



# SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED LIAISON MEETING



Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025  
Roots Hall Stadium 16:30

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## 1. Present and Apologies

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

PF and SC were thanked for all their support and involvement over the years and presented with a bottle of bubbly each from the Club.

The Meeting was chaired, for the final time, by PF.

## 2. Actions Carried Forward and Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024

All outstanding actions had been carried out. There were updates on some as follows:

- RD reported that Southend High School for Boys had made contact about resurrecting the match day parking arrangement and discussions are ongoing.
- RD also advised that Fourex have been recommended by one of the Club's suppliers, as a potential route for retro shirts. JS added that new Trust Board member, Sam Duckworth, is exploring the rights to use the old Beaver logo
- RD reported that Sammy's Spot has been well supported and that several businesses had reached out to him following a LinkedIn post, which may provide other opportunities for sponsorship, possibly the Shrimpers Bar or Junior Blues.

**ACTION – RD to report back any further progress in this area.**

## 3. Resolving repayment of the £40,000 (plus interest) loan

TL has drafted a settlement agreement, but it is not quite finalised. PF proposed that he and JS work on what has been prepared so far and come back to the Club with a proposal. This was felt to be an acceptable idea,

**ACTION – TL to provide PF and JS with the draft agreement for them to finalise.**

## 4. COSU plans:

TL said that the ground is aging and the work required to keep parts of the ground functioning is not insignificant. TL confirmed that the North Bank is currently working at 95% capacity, and the rest of the stadium at 85% capacity – SCC are very supportive and recognise the hard work undertaken by staff, contractors and friends of the club to keep the ground safe.

The idea of a FanZone is still part of the strategic plans, but, in the meantime, the Club have offered early opening and drinks offers to try and entice people in to the

Club bars. There is some ongoing discussion about where a FanZone would be best suited and how much should be spent on it. There will need to be plans made to house the hospitality and corporate guests when the East Stand re-build begins, and this may effectively be in a FanZone environment. TL felt that once the East Stand has been re-built, the Club may prefer fans to be making use of the new facilities – but no view had been crystalised on that

The budget for improving/increasing the squad has been increased, but has not all been spent so far this season. Kevin Maher and his team are waiting for the right players and don't want to do anything that may detrimentally affect next season. There are a number of targets. TL said that the Club have not given up on this season and still see the potential of finishing in the play off places, but recognise that reaching the playoffs would be an incredible achievement against the backdrop of a delayed COSU takeover and a suboptimal pre-season.

In response to a question regarding the use of data and analytics, TL reiterated what he said at the ST AGM, namely that the Club is about to embark on a data and analytics journey. A plan around data and analytics is being worked up and software is being trialled. The Football Dept already use data and what is being considered now will supplement the process (not replace) what the guys do already. TL demonstrated some aspects of the data analysis and emphasised that this is supplementary to what we have always done with the scouting network, identifying targets and watching games. It helps to reduce the number of times a target has to physically be watched and is not intended to replace traditional methods but to complement them. TL also confirmed that recruitment of players will not be data led – data and analytics will simply support what we do already – it will hopefully throw up more targets for the scouting team to consider.

In response to some supporters' request for more communication from COSU, JS said he had recently spoken with Justin Rees about communication between the COSU team and the fans. TL said that there is a strategy for communication and a timetable for comment for publication. The next comms from Justin is due at the end of February. TL said that it is the view of COSU that they are custodians of the Club and that their comms should be relatively infrequent – with the Club issuing the lion's share of comms. TL mentioned that a CEO forum is scheduled to take place in March and that he would be providing an update on facilities before then. TL also confirmed that he keeps Justin updated on feedback from the ST and that Justin had seen the Agenda for this meeting which would be fed back to other Board members.

TL reported that revenue is up on food and beverage spend across all outlets at the stadium. The targeted spend in bars had been 95p per head, and is currently £1.18 per head, and the targeted spend in kiosks had been £1 per head, and is currently £1.07 per head, so this is a welcome trajectory.

In response to a question from supporters, TL confirmed that the new stands would have some hand rails.

#### **4. Stadium Issues/Fans Feedback:**

Trust Board members provided a "wishlist" for the Shrimpers Bar, as had been requested, although it was emphasised that no-one wants to see frivolous

spending on something that will be demolished in a few years. KF added she had been asked to request that the Club look into baby changing facilities and buggy storage to make it more appealing for families. It was thought that there is currently only a changing facility in the West Stand and in the North Bank.

There had been many complaints from people surrounding the situation in the main car park concerning the “segregation” for away supporters and their vehicles and how this has negatively affected the provision of car parking and, particularly, the re-siting of the Blue Badge designated parking bays. The Club provides 12 bays, half of which are now closer to the ground itself than they were previously. TL added that we have far more parking in the ground for all, than most Clubs do. He sympathised but there is little that can currently be done that they are not already doing. The issues with the car park are a quid pro quo of opening up the North to home fans – the north can only be opened with the police and council’s support and the stewarding plan (including access and egress through the car park) reflects their requirements.

Some fans had wanted to be able to move between the North and the West, but this is not possible for safety and security reasons. People are currently able to access the amenities in the North-West Quadrant from both stands, but tickets are checked to go back to the stands. It was confirmed that there had been an error in the ticketing system which had resulted in some supporters being charged to move their season tickets to the North Bank. The Club will continue to monitor the use of the North Bank and review it in full at the end of the season.

KF raised again the South-East corner toilets (by East Stand turnstiles), she said she’s been told that there is still no hand soap, one tap working (a dribble), dryer not working and that it’s been like this for months. RD said he would raise this again with the contractors, it seems like this toilet is getting overlooked for some reason.

**ACTION – RD to discuss with contractors.**

RD said that 75% of the matters raised by supporters either from these meetings, from members of the Engagement Board or from the QR codes around the ground, have been actioned. KF said it would be useful to get a report back from facilities on their actions, rather than just being told something had been passed to them.

**ACTION – RD to request update.**

Following a number of complaints about pigeon mess, it was also mentioned that the foxes are still getting in despite a number of preventative measures having been brought into effect. 200 pigeons had so far been trapped in the traps around the ground. It was agreed to contact the deterrent company for them to re-visit.

**ACTION – RD to progress.**

## **5. Junior Blues:**

KF said that the Christmas Party had been a success, and that the sponsorship payment from c2c for the event, had been received. There had been a lot of comments and complaints from parents as the event had sold out within a few hours, and it was noted that, with just under 500 members, it would be worth considering different methods of booking events in the future.

A method involving a pre-booking system over a period of time, with a draw for final places was discussed, with a holding deposit at the time of booking, which would be refunded if unsuccessful. PY felt that this could be managed.

TL asked if the venue could be changed or if two events could be run, however, KF said that larger venues had been tried but had proved unsatisfactory as the children are not interested in entertainers, they just want to be with the players. We also struggle with getting enough players along for the events we do run, if we ran an extra event, it would be even harder. We had also had a number of members who did not turn up, despite having paid, and those places could have been offered to people on a waiting list.

**ACTION – KF, RD, PY to meet to discuss future plans.**

KF raised the issue of the Junior Blues birthdays. Part of the Junior Blues membership is to receive either a birthday card or a birthday video message from the Junior Blues' favourite player. Currently, KF sends these over each month to the Club, and Jamie Cameron, in the media department, had sent the messages out. As Jamie has now left SUFC, Matt Mundy, the head of the media department, had contacted KF to advise that he would not be able to do the birthdays going forwards.

Some discussion followed as to how this could be managed, with RD agreeing to take this over for February. TL said that someone new would be joining the media department, so, hopefully, this would only be a short term issue.

**ACTION – KF to send RD the February birthdays for him to send the messages out.**

## **6. SUEPA:**

The next former Players Club meeting is on Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> February. A "Bench for Barks" campaign is due to start soon, with possible plans for a memorial garden.

RD is meeting with SUEPA organiser, Andy Leeder to discuss the start of the Legacy Numbers project, which is approximately a year away.

## **7. History & Heritage Project Group:**

PF said that he will be heavily involved in this going forward, despite stepping back from the main Trust Board. The group is having a meeting soon (trying to arrange) to discuss the way forward.

The group is still looking into a museum on site, and the possibility of this being on a bus rather than the planned train carriage, which could then be taken out "on the road".

Box Corridor prints project is currently being worked on, hopefully to be completed in February.

## **8. Social Inclusion Feedback:**

All feedback had been positive. The invoice for the group for the upcoming Cup match was discussed with the Club agreeing to look into this.

**ACTION – RD to revert to PY.**

## 9. Any Other Business:

- PF raised the subject of a planned visit by a team of 12 under 11 Irish youngsters, Jobstown Celtic, being organised by long term Trust member, Brian Sheridan. He had met up with Justin Rees and Kevin Maher on the pre-season trip to Ireland, and there had been discussion about these lads coming over to visit.

This visit is now planned for 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> April, to include the Wealdstone home match and they are looking for tickets for the match for the 12 boys and the 13 adults coming, and help with accommodation and transfers, and would like to play a match, possibly against our own youngsters.

**ACTION – KF to contact Belchamps contacts re accommodation, PF/PY to liaise with SBC for help with transport, PF to discuss with Dale Spiby and RD to organise tickets.**

- PF also commented on his experiences in hospitality this season, as he had twice been in the D2 lounge and on both occasions, the food had arrived very late, despite them having been there in plenty of time. He had also filled in the feedback form but had not been contacted. TL said he would speak with the catering team. PF also commented on the fact that the high tables at the front of the D2 means that people at the back struggle to see and RD agreed that they would look into this.

**ACTION – TL to speak with the catering team about delivery times of food. RD to assess whether anything can be done to resolve the issue of poor views.**

- SC asked if anything could be done about the heating in the Shrimpers Bar as it had been extremely cold in there over the last few matches as the heaters don't work. KF added that it would be helpful to have the new urn available on matchdays so hot drinks could be served to help with this.

**ACTION – TL/RD to look into and report back.**

Meeting closed 18:05

Next meeting due early March.