



# SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED LIAISON MEETING



Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024  
Roots Hall Stadium 17:30 approx.

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## 1. **Present and Apologies**

The meeting took place after an informal meeting with Dale Spiby (DS) regarding Shrimpers Trust activities on matchdays. He left for the Liaison Meeting to continue and those in attendance were Tom Lawrence (TL) from SUFC, and Paul FitzGerald (PF), Paul Yeomanson (PY), Kay Fogg (KF) and Michelle Gargate (MG) from the Shrimpers Trust.

There were apologies from Shane Chapman (SC).

The meeting began with a champagne toast to new beginnings, courtesy of Tom Arnold!

## 2. **Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

It was agreed that the vast majority of any “Matters Arising” were now either out of date or were already on the Agenda elsewhere.

## 3. **Update post takeover**

There was inevitable huge relief and a new enthusiasm around Roots Hall following on from the Completion of the transfer of the Club to COSU on 19<sup>th</sup> July. TL advised that there would be a targeted spend around the ground ahead of the impending new season, with a particular need for urgent attention to various toilet areas.

The Frank Walton clock on top of the South Stand had been an easy fix, as it was found that an animal had chewed through a single cable!

The new scoreboard, sponsored by We Finance Any Car, would be in place for the opening game of the season. The Commercial department have been working exceptionally hard and have managed to almost sell out almost all available sponsorship opportunities.

There are ongoing talks surrounding the possibility of moving the away fans and bringing the North West corner back into use for them, with the subsequent possibility of returning home fans to the East side of the North Bank.

Uptake on Season Cards has been very good. At the time of the meeting, out of 3,300 odd booked, 1,200 or so, were “new” ones i.e. hadn’t had them last season.

Getting the training ground up and running is now a priority, The ground works are approx. 2 months away.

TL said there are still a few more players that they are looking to bring in

He said that he was very grateful and gave his thanks to the Shrimpers Trust for the £7,500 which had been paid towards the Dublin pre-season trip. This trip had been largely arranged through Kevin's own contacts.

#### **4. Shrimpers Bar – pre new season launch clean**

TL thought that the Shrimpers could be improved with quite a reasonable £8/£9k spend to bring it up to a much more acceptable level. The toilets have already been painted.

He promised to look into leasing/buying a replacement dishwasher ahead of the new season, as had been discussed previously, and to talk to Sharon about having the sturdier plastic glasses once this is in place.

Trust representatives asked if it would be ok for us to approach our members to come and assist with a freshen up and re-paint and TL had no objection. This then led on to the idea of another community day to work on getting the ground ready. TL explained that much of what was necessary, had already been done Trust representatives emphasised how valuable this had been in bonding the supporter community and recommended that we have a community day. TL reiterated that until we have a Safety Certificate and machinery and hazards are removed from site, supporters would not be allowed on site. It may be that we have an afternoon of seat cleaning a day or two before the game.

#### **5. Shrimpers Trust Sponsorship**

PF touched on the outstanding £40,000 loan plus interest and felt that there should be some recognition or mechanism in place for this. There was a suggestion that it could be "paid back/invested" into something at the Club, e.g. Shrimpers Bar, FanZone, Community Corner.

The Trust have always sponsored the youth team and been "front of shirt" sponsors for many years. It is something that is well supported by Trust members and promoted when selling our "Quid a Goal" pledges. The money from last season for this is still outstanding, pending an imminent presentation from SUCF.

PF also advised that the Shrimpers Trust would be reducing the number of player sponsorships held, so as to give others a chance to take these up.

#### **6. Junior Blues**

KF advised that new flags for the Junior Blues to wave on matchdays were in process of being ordered, and she needed to check with Rylee as to where things were with this.

She also reminded of the importance of making sure that data relating to Junior Blues is captured correctly at the Ticket Office when purchasing Junior Season Cards.

**ACTION – KF to liaise with RD**

## **7. SUEPA/8. History & Heritage Project Group**

KF confirmed that there was going to be a benefit match for ex player, Micky Stead, who has had to have some operations which have left him unable to work. This would be taking place at Bowers & Pitsea, on 20<sup>th</sup> October. TL confirmed the Club would be happy to support this event and to provide some raffle prizes.

Following on from the new Southend United FC signage being put up, Trust members present urged TL not to allow anything like the old lettering to be thrown away or discarded, as there are many fans who would have been more than happy to contribute something for nostalgic items from around the ground.

TL advised that it is hoped that the Club shop would be given an external face lift, and there may be some pieces from this which could be sold on. This is being done as part of "City Jam" and will be painted by local artists. KF asked about the shops at the bottom of Victoria Avenue, by the traffic lights, and if the RM emblazoned signage there could be removed? TL responded that these are not owned by RM and that this is "in hand".

JR had approached the Trust via TL, to ask if there were any pieces of memorabilia in the Trust's possession, which could be used to adorn the corridors of the executive box level and the Directors' board room. AL had spent some time working on ideas for this, which had been forwarded to TL. There are certainly a number of items which could be used, including framed shirts, framed programmes of memorable games, copy of the original Deed etc. It was felt by Trust Board members that the large wall murals are an attractive feature. Further discussion ensued with the Trust agreeing to continue their search for relevant items, many of which would serve as items for the proposed Museum area.

**ACTION – Trust to source suitable items**

## **9. Social inclusion**

This had largely been covered during earlier discussions with DS. MG would be taking over the responsibility of this for the Trust.

## **10. Fan Advisory Board**

Circuit Creative (who have done the season ticket card and new kit launch videos) are putting something together for this, to attract people interested in applying for a position on the Fan Advisory Board. The Club have taken on board lessons learned at Rangers in setting their own up during recent visits. There will be an interview panel headed up by consortium member, Ian Redbourn. There would be a reserved space for the Trust, and 6/8 people in total, with Ian or another member of COSU chairing.

LA asked what overlaps might this have with our Liaison Meetings, and TL didn't feel it will impinge. There would be some overlaps obviously, but he described it as the old Supporters Liaison Group "on steroids". The Trust Liaison Meetings still had value in his opinion.

## **11. End of season (funds raised for players and staff) feedback**

TL wasn't aware that the funds, raised by supporters via ShrimperZone, had been handed over and said he would speak with Sharon.

## 12. Any Other Business:

- KF asked, on behalf of a question from members, what the Club's position on allowing banners and flags into the ground, post the Martin regime was going to be. TL responded that there had been a genuine concern about fire risk, but they may have been "over cautious". He said that advice was being sought as to whether this could be relaxed or mitigation could be introduced. TL hoped that flags and banners would be allowed again.
- The question of a formal way of donating season tickets which are unused for games was discussed. TL didn't think this could be done, as it would go against the terms and conditions of issue. It was noted that several other Clubs do already do this, notably Orient and Norwich. COSU members are discussing this.
- A suggestion was put forward of tickets for fans who may have fallen on hard times, with the idea of four donated season tickets, maybe in South Lower to be administered by the Trust under social inclusion. TL was very much in favour of this idea.

### **ACTION – Trust reps to progress**

- Macron deal in the shop – several people had repeatedly asked on ShrimperZone, about whether the Club makes money on items sold in the shop. TL was happy to confirm that the Club do, indeed make money out of sales within the shop, but that the terms of the deal are subject to confidentiality.

### **ACTION (outstanding) – Chase Macron with the idea of the Trust producing a plush Sammy toy**

- Hardship fund – PF suggested a re-purpose of the Trust's Hardship fund, and would be approaching Matt Uggla, as the single biggest benefactor, to gauge his feelings. One suggestion was for hardship in communities at away games.

Next Meeting scheduled early September. Dates to be circulated.