destroy a 117-year-old local institution but, without wider, sustainable changes, another may be just around the corner as Bury FC found out in 2019 and Scunthorpe United are witnessing now.

Recommendations

1. The most powerful form of regulator is a club's own fanbase. The independent regulator will not be required to intervene if a robust structure of material fan involvement and ownership can be implemented.
2. Opaque corporate structures, including offshore shareholdings, cannot be permitted. Fans are expected to put their hands in their pockets for clubs, they deserve to know how that money is being used.
3. Football clubs are most commonly exploited for their bricks and mortar assets. Local authorities need powers to protect those assets from being used as a bargaining chip for private gain.
4. Fans deserve to be organised and educated on the risks that club custodians present. Formal education and training should be given to each clubs' nominated fans organisation by the independent regulator to allow for relationship forming and ground up vigilance and management of problematic custodians.

The printed version of **Dereliction and Decline** can now be purchased from our online shop here <https://www.shrimperstrust.co.uk/product-category/books> for just £7.50 plus postage & packing.

Alternatively, the booklet will also be available from the Trust stand in the Shrimpers Bar on a match-day.

The booklet is A5 size, full colour and has over 50 pages.

SHRIMPERS TRUST MERCHANDISE

DRAWSTRING BAG



New in for 2024 is a Drawstring Bag.

The navy bag is printed with the new Shrimpers Trust Logo and Tag Line, manufactured from nylon, the bag measures 330 mm x 440 mm and has reinforced corners.

Priced at **£5.00** the Bag can be purchased from our new online shop at www.shrimperstrust.co.uk or from the Trust Information Stand in the Shrimpers Bar prior to any home game.

TROLLEY KEYRING

Recycled Eco Trolley Coin Keyring – Printed with a New Trust Logo on a White Background.

Priced at **£2.00** the Key Ring can be purchased from our new online shop at www.shrimperstrust.co.uk or from the Trust Information Stand in the Shrimpers Bar prior to any home game.



NEWSLETTER – Vol. 19 Iss. 02. – January 2024

NEW SHRIMPERS TRUST PIN BADGE



2023 Shrimpers Trust Hard Enamel Pin Badge

Based on the new Shrimpers Trust Logo featuring a Shrimp and the three Essex Seaxes, the badge measures 9.1 mm x 30 mm and has a white background with blue lettering and raised nickel metal edging.

Priced at **£3.00** the Badge can be purchased from our new online shop at www.shrimperstrust.co.uk or from the Trust Information Stand in the Shrimpers Bar prior to any home game.

These and other items in our merchandise range can be purchased online in the New Trust Shop at www.shrimperstrust.co.uk or from the Trust Information Stand in the Shrimpers Bar prior to any home game.

Please note that as well as the usual cash and cheque payments we can now accept Credit/Debit Cards for all purchases including Merchandise & Memberships.



SHRIMPERS TRUST ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Follow us on 'X' (formerly known as twitter) @shrimperstrust and like and follow us on Facebook "ShrimpersTrust" to keep up to date with all our latest news and events.

You can also follow shrimperstrust on Instagram and you can connect with us on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/company/75033660

We also have a dedicated Away Travel Facebook Page "sufcofficialawaytravel" where you can find all the latest details on the Official Away Travel for Southend United.

26th January 2023