



SOUTHEND UNITED SUPPORTERS SOCIETY LIMITED LIAISON MEETING



Thursday, 7th November 2024
Roots Hall Stadium 16:30

1. Present and Apologies

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

Apologies for absence were received from James Schooley (JS) and Paul Yeomanson (PY).

2. Actions Carried Forward and Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 26th September 2024

All actions were confirmed as having been addressed.

3. Update Post Takeover

TL confirmed that the new North-West Quadrant facilities are now available for use by those in the West Stand, and that the test of these by Charlton's supporters at the recent FA Cup match, had gone well. Making these available to West Stand supporters, will reduce pressure on the existing West Stand kiosks and facilities. Costs of what has been undertaken so far amount to circa £120,000. We would like to incorporate an area for safe standing in due course but that will not happen in the short term.

TL said that he had been on a call earlier that day about the feasibility of the plans for the East Stand – progress is being made but it is important we take some time to understand what the various different potential feasibility partners offer and what differentiates one from the other – the hope is to get a partner locked in before Christmas.

Works at the training ground are progressing with approx. £200,000 having already been spent on groundworks. A large crane would be on site imminently (for which permission had had to be sought from London Southend Airport!). This would be used to place the cabins on site. UK Power Network have provided quotes for connection to the National Grid, rather than the generators which have been in use up till now.

The 1906 Club has been re-purposed into a kind of mini D2, but would retain the existing name.

Applications are in for the floodlights to be upgraded.

It was noted that Mick Maddocks has been brilliant in all his continued facilitation and support.

The management team are still keeping tabs on players they would like to sign and approaches for players have been made – no one has been signed either because of unrealistic wage demands or unrealistic valuations by current clubs.

The successful Fan Advisory Board applicants would be being interviewed later this month.

4. Stadium Issues/Fans Feedback

PF raised the matter of the outstanding Shrimpers Trust Loan, and all present concurred that it was now time to bring this matter to a conclusion. TL offered to devise a formal settlement agreement, which the Trust Board could debate. Options were for a full settlement, to take a percentage settlement or to write it off in full. There was some discussion as to how a percentage settlement might be offset against some benefits over the next two or three years, including box usage for the Trust's social inclusion guests.

ACTION – TL to draft settlement agreement to forward to PF

RD confirmed that he had checked the troublesome toilets in the South-East corner by the turnstiles, which had been highlighted in our last meeting, with the cleaners himself, to make sure they are aware.

Trust representatives had been contacted by member, Terry Dangerfield, concerning wheelchair usage and transfer into the ground. RD believed that this has been addressed but advised the supporter to notify their nearest steward, as the Safety Officer had been notified.

ACTION – RD to liaise with West Stand stewards

Trust representatives had also been contacted by member, Matt Eva, about the lack of priority for shareholders for tickets for the recent Charlton FA Cup game. RD felt that, should this situation arise again, something could be sorted out to include shareholders as a priority. He added that plans are on the radar for a loyalty membership scheme to start for supporters next season.

KF said she had been contacted by a few people about the amount of obvious vaping which is continuing to go on, particularly in the West Stand. One person said that one child had kept coughing at the most recent match because of the amount being blown into his face. The stewards do not seem inclined to act, so some fans are taking matters into their own hands, which doesn't always go down very well. RD agreed to include it in the pre-match briefings.

ACTION – RD to introduce in pre-match briefings going forwards.

“Gremlin” had asked on ShrimperZone about the results of the early season ticket holders draw. RD advised that this was due to happen in the near future.

ACTION – RD to progress

“Defender05” had asked on ShrimperZone if the delay in the deal being finalised between the previous Chairman and the Council affect COSU's plans for the current site. TL replied that it did not – we plan to regenerate the entire site.

Trust member, Phil Parker, had raised two issues, the first surrounding stock of shirts in the store. Many other fans had commented negatively about the supply

and having to wait. TL advised that he had received data from Macron (who operate the shop) that shows that the sales for the first quarter of the season had already almost outweighed the total number sold last season, with demand far exceeding expectations. More stock is due in ready for Christmas.

Phil also asked if the Club had looked into the possibility of engaging with SHSB again to see if they would be willing to allow matchday parking. The Club has worked with its Front of Shirt Sponsors, c2c, to make rail travel as affordable as possible for fans, including 40% discounts for those booking in advance and child travel for £2. He hoped that further discounts would be available in the future. RD had reached out to SHSB during the summer, but no-one had responded. KF pointed out that this could be good money earners for some of the local schools and RD agreed to try a few other possibilities.

ACTION – RD to contact St Marys Prittlewell and other local schools to see if they would be interested.

5. Junior Blues

KF reported that the Junior Blues Meet the Players Day on 29th October, had gone very well, with all the players and management being present and on good form for the children. She added thanks to those who had helped on the day – Kevin Fogg, Michelle Gargate, Clare Chapman and Chris Hunt.

The next event up for the Junior Blues would be the Christmas Party and KF and RD would be starting work on this imminently.

Finally, KF said that we have now exhausted the stock of Junior Blues scarves (sign up gifts from three years ago), but that parents are still asking for them, so would be looking into a re-order.

6. SUEPA

PF advised that the Match for Micky raised circa £7,700, which was good, but a little disappointing. Two COSU members, David Kreyling and Tom Arnold had turned out for the Carli Lansley team.

World Retro had provided the shirts for the M4M, but the Trust is looking into the possibility of new sources for retro shirts due to the poor service to customers over the last few months. RD asked whether he could help.

ACTION – RD to try and investigate other options.

The Evening with Roy McDonough would be taking place on 23rd November at Essex County Bowling Club.

The next Southend United Former Players Club get together would be held on 13th December.

Andy Leeder is working hard on the PFA Brain Health Fund in conjunction with Dawn Astle.

7. History & Heritage Project Group

PF might take this over in the near future due to Andy's workload. Some memorabilia is going to be placed on the walls of the box level of the East Stand,

and some of Keith Bird's original art work has been purchased for the Board Room.

8. Social Inclusion Feedback

All feedback had been very positive.

9. Any Other Business:

- Sammy's Spot – PF raised this as a concern following recent proposals for the Trust to be involved in this. RD advised that SUCF have now secured a grant from the Premier League to run this as a kind of pre-match crèche. The plan had been for trained staff to monitor this as an adult free pre-match area with various activities on offer.

ACTION – RD to update as to whether any further Trust involvement is required.

- Bar revenue has gone up, with more people using the bars pre-match. SC reported some confusion in the Shrimpers Bar recently with the planned Happy Hour, which was advertised as being from 12 – 2, having been stopped at 1.
- Quid a Goal money 2024/25 – PF asked if there were any plans for the Shrimpers Trust Quid a Goal money income this year. TL suggested some improvements to the Shrimpers Bar, and Trust representatives agreed to come up with a “wish list”, to include removing the “Fast Queue” sign; cleaning the light fittings and improving the ceiling; getting rid of the large table and replacing it with a couple of smaller ones; more chairs; making the entrance more welcoming, possibly with new murals or a “welcome sign”; toilet signage for the gents' toilets.

ACTION – Trust Board members to discuss and revert.

- Friday Night Football – SC asked if this is something that the Club no longer wants to continue with. TL responded saying that the request to move a game to a Friday night has to be issued within 7 days of the fixture list being released. The Club did approach some others about potential changes to Friday night, but no-one agreed in the end.
- Fan Engagement Team – RD advised that this would be being launched soon. It is a method of dealing with fan feedback in a practical and responsive way. The team will be composed of RD; Sarah Kavanagh, the Ticket Office Manager; Liam Oliver, on behalf of the Macron Store, and KF.
- KF asked if the Club could help with promoting the Shrimpers Trust Christmas Quiz. RD agreed to get some photos.

ACTION – RD to provide photos

Meeting closed 18:15

Next Meeting – TBA (mid January)