

STOCKPORT COUNTY SUPPORTERS' CO-OPERATIVE AND STOCKPORT COUNTY FOOTBALL CLUB

Meeting Notes

to be held on Monday 14 January 2019 at the Fingerpost Hotel
commencing at 6.30pm

ATTENDANCE

Present (SCSC): Pete Towey (Chair), Damian Beaumont, Ian Brown, Andy Burt, Caroline Burt (Independent Secretary), John Giles, Ed Keane, Steve Murray, Phil Robinson

Present (SCFC): Simon Bellamy, Steve Bellis, Malcolm Cooke

Apologies (SCSC): Dave Marchbank, Andy Plant

Promotion Plans

1. This season is County's best chance of promotion in the last 6 years, especially as there are no Clubs with massive budgets like Salford and Harrogate. Will the Club make the funds available for the manager to sign new players and provide the best chance of securing promotion?

What is the latest situation on renewing contracts for next season? Will there be any possibility of extending Scott Duxbury's contract and retaining Jamie Stott?

The Club are doing everything to keep the current squad together, whether they be under contract or on loan. They are fully backing Jim Gannon and will sanction bringing in the right players to boost our promotion push.

It would be madness to disrupt this current squad in the form they are in now, the Board want County to get out of this league as much as the fans do.

2. Given the fantastic progress made by Jim and the team, and the realistic prospect of finally exiting this division, how confident are the board that they would be able to provide the funds to support a full time conference premier team. Not just in terms of the playing squad but costs such as overnight stops and providing enough seating in the Railway end for increased away support, increased stewarding etc.

This comes up at every Board meeting. There will be extra costs associated with getting promoted, but there will also be extra income. The average attendance for National League clubs is significantly higher than Conference North, plus there are two extra games.

The Board are constantly working with Jim to identify what he needs in terms of finance and resources to go up to National Conference and compete.

As mentioned at the last meeting, there are no plans to develop the Railway End. There probably still wouldn't be a need to use it even in the league above.

Financials

3. At the last meeting you stated that you under wrote 200k losses at the behest of the league. How does this work? Does every club have to submit a budget for the league's perusal? If not, how do they ascertain how much needs to be underwritten?

At the start of every season the Board sit down to work out the costings for the season. We know roughly what the costs are, and therefore what the overall business budget needs to be. The Shareholders are committed to getting out of this division and as a result “speculated to accumulate” by giving Jim a bigger playing budget than he expected at the start of the season.

We were aware that if it all went wrong, we would be looking at making circa £200,000 loss which the shareholders were committed to covering.

Auditing in this League is very strict and we had to commit to the league that any projected losses would be covered. The League essentially needs assurances that we won't go bust.

This season turnover has increased, but the increase in costs has been significantly higher - which is mainly attributed to a larger playing budget.

All that being said, the Board have an appetite to strengthen the squad if the appropriate players become available and requests are made by the manager.

4. Steve Bellis is quoted as saying that the victory against Yeovil is worth £38,000 and that all money that comes in that's extra goes straight to the manager for players.

In light of the comments made to the Co-op in December, advising the playing budget was front loaded and money from the cup run wouldn't be going to the manager, can the board explain the comments made in this interview with BBC Manchester?

Director Steve Bellis told BBC Radio Manchester that the win at Yeovil would be more than just a financial boost to the Greater Manchester side.

"I'm so delighted for the fans. Seeing them jump around, they've travelled a long way and it's nice to see them have something to be genuinely happy about," he said.

"It's worth about £38,000 but it's more than that, it's the profile. It's about reminding people that we're still around and on the way back.

"It makes a huge difference to a club like ours [to possibly be on television in the second round]. All the money that comes in that's extra goes straight to the manager for players"

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/46164692>

Steve explained that the extract above was from a much longer interview which had been cut down and as a result he had been misquoted. What he actually said was “we set an overall budget and anything over that budget goes to the manager”. E.g. the previous season saw the club make a £35k profit and this went into the following seasons playing budget.

The Club are determined to get out of Division 6, and are actively funding the team's ongoing developing needs, via such things as bonus payments and the funding of overnight stays for vital away games, and more.

The Club have also committed funds during the season to bring in new players, for example Osbourne and Stott.

Steve was offended that supporters would think he would try and deliberately misled the fans.

5. The Co-op were advised that the accounts to June 2018 would be lodged at Companies House by the end of Dec 2018, but this hasn't been done. When can we expect the accounts to be available? Will debt on the balance sheet be written down?

The accounts are now ready for Richard Park to sign off and should hopefully be posted to Companies House by the end of January.

There is no third party debt to repay; the only debt on the balance sheet is shareholder debt. No further write down of debts at this point is envisaged.

6. What is the projected profit / loss for the 2018/19 season to June 2019?

The Club is currently forecasting a six figure loss to June 2019; we can't be specific as this is likely to change over the remainder of the season. The shareholders and directors are committed to underwriting any losses.

It is a moving figure depending on what instances crop up during the year. For example, we budgeted a certain figure for electricity and this is now looking like it might be double the original budgeted figure.

Edgeley Park / the Bungalow

7. What plans does the club have for Edgeley Park in terms of its acquisition and redevelopment? What are the aspirational timeframe and how would the board see this being financed?

The Club would ideally like to acquire the ground back from the Council, but currently has a very good working relationship with them and the arrangement suits both parties.

The Club would rather focus its energies on getting out of this league at this present time.

8. During the last Q&A with the club representatives it was noted that the Bungalow club and associated land was sold. Should the club ever be successful again, and I mean really successful, do the board feel that losing out on a plot of land that could accommodate expansion in the future is short-sighted? The land is also believed to be the site of an historical access point to the pitch drains, adding a complexity to any works in the future. The adjacent land currently used as a car park could also benefit SCFC sometime in the future as opposed to the tedious notion of putting houses on it. Have the club explored the use of the whole site with SMBC?

The property was put on the market inviting sealed bids. The Club made a sensible (some might say overly generous) offer for the Bungalow but were outbid. Rumour now has it that the successful offer has fallen through. This is not yet confirmed.

In terms of Booth Street, the Club received an e-mail today to inform them that from the 31 January the car park can no longer be used. Steve Bellis intends to arrange a meeting with the Council to discuss options, but this decision will likely cost the Club approximately 10-15K per season in lost revenue, which is another example of the projected profit / loss having to change as per question 6.

Catering

9. It was pleasing to see the caterers introduce a `Bottle Bar` in the Cheadle End, as previously suggested by the Supporters Cooperative.

Could we have a report as to how this venture went please?

Is it possible to stock better quality beer? Real ales / craft lager, etc.?

Also.....please advise as to what plans or measures the caterers have in mind to introduce to improve staffing and quality of service in the Danny Bergara Stand, Cheadle End, and Pop Side (Vernon Stand).

Malcolm Cooke has now taken charge of this issue following on from the especially bad catering issues experienced on Boxing Day.

For the Kidderminster game, from 1:30pm he went round to every kiosk in the ground, speaking to the staff and finding out what the issues are. It was discovered that a lot of the equipment was not working – e.g. a kiosk in the Popside had no working boilers so they were having to use flasks to provide hot drinks! Food was running out before kick-off and so on.

The Club are now getting accurate reports from each kiosk to see how they are performing and pressure is being put on the caterers to improve.

The bottle bar in the Cheadle End is doing well, although it is acknowledged that we need more products. A new fridge has been ordered to enable to provide more stock. It is difficult to find beers that are available in plastic bottles though, and they **do** have to be plastic. Bitters do not keep well in plastic bottles so this may not be an option. We are also restricted to the type of beers that can be provided due to the brewery deal with CGC.

The club in conjunction with CGC are committed to improving the fans experience in all areas of the ground across the entire catering product - the club acknowledges that it needs to improve and intends to ensure that this happens as quickly as possible.

Summer Concerts

10. It is very good news that the Club will be staging 3 concerts in the summer, that Edgeley Park is being fully utilised as a venue and a new key revenue stream has been added.

How much money would the Club expect to make across the 3 nights?

Will the money generated from the concerts go directly into the playing budget for next season?

These events will be profitable for the Club and they would love to do something like this every season. The Club will derive income from the concerts via fixed fee, rent, a % of profit on food etc., and are confident that this sort of venture offers a good realistic income stream for us. The Council are also delighted as there will be 45,000 people coming into Stockport.

Concerns were raised about the damage to the pitch.

The organisers will take eight days to set up, and the budget for the pitch next season has been increased to ensure it is in the best possible condition for the season ahead. We will have six weeks to prepare, but if the weather is really awful over the summer and the damage more serious than anticipated, it may affect how many pre-season home games we can schedule, but that is the only impact that is envisioned.

11. It is important that the impact on residents is minimised, so that the Club don't receive objections and can hold events on an annual basis.

What steps are the Club putting in place to reduce the impact on littering, parking, toilets facilities (outside Edgeley Park)?

The event is being organised by SJM and they are very experienced in running events such as this. The Club will be sitting down to meet with them nearer the time.

There have been no objections to the licence from the local residents. In fact the only enquiries we have had are people wanting tickets!

12. Do the Club require any help or assistance with the concerts from a volunteering point of view?

Yes. Specifically there will be a need for stewards (but there may be an issue with how qualified / experienced people need to be) and help clearing the site after each concert. We would be grateful to have help from Supporters and the Co-operative / Help the Hatters involved in this respect nearer the time.

Ticketing / Club Shop

13. Would it be possible to introduce a 'token' type loyalty scheme so regular attendees at matches could get priority after ST holders for possible play-off games and boost attendances at the same time?

The Club aren't sure how this could be achieved at the present time.

The Club are aiming to go cashless in the coming year and as such will be looking for volunteers in the Vernon Stand in the next couple of months to help trial turnstile scanners. Season ticket holders will also be asked if they would like to take part, swapping their book for a credit card season ticket. They would be looking for circa 50 volunteers initially.

This means there will be no cash only turnstiles open on that stand. Paper tickets will still be accepted as normal. The ultimate aim will be to have ticket scanners rolled out to the whole stadium. Eventually, using this system, fans should be able to buy their tickets online (and pick a specific seat!) and have their tickets scanned at the turnstile.

14. The club shop is asking for cash only. Why can't the club take cards? Is this likely to change in the future?

As far as the Club are aware, the shop has always been able to take cards? There may have been instances where there have been Wi-Fi problems, but nothing aside from that.

However, when selling tickets for away games, e.g. Altrincham and FCUM, the away club insist on it being cash only.

15. Would it be possible for the Club to run a promotion with a discount for a home league match this season? For example - £12 adults, but encourage supporters to bring friends and family, with the aim of achieving a high attendance figure as a target - 6,000 / 7,000?

The Club are always looking at these things. We currently have a student from UFCB working in a fan engagement role – using Twitter, Facebook etc.

His name is Jack Cairns and he is passionate about the club and always open to new ideas. Jack was behind the “bring a mate” scheme on Non-League Day and he'd love to do something like this again.

We welcome ideas from through the Co-op about how we may be able to better engage with fans and increase attendances alongside the schemes we already operate.

Future Potential Investors

16. What is the current situation?

The situation is the same.

The Chair referred back to the previous meeting with the Club where the Co-op asked if it produced an open letter to the potential investors would the Club pass it on. The Chair read out the proposed letter and agreed to send it electronically to Steve Bellis. When asked if the letter could be made public, the Club agreed that this would be ok.

(a copy of the letter is attached)

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Monday 25th February 2019



STOCKPORT COUNTY SUPPORTERS' CO-OPERATIVE

Open Letter from the board of Stockport County Supporters' Co-operative to potential investors in Stockport County FC

Dear Potential Investors,

The Directors of Stockport County have informed us that you have expressed interest in investing in our football club.

The County Supporters' Co-op warmly welcomes this initiative. We believe that the further progress of the football club will require considerable additional investment.

The Supporters' Co-op is by far the largest group representing County supporters. We are a democratic group, run entirely by our membership and answerable to them. We are also a legally constituted body and hold shares in the club.

We would be most interested in arranging a meeting between our representatives and yourselves. We believe that there are many areas where there is scope for mutually beneficial discussion. The supporters constitute one of the clubs greatest assets. County fans are fiercely loyal to our team and have shown their dedication over the recent lean years. We think it would be very useful to yourselves to get, at first hand, the views of such supporters. We would look forward to a fruitful future relationship with you.

We would be most grateful if you can meet with us at a time and place of your convenience.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Towey

Chair. Stockport County Supporters' Co-operative