



STOCKPORT COUNTY SUPPORTERS' COOPERATIVE/STOCKPORT COUNTY FC

Minutes

Monday 29th January 2024
Pareto Lounge, Edgeley Park
19:00

ATTENDANCE

Present (SCSC): Dave Marchbank (Chair), John Giles (Vice Chair), Ian Brown, (Comms & Media), Ed Chadwick, (Board Member) Cath Shanley (Independent Secretary)

Present (SCFC): Tom Mahon (COO) Steve Bellis, (President) Liam Richardson, (Media Executive), Jonathan Vaughan (CEO)

Meeting opened with introductions round the table, followed by a run through of the questions sent to Tom in advance of the meeting.

Edgeley Park and Match Day	
Questions	Club Responses
1. Safe Standing Is there any movement from the EFL on safe standing in Leagues One and Two? If there is, would the club consider a trial at Edgeley Park? When the new stand is built will this include a standing area?	<p>Tom Mahon represents the Club at the Safety Advisory Group which is chaired by the council. TM explained that the club like the principle and the idea will be considered with forthcoming ground changes however as safe standing would be like for like in terms of capacity it may not be the best investment for the club. A feasibility study has already been carried out in the Cheadle End.</p> <p>If the Club invested in safe standing in the</p>

		<p>home end, the Club would be obliged to provide an equivalent for away fans.</p> <p>Jonathan Vaughan added that it would likely lead to reduced capacity because of the design of rail seating. He said the club did not believe it was commercially viable but would continue to monitor the situation.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Ticket Collection at Edgeley Park</p> <p>Away Fans Ticket Collection.</p> <p>a) Would the club consider having a ticket turnstile at the away supporters entrance for those collecting tickets on the day? This would avoid stewards having to re-direct supporters to the Cheadle End.</p> <p>Home Fans Ticket Collection for Away Matches</p> <p>b) The Co-op have received complaints that away tickets cannot be collected within an hour of kick off from the Ticket Office. Is it possible for the Club to reconsider this policy or advertise it better?</p> <p>c) Can the Club make away tickets available for collection after home games and make sure that is well advertised?</p>	<p>TM said the majority of the away ticket allocation is in the Together Stand so the impact is minimal making it a handful of collections at the ticket office. A solution would be considered if the volume increases.</p> <p>TM agreed to more efficient advertising. The process was publicised at the start of the season. During the last hour on match day, the club wants to service as many fans as possible who are purchasing tickets for the match on the day. The Co-op advised of anecdotal reports of supporters being turned away when there was no queue.</p> <p>One of the main challenges for the club is that people use the windows to re-grade ticket categories before the game. The club is trying to find a solution so that fans can do that online.</p> <p>Tickets were made available for collection after the Walsall game but this was a decision made during the game. Tickets will be available post Harrogate match.</p>

<p>3.</p>	<p>Development Plans</p> <p>Could you give us an update on the training centre and ground developments plans for the near future?</p>	<p>Ground - Following a few iterations of the designs, which have had challenges due to location and being landlocked, the final design is fixed.</p> <p>JV explained that construction costs had risen since the club consulted on its initial proposals.</p> <p>Phase One: The club are working up 2 options for the extension of the Railway End:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To create a stand with a capacity of 2,000. 2. To create a stand with the capacity of 4,000. <p>It is intended this would be the designated family stand and a family zone would be created behind the stand.</p> <p>There is potential for work to begin during the closed season, dependent on the outcome of the public consultation and the planning process. Improvements to Danny Bergara stand planned - replacing the roof with the option to extend at both ends. Replacing the Together Stand with what JV described as a 'showpiece stand'. The stand would incorporate hospitality facilities and executive boxes.</p> <p>The phasing was structured in line with projected demand for tickets.</p> <p>A public consultation will begin in the next couple of months. The Co-op, fans, neighbours and community groups will be invited to comment.</p> <p>JV said one of the changes fans would notice from the original proposals was that ground would comprise four distinct stands without the corners filled in. He explained that filling the corners with seats cost three-to-four times as much as the equivalent number of seats in stands along the sides and ends of the pitch.</p>
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		<p>Training Ground and Academy – JV said the club had aspirations in the medium term to find a site within the borough for a single facility which is in line with club growth. He said it was challenging to find a parcel of land that could accommodate the first team, ladies and youth set-ups. The club feels it has a ‘Championship-quality’ facility at Carrington and was in negotiation over extending the lease. JV added negotiations were ongoing with Life Leisure around the club’s use of Stockport Sports Village and its aspirations to develop facilities which means it can qualify for Category Two academy status.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Away End</p> <p>a) Could the club consider erecting a temporary cover on the Railway End? It’s putting fans off buying tickets as they don’t want to pay to be soaked.</p> <p>b) Could the club consider selling Railway End tickets at half price? With reduced facilities and no roof cover this feels like an appropriate price to pay. I’m sure it would sell out immediately guaranteeing a great atmosphere at both ends.</p>	<p>JV explained this was not an easy thing to do. The cost was likely to be in the region of £1-1.5m cost and with planned improvements this was not a cost-effective exercise.</p> <p>TM said there was no intention to offer a discount this season. Any discount would have to be extended to the visiting team in line with the club charter. Has to be cost effective overall and tickets are sold as last let. The club would rather have three full stands than sporadic groups as it is felt this creates a better atmosphere.</p> <p>Opening the Railway End adds extra costs for turnstile operators, stewarding, etc, so this stand is only opened when the rest of the ground approaches a sell-out.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Season Ticket Resales</p> <p>Could the club consider a system where season tickets could be re-sold via the club for matches they’re unable to attend? Liverpool, Leeds, Crystal Palace, Fulham and West Ham are examples of clubs that offer this option.</p>	<p>Until available tickets are sold there won't be a resale option. They rarely sell out pre match day so resale isn't viable currently</p> <p>It's in the development plan for the future but currently priority is given to selling available tickets.</p>

6.	<p>Away Match Tickets</p> <p>The allocation of away game tickets sell out quickly. The club currently has two windows of sale: season ticket holders then general sale. What plans does the club have to introduce any further window(s) for the allocation of away game tickets (e.g. how long a season ticket holder has held their season ticket, how many away games have been attended in the current season, etc)?</p>	<p>No away allocation apart from Harrogate has sold out to season ticket holders in advance of going on general sale. TM said Salford and Wrexham are anticipated to be the only games which will sell out to ST holders. He anticipated tickets for those games would be released in phases based on the number of away games season ticket holders have attended this season in the same way as they had been for Harrogate.</p> <p>TM said there had been no retaliation from clubs for only being given the minimum number of tickets for EP.</p>
7.	<p>Edgeley Park</p> <p>Are there any plans for the club to offer organised ground tours of Edgeley Park which fans would pay for?</p>	<p>Talks are ongoing with Olivia Hanvey (Head of Commercial & Supporter Services) for tours to be arranged at EP, hosted by Steve Bellis. Dave Challinor isn't keen on Carrington being used due to tactical discussions and team training. Supporter visits to the training ground have been used as part of the club's charity work which they intend to continue. This has raised around £1,500 for local charities.</p>
8.	<p>Away Supporters</p> <p>Can away supporters be held for 10 minutes post match to give home supporters some time to clear the area and avoid them meeting on Mercian Way/Booth Street, which I've seen cause issues for the police on a few occasions this season?</p>	<p>Gate F is now the entry/exit point for away fans and so the number of flash points has been reduced. The police are advocates of the current process. Regulations prevent the club from holding fans unjustifiably.</p> <p>TM said incidents of disorder and arrests were down this season.</p> <p>Away coaches are now located on Bergara Close.</p>
9.	<p>Match Day catering</p>	

	<p>a) Does the club have plans for catering supplies to be increased? Pies can be in very short supply by half time.</p> <p>b) The club advertises pizza in the Cheadle end however it's never available. Are there plans to either start selling pizza or remove the adverts?</p> <p>c) The waiting time to buy drinks is very lengthy and if you leave at half time, it typically takes until the end of half time to get served. This is OK for soft drinks, but not for alcohol, which cannot be taken into the stand. Can the Club look at pre-pouring drinks to speed up service?</p>	<p>TM said a 'pie tracker' linked to till sales was in place to see when stocks are running low. Challenges are caused by the fact that the pies arrive fresh and take 25 minutes to cook. Sales are analysed to assess future supply and the club are aware of the challenge for supporters and working to reduce this</p> <p>TM advised of issues with suppliers. Pizza will be back from the Harrogate fixture. A pizza tracker in place which works in the same way as the pie tracker. The club is in talks with local pizza supplier (Napolezza) with a view to Courtyard provision.</p> <p>Pre-pouring does exist however it's not always popular with fans. The club ran a trial last season with app2tap and are hoping to have self service in place from the Crewe match onwards.</p> <p>TM said the club was working to provide mobile bar capacity in the Together Stand as the club are aware that long queues are usual.</p>
10.	<p>Cheadle End Fans Standing</p> <p>Can the Club advise as to how the efforts to resolve the situation of fans standing along the front gangway on the Cheadle End in the latter stages of matches are progressing please?</p>	<p>The club has recently changed its stewarding company and is now working with two new ones. It's a challenge due to being the key exit point however the club will work with the new stewarding company to improve the situation. TM acknowledged that he sees it for himself and that it can impede the view of lower tier supporters. Ian Brown suggested that stewards guide upper tier fans through the upper concourses for an even exit distribution.</p>
11.	<p>Match Day Drug Use</p> <p>I'm growing increasingly concerned about potential drug use at Edgeley Park. There are regular long cubicle queues in the mens toilets. Are the club working with</p>	<p>Increased searches are going on and anyone found with drugs will be handed over to the police. Sniffer dogs for higher profile games are in place. The club will</p>

	the FA to enhance search regimes and introduce sniffer dog searches	continue to follow all EFL guidance.
12.	<p>Bottle Tops</p> <p>Why do home fans have bottle tops removed from coke drinks (many of these drinks get spilt in the crowd) especially as fans can bring in similar sized heavier items such as coins with no issues?. I have never seen a home fan throw a bottle top.</p>	The club introduced removal of bottle tops in line with EFL guidance as a safety measure to reduce the risk to supporters of injury from items thrown.
13.	<p>Merchandise</p> <p>a) Could you ask the club about how they plan to maximise revenue from the club shop and if there's any plan to increase the stock levels/ have a counter in town?</p> <p>b) Club shop items don't have a price tag and you either have to ask an assistant or search the shop online for pricing information. Could items be priced either individually or on the rail?</p>	<p>TM said the club received a second drop of replica kit at Christmas. There are good current stock levels of replica kit and training kit in store</p> <p>The retro remake of the Tony Dinning-era Patrick shirt before Christmas sold really well. Other opportunities to reissue kits are being explored. Casual wear introduced by the club was selling well.</p> <p>For the 2024/2025 season, an order has been made which is in excess of the amount of kit sold this season to date.</p> <p>There are no plans for an outlet in Stockport town centre. Kit can be purchased online if supporters can't regularly visit the EP shop which is open three days a week, which the club thinks is sufficient provision.</p> <p>The club shop is due to be refitted as part of the ground improvement plans.</p> <p>The price tag issue has now been resolved and items in store are now labelled. TM personally checked this on the day of our meeting.</p>
14.	Match Day Streaming	

	<p>Could the club review the customer service provided by the match streaming company please? I've had an issue with being charged twice for a match and had no response when I've raised this with them. I've heard of others having the same issues and feel that this is not good for the reputation of the club.</p>	<p>Stream AMG is the club's third-party streaming provider. The club regularly engage with them and are confident that they're the best provider for the services. Stream AMG has acknowledged that customer service is an area which needs improvement. The club plans to meet with Stream AMG to ensure standards are being adhered to.</p> <p>Liam Richardson advised that stream revenue for away games bought through Stockport County Live goes to the club and not the away team.</p> <p>Match day streaming is very popular, with some audiences over 2,000.</p>
<p>15.</p>	<p>Community Work</p> <p>a) Can the Club provide an update on the free tickets / community work that is currently being done in schools and the community for the 2023 / 24 season? On average, how many tickets per game are distributed to schools / community projects?</p> <p>b) The County Collective looks like an interesting initiative to make Edgeley Park an inclusive environment for staff and supporters. It is pleasing to see the Quiet / Sensory room has been established, which has been part funded by the Co-op's sponsorship of the Community Trust. What scope is there for the co-op to engage with the Club on this project?</p>	<p>The Community Trust goes out to every primary school in Stockport with a programme of education and an average of 350 tickets per game are given out to schools. Tickets are now attendance tracked so the club can assess the highest take up rate by school, helping with future focus.</p> <p>The initiative is in its infancy. The club has recently surveyed ST holders and is going through responses at the moment. Once the outcomes are reviewed Tom will share these with the Co-op. This will determine how it progresses and how the Co-op may be engaged moving forward.</p> <p>The club has introduced a text line for fans to report problems or concerns. Staff trained in safeguarding can provide mental health support.</p>
<p>16.</p>	<p>On my occasional visits to the Bergara Stand, I find the posts that line the stairwells are very useful in</p>	<p>There are no plans to make changes to the Cheadle End currently. If the club deems it appropriate in the future, it would be reconsidered</p>

	<p>making my way up to my seat. Are there any plans to install them in the Cheadle End? (from one of our more senior supporters)</p>	
Finance		
	Questions	Club Responses
17.	<p>As of the 31.12.22, the company that owns the club, Stott Capital Limited, was showing negative reserves of £10M and owed £24M to 2 of Mr Stott's other companies, one of which, Select Property (SP) Limited was largely being funded by a £24M overdraft?</p> <p>What would you say to reassure supporters that this level of debt does not pose any danger to the future sustainability and security of the club?</p>	<p>Stott Capital Limited and Select Property (SP) Limited are not linked to the Club. Mark owns multiple companies and the club doesn't report on entities in the wider Group structure.</p> <p>JV said when the club begins to invest in the redevelopment of the stadium or training facility it would look to bring external funding in.</p> <p>Debt is not being passed up to a parent company but is being converted to equity as part of Mark's ongoing commitment.</p> <p>JV gave reassurance to supporters that MS is well capitalised and committed openly to investing in the growth of SCFC.</p>
18.	<p>What are the club's plans for financial sustainability (considering the aim to reach and stay in the Championship) where will the revenue streams come from?</p>	<p>Investment by the club is on par with the top few clubs in the division, including investment in the club infrastructure, growing the fan base and match day revenues. As the club moves upwards through the leagues, the value of commercial deals will increase and the potential income from player sales in League One is significantly higher.</p>

19.	How much debt is the club servicing and does the Club cross guarantee any other group debt?	<p>The club's only debt is a winter survival loan taken from Sport England during Covid. It totals about £1m and its low interest rate and long term mean there are no plans to repay early.</p> <p>JV gave an assurance that the club does not guarantee any wider group debt.</p>
20.	Can the Club explain FFP and where they see County fitting within the framework of FFP?	<p>FFP is the Premier League's governance. Salary Cost Management Protocol (SCMP) is the League One and Two equivalent .</p> <p>SCMP limits spending on player wages to a percentage of club turnover. In League One clubs can spend a maximum of 60% of their turnover on wages. In League Two, the limit is 55%. There are no restrictions (in themselves) on the amount a club can lose or spend on transfer fees.</p> <p>There is no limit in owner investment as long as it is converted to equity. Championship clubs are closer to the FFP framework.</p>
21.	What research or analysis was carried out by the club prior to the initial ticket price announcement that would have amounted to a 25% increase for adult walk-up fans attending most home games?	<p>TM said benchmarking around the leagues is carried out and the club feels they're competitive in League Two.</p> <p>Last season was the first price increase under the current ownership. Fans made their opinions clear on announcement and the club responded the same day despite believing that the pricing structure they landed on was an appropriate one to build a sustainable commercial model.</p>
22.	Will there be a debt to equity swap in 2024 similar to that of June 2023 that leaves the company which directly operates Stockport County debt-free?	<p>JV said this would absolutely go ahead. The club has to get approval to convert from Sport England. Once this is approved they'll continue to convert. In June 2023, £5.9m of debt was converted to equity and that will be reflected in accounts due to be</p>

		published by Companies House shortly.
23.	I come to between six and eight home games with my husband and two kids of 7 and 9. Most other activities or attractions we attend offer a family ticket that represents a small discount. Why is Stockport County different?	<p>TM said the club does due diligence on the viability of discount schemes.</p> <p>He said in terms of ticket pricing the club was not different to others but, if due diligence shows otherwise this may be reviewed.</p>
24.	<p>What are the Club's plans for season ticket and match day pricing for the 2024 / 25 season, based on remaining in League Two and gaining promotion to League One?</p> <p>Asset of community value application with Stockport Council Update.</p>	<p>TM said talks are at an early stage. The first meetings have been held and decisions will be made by MS and decided depending on the teams finishing position this season.</p> <p>The club are talking to third party organisations to look at providing a solution to spread the cost of season tickets.</p> <p>It was agreed to set up a separate meeting with Ken Knott to discuss the renewal of the ACV, which has been in place at Edgeley Park since 2013. The Co-op clarified that this wasn't a new application and was a renewal.</p> <p>JV advised that the ACV potentially has an impact on the club's plans for expansion as funders may be more reluctant to invest with this in place.</p> <p>Dave Marchbank clarified that the application has been placed on hold with the council until the meeting with Ken Knott has been held and a way forward agreed.</p> <p>John Giles asked for a swift meeting date to enable the Co-op to explain details to members at or before the SGM on the 26 February.</p>

TEAM		
Questions		Club Responses
25.	Can the Club offer any insight with regard to potential signings be they loans or permanent signings please? Clearly we have a significant amount of injuries and it feels like the Club were hoping to bring in more back up.	The club is looking for value. The depth of the squad puts the club in a strong position, recruiting the right player at the right price is paramount.
26.	Can we have an update with the regards to the injury situation and when we can hope to see some of our injured players being available for selection again	LR said this was addressed in every pre match interview with Dave Challinor, who's very open and forthcoming in updating supporters with the team situation. Recordings are available via the Stockport County channel on YouTube