



# SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED LIAISON MEETING



Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024  
Roots Hall Stadium 16:30

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## 1. **Present and Apologies:**

Those in attendance were Tom Lawrence (TL), Rylee Doe (RD) and April Smith (AS) from the Club, and Paul Yeomanson (PY), Shane Chapman (SC) and Kay Fogg (KF) from the Trust. Apologies for absence received from Paul FitzGerald (PF) and Rhys Ellingham (RE).

## 2. **Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024:**

- A new urn for the Shrimpers Bar was ceremoniously revealed and presented to the Trust board members present by TL. This will enable hot drinks to be served before games and during events and replaces the one which was unfortunately used for mulled wine during a Christmas event hosted there a few years back.
- There still appear to be some issues regarding capturing data correctly in the Ticket Office. Date of Birth, first line of address and postcode (which have all previously been optional) will now be mandatory fields for any new supporter setting up a ticketing account. The Club also strongly recommend that anyone who has an existing ticketing account but has not filled in these sections do so. This will hopefully resolve the issues with transferring junior season card holders over as Junior Blues members.

### **ACTION – AS to continue to discuss**

- Shrimpers Bar, specifically toilets and glasswasher – TL has the quotes for the glasswasher but this cannot proceed until the takeover has been completed. Similarly, there are quotes for the toilets to be replaced, at circa £9k amongst a much larger figure for necessary improvements elsewhere. None of which can be actioned at this moment in time.
- Annual Trust Sponsorship deal – Still outstanding.

### **ACTION – TL/RD to discuss with PF/PY**

## 3. **Update regarding pending takeover:**

TL advised that the Council are still undertaking their due diligence. The impending local elections will not affect things as it has cross party support.

## 4. **Changes within the Trust and any impact in relationship with the Club:**

PY advised that the incoming chair of the Trust is James Schooley, a genuine and levelheaded man, who will be working in tandem with PF over the summer ahead of PF officially stepping down at the next Trust AGM in November. James has already been heavily involved in discussions as part of the working group during the period leading up to and since the involvement of the consortium.

## **5. Club shop/merchandise:**

With the recent announcement that the Club has taken up a new contract with Macron, TL explained that the recent lack of supply had been down to their uncertainty as to the situation with the Club, and whether they would have their contract renewed. He added that staying with Macron had proved to be the best way forward financially as other alternatives had proved to be too costly.

Having been agreed, TL went on to say that part of the terms of the new contract, would be to have an increased number of 'line items' (currently 30, but to be increased to 50), and that the minimum number of replica kit orders placed by Macron – this should deal with the issues around availability. Special items, such as Christmas jumpers, would also be part of the commitment. There would also be more frequent meetings between Club and Macron representatives to ensure everything is running smoothly and that stock levels are maintained.

The order for the new shirts for next season has already been placed.

PY asked if the Club and/or Macron would have any objection to the Trust pursuing the possibility of a “Sammy” plush toy, similar to the Sammy and Elvis ones from a few years back. TL agreed to check with Macron and revert.

**ACTION – TL to report back**

## **6. Junior Blues:**

KF advised that the new sign up gift for members for the forthcoming season had been received and that she was really pleased with the new graphic, which had been redrawn by Stuart Byford. This can now be used on any Junior Blues related items. RD asked if the Club could be forwarded copies to be able to use on websites and other areas, which PY agreed to do. The Trust would also be ordering new replacement flags for the Junior Blues this summer.

**ACTION – PY to send new Junior Blues graphics to RD**

The adventure golf session with the players on 11<sup>th</sup> April had been released to members that day and was expected to sell out quite quickly. KF had spoken to a number of players at the recent Sponsors' Evening and several had expressed an interest in coming along.

**ACTION – AS/RD to organise the players for this event**

KF mentioned a couple of issues pitchside for the televised Dagenham game, which had been while AS was on holiday. Unfortunately, the two local teams who were lined up to accompany the players, were placed immediately in front of the flag bearers, despite being asked to move them to where they usually are for televised games. AS agreed to make sure those covering for her were aware. There had also been an incident in the same game where a new cordon was put in place to keep parents outside of the “live” area, and where the steward had tried to move it to allow KF and the JB's past, had slipped over where the side of the pitch was so muddy. This is obviously a concern.

Finally, KF advised that she would provide an updated summary for the Club website which is a little out of date.

**ACTION – KF to update website**

#### **7. SUEPA – drop in session feedback:**

The first SUEPA drop in session for ex-players had been held on 13<sup>th</sup> March, and had proved a huge success, with lots of very positive feedback. Thanks to the Club for providing the D2 lounge as the venue for this event. The Ex-players association continues to thrive.

#### **8. Social inclusion – hosting and booking:**

As there had been some confusion recently over the Trust booking of boxes and tickets as part of their social inclusion project, Trust members had asked for some clarification over the booking process going forwards. RD agreed to liaise and report back.

**ACTION – RD to liaise**

#### **9. Memorabilia:**

AL had raised an issue which he had become aware of, when two ladies had been expecting to meet someone from the Club about some valuable memorabilia they had, after a recent Senior Shrimpers get together, but the person had not turned up. Unfortunately, it transpires that the person they were due to meet had gone home unwell that day and been unable to get a message to them in time.

AL was planning to meet up with them anyway and AS said she would also try and find out who they were and to talk with them.

**ACTION – AS to report back**

#### **10. Safety and stewarding, specifically issues in W block at recent games, also West Stand bar:**

The Trust had been contacted and several comments had been seen on Twitter (X) following the recent Dagenham game, concerning rising tensions and what has been perceived as “heavy handed” stewarding, surrounding the overcrowded W Block as fans continue to migrate to this area despite having tickets elsewhere.

TL a little surprised to hear such criticism as the Club had put in place an enhanced level of stewarding, in line with a request from the Police, who had raised their concerns about the potential for trouble at this match. To provide some balance, TL confirmed that Keith Baker’s feedback had been good. The pre-match briefing had been very good, and a medical incident within the ground had been handled well. Keith’s police superiors were impressed with the arrangements before, during and after the match, and, in fact, had written to Bernadette Bowden, on the SAG group at Southend Council, to compliment the Club on their arrangements.

With regard to the West Stand bar, licensing conditions limit this to 60, and the Wine Bar to 40. There is provision in the licence saying drinks are not permitted to be taken outside. TL has engaged a licensing lawyer to review the liquor licence and a fire safety expert to review the capacity restrictions.

#### **11. Supporter Liaison Group:**

KF had been asked by Keith Baker, if these could be reinstated. TL had no objection to this, if someone would like to take on the organisation.

**ACTION – KF to report back to Keith and to Trust**

## 12. **Season Cards 2024/5:**

Season Cards for the new season are expected to be launched at the end of the month. No increase is planned at present, but it cannot be ruled out, the Club is losing significant sums each year. TL did however confirm that some of the concession pricing may be looked into for the future.

Plans are ongoing, but the current thinking is that there is likely to be the usual “Early Bird” period, with incentives, which is expected to run until 1<sup>st</sup> May. Seat swaps would then be available until 13<sup>th</sup> May, with general sale following on.

The turnstiles are incompatible with the current ticketing system so the current system will remain in place.

## 13. **End of season:**

During the upheaval earlier in the season, supporters had raised £1,230.95 as a “thank you” to all staff – players and non-playing – in gratitude of the way everyone had continued under quite extraordinarily difficult conditions. This had been proposed to hand over at Christmas, but, unfortunately, the money had been “lost” in America. It has now been recovered, with the help of SUCET, and the plan is to hand it over, with half going to the squad and half to the non-playing team to have a bit of fun with.

**ACTION – PF to arrange for the money to be passed over**

## 14. **Any Other Business:**

- TL advised that SUCET is re-branding to become the Southend United Community Foundation.
- TL asked if the Trust would consider a donation towards the planned improvements in the Shrimpers Bar. PY replied that the response to the “Quid a Goal” scheme had been unsurpassed this year, and he didn’t see any reason why some of the proceeds from that might not be used. He added that the Trust would be looking to get it cleaned and hopefully re-painted during the close season.
- SC asked if there were any plan to re-open any food outlets in South Upper. It was pointed out that there were problems with queues, although it may be possible to open an outlet with “grab and go” type products – crisps, soft drinks, chocolate bars. TL added that they are also considering putting a bar in the North Stand.
- AS reported that a provisional date for her planned forum for disabled fans clashed with the Trust’s End of Season awards so she would re-schedule it. She has yet to check the date with Kevin Maher. PY advised the change of venue due to the condition of the Shrimpers Bar and potential issues with numbers for this event. Venue to be confirmed but thought to be Ambleside Social Club.

**ACTION – AS to confirm date with Kevin Maher and confirm with PY**

- TL and RD shared information about an “End of Season Awards Evening” at the Cliffs Pavilion, on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> April. TL wondered if the Trust one could be combined with the Club one? While this was an attractive proposition, it was thought logistically, it wouldn’t work.

- KF raised, again, the issues surrounding the car park exits. Only the top exit had been open at recent matches.  
**ACTION – TL to talk to Keith Baker about Fairfax Drive exit and RD to find out why the lower exit to Victoria Avenue wasn't being opened.**

**Next meeting scheduled late May/early June**