



SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED LIAISON MEETING



Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 8th May 2025
Roots Hall Stadium 16:30

1. Present and Apologies

Those present were Tom Lawrence (TL) and Rylee Doe (RD) from SUFC, Paul Yeomanson (PY), Kay Fogg (KF) and Mike Paterson (MP) from the Shrimpers Trust. Apologies were received from James Schooley (JS), Rhys Ellingham (RE)

The meeting was chaired by PY.

2. Actions Carried Forward and Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd January 2025

Most actions had been carried out, there were a few to be updated as follows:

- RD is still in discussion with local schools about parking on matchdays and will press this further.

ACTION – RD to progress.

- Trust member Sam Duckworth is still working on the right to use the old Beaver logo.
- The visit of the boys from Jobstown Celtic had been a huge success and coincided with the home win against Wealdstone.
- A couple of Trust Board members had asked for clarification and confirmation that the Liaison Meetings were still seen as necessary alongside the other engagement groups. TL and RD both felt that the Liaison Meetings were important and give the Trust representatives the opportunity to discuss things which are of particular relevance to the Trust, such as the Junior Blues and SUEPA, as well as being a vessel to report on things raised by members. The different groups cover different things, and while there will inevitably be some cross over at times, both TL and RD value the meetings and were quite happy for them to continue.

3. Club Financials including Accounts being published and resolving the £40k loan

TL reported that he and JS had been discussing getting the £40k loan fully resolved, with Justin also involved. All parties are broadly aligned. TL is working on the final draft document.

ACTION – TL to progress

Trust board members commended the Club on the publication of accounts to year end 23/24, and the excellent explanatory notes. TL said that transparency is something being driven by Justin Rees and John Watson. He added that the key to moving closer sustainably is getting back into the EFL and getting the East Stand rebuilt.

Season cards for next season are planned to go on sale on 14th June, with a priority period for existing season ticket holders.

4. Forward Planning, including plans for Roots Hall:

- Shrimpers Bar wishlist – TL advised that structural engineers would be visiting Roots Hall on 14th May to begin assessing things. It was agreed that the Shrimpers Bar was in need of some work as it would still be in use for a while and agreed that the Trust would arrange a suitable time for volunteers to come in to paint, clean and make it more user friendly. There was some discussion on cleaning of the toilets, and KF emphasised that they are not being cleaned thoroughly enough, requiring a deep acid clean of the toilet bowls. RD had tried to remove the Fast Lane sign above the bar but it doesn't seem to want to be removed! PY offered to fix the large table as it is useful for Trust events. TL agreed to provide the paint for a mutually convenient time to be arranged for volunteers to attend.

ACTION – Trust to arrange a suitable time and source volunteers. PY to fix the table. RE to talk to cleaning contractors.

- Baby changing and buggy storage – after some discussion, it was suggested that a buggy storage area could be combined with a cycle storage area and, as this was something that April Smith had previously been looking into a grant for, RD would liaise with SUCF to see if something could be brought in as a temporary measure, in the nature of a cage storage with a key pad lock for users. RD also advised that the Club are looking into bringing in a sensory room at the rear of the Family Stand. It may be that some baby changing facilities can be incorporated.

ACTION – RD to liaise with SUCF re possible grant funding.

- Meet the Blues Day/Cricket Day – There are two potential dates for MTBD depending on which league we are in. This will be organised this year by SUCF and likely to be held at Garons. Further updates in due course. RD advised that he hoped that the Cricket Day would happen and he would discuss further with Clare Campbell and the 1st Team.

ACTION – Club to confirm when MTBD will be. RD to liaise with CC.

- North Bank – the move of supporters to the North Bank has been very successful over the final four home games of the season. Problems with speakers has been identified with confusion over which speakers should be working. TL advised that Essex Sound and Lighting had installed new amplifiers and that speakers should all now be working, however, the Club would look into getting the old ones removed over the close season to avoid confusion.

- **ACTION – TL/RE to arrange for defunct speakers to be removed.**

MP asked if there were any plans to give the whole of the North Bank to home supporters. TL replied that there are presently no such plans as there is nowhere practically that can house away supporters that meets with safety criteria for access but nothing is off the table in the medium term.

5. Problems already identified:

- Updates needed from “facilities” on problems already identified – RD advised that Emersons, who undertake most of the repairs around the ground, would be creating a logbook of issues which would give updates. KF would have access to this and be able to report back to people as a result. TL confirmed that a “Roots Hall Ready” event would be highly likely

as it is good for the morale of everyone involved, and that the Club would also be seeking for tradesmen to come in on this day to help with specific specialist areas.

- Toilets – Ongoing issues in the West Stand (main toilet blocks and the two independent cubicles by the bar) and the South-East corner. KF had provided a thorough analysis of some of the issues faced by supporters within the ground. A full and frank discussion ensued emphasising the need for supporters to feel valued enough to have acceptable toilet facilities. TL informed the attendees that the Club had recently sought a quote for the current East Stand toilets (not including the external men's block) to be refurbished, and this had come in at a staggering £168,000. The Club has to prioritise where monies of this level should be invested best, but agreed that the toilets highlighted (West Stand ladies individual cubicles and main block, West Stand gents block near W block and the South-East corner by the turnstiles) needed some investigation over the close season. KF said that none of the locks in the ladies' block even seemed to work! RD had spoken to the cleaning contractors about the SE corner toilets several times. It was emphasised that no-one wants to see money wasted on things that "it would be nice to have" but that money needed to be spent on things that were vital for supporters to feel their concerns are being addressed, particularly where hygiene is concerned. TL emphasised that works reported through the feedback@southend-united email were actioned and only ST to encourage supporters to use this email or QR codes.

ACTION – Club to try to improve facilities over close season.

- WIFI – Supporters are still reporting issues with WIFI around the stadium and it had been suggested that the Club link in with CityFibre to try to improve things. TL advised that the Club are already in discussion with them and recently invested a 5 figure sum in upgrading WIFI with a fibre loop around the ground to make it easier for cashless payments etc. Improving things further so that more supporters are able to engage is in the plan over time. PY and KF both reported that they have no issues anywhere in the ground on EE, in fact, the Trust shop and merchandise is now run through EE in the Shrimpers Bar with no problem. TL said they are "nursing an end of life WIFI infrastructure."
- Lighting by Block S, row K/L (strip blew about 5 years ago and never replaced) – a problem identified by a supporter via ShrimperZone. This is being reported to facilities to remedy over close season. Again TL asked ST to encourage supporters/member to report via QR code or dedicated emails to ensure issues are addressed in a timely manner.

ACTION – RD to report to Emersons.

- Car Parking – Issues with the car park remain ongoing, largely due to supporters who have not purchased a car park pass attempting to gain access on a matchday with a reduction of spaces to just 268 due to the need to have safe passage for away supporters through the car park. It was suggested that, with everything being forced in and out of the main entrance on Victoria Avenue, problems could be alleviated at the end of a match by having someone controlling traffic with two clear lanes of vehicles leaving, and traffic being held every now and then on Victoria Avenue to allow a number of cars out. It could even be made left turn only. KF said that it would help if cars were not allowed in at this time, or for a

set period after a match finished. She also asked if the Fairfax Drive exit could be opened up once the away supporters had left, noting that this would coincide with most supporters coming out of hospitality and help relieve the pressure on the Victoria Avenue exit.

ACTION – TL agreed to talk to the necessary people to discuss this.

6. Junior Blues

KF reported that feedback from the Easter Event was all very positive, both from parents, children and Caddies themselves, and RD added that the players had all been very positive and felt it was better than previous venues. It was noted that Caddies had been particularly welcoming and had also provided some gifts for the Club's Awards Night.

Whilst the new method of applying for the places over several days had been trialled for this event, it had not sold out so there had been no need to draw for places, and we had places left at the end, which had been paid for. A credit note had been accepted from Caddies for the future. It was agreed that this method would be trialled again for the Christmas event which is the one that traditionally sells out quickest.

The sign up gift for coming year had been agreed, and would be a t-shirt with the Junior Blues logo on the front – a full logo for smaller sizes, and a breast logo for older ones. These will come into effect on 1st July. PY would work around a way to get the sizing correct for members on application.

ACTION – PY to come up with a workable system for providing correct sized items.

With more being spent on sign up gifts, the Trust proposed changes to the sibling discount currently in operation where siblings are offered a discount of 50%. This will be reduced to 25% on 1st July.

KF reported that Trust Board member, Kelly Bolton had approached Hollywood Bowl in Basildon with a view to holding the Christmas Event there and that they had been keen to help. This will be investigated further.

ACTION – KF to monitor and report back.

7. SUEPA & History & Heritage Update

The most recent Former Players Club meeting had been held quite recently, with Dave Smith's diaries being shared. A good mix of ex-players attend and it's very popular.

Bench for Barks – Legends on the Bench – project had been a huge success, with the two benches now in place. People have been seen to be using them. It was reiterated that these are the first at a football club in the country.

Box Corridor prints project currently being worked on with half of the items dropped off and being stored for the time being.

Trust Board member, Liam Ager had asked if the Club would be willing to work with SUEPA to get more recent ex-players along for events, as they seem to have

more success? RD confirmed that he would be happy to work on behalf of the Club, with SUEPA organiser, Andy Leeder.

TL asked if AL could provide an inventory of everything that had been removed for the Museum as he had not had the opportunity to do so before it had been taken. He also asked if he could have the key returned.

ACTION – AL to be approached to liaise with TL

8. Social Inclusion Feedback

Everything had worked well this season, with a lot of very happy guests. PY said that the system with having the hospitality box shared with SUEPA and SUCF had been successful and that it was hoped this would continue. 50% of the funds raised from the Trust's recent sponsored walk from Braintree to Southend would be going towards the Trust's social inclusion project as funds had been reduced. It was noted that AL didn't feel that the box worked well for his SUEPA guests, but the Club feel this is the best way to accommodate them.

9. "Academy" Mini-bus

PY asked for clarification of the SUCF minibus, as, when he had gone to borrow it for the sponsored walk, he had expected the blue one which is logoed with the Shrimpers Trust logos as the Trust had part funded it, but been given the white one, which isn't. TL said that the foundation owns the smaller mini buses, one blue, one white. The larger branded mini bus is owned by the Club. He said if they had realised, it would not have been a problem for the Trust to use it.

10. Play Offs

Against all the odds, at the time of the meeting, the Club's season continues with a journey into the Play Offs, with a match away at Rochdale on 16th May. The live screening at Roots Hall for the Gateshead game had been a success, and it was anticipated that the Club would repeat this for Rochdale. TL was asked if a bigger screen would be better, but TL replied that a bigger screen would be 10 x more expensive, it might be possible to have more of the smaller screens across a bigger area of the East Stand.

If we get through to the semi-final match against Forest Green Rovers, RD informed the meeting that we would only be given the required number of tickets that the competition dictates, 15% of capacity.

Should we get through to the Play Off Final, then the Club would be more than happy for the Trust to take on the coaches for Wembley. PY confirmed that everything is already in place and would just need updating from previous times.

11. Any Other Business

- Request for Feedback from Club on Trust End of Season Awards Night – Kevin Maher had already provided feedback as had Danny Heath, everyone felt the evening is an important part of showing the Club's appreciation to the Trust and its members and giving up a few hours is part of the players' contractual obligations. Those others spoken to also had felt it was a good evening, and a better venue. This also led on to some discussion about the Club's Sponsors' Evening, and the fact that the Holiday Inn in Basildon had also been an improvement.

- Trust Youth team contract – under our previous agreement with the Academy, the Trust received items to be able to be auctioned. Would it be possible for a similar arrangement to be written in place? TL and RD both had no objection to this and RD agreed to formalise a document to this effect.

ACTION – RD to work with PY on formal agreement.

- MP raised the matter of Football Governance and Fairgame which he has been working on for some time, and sought TL support. TL agreed to facilitate a separate time to discuss this further with MP.

ACTION – MP and TL to meet separately.

Meeting closed 18:15

Next Meeting TBA late June.