

MINUTES OF THE MEETING BETWEEN LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB, SUPPORTERS' COMMITTEE AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM SPIRIT OF SHANKLY AND SPION KOP 1906 ON 11 DECEMBER 2014 AT 20 CHAPEL STREET.

Representing Liverpool Football Club: Ian Ayre (IA), Chief Executive; Susan Black (SB), Communications Director; Phil Dutton (PD), Head of Ticketing and Hospitality; Andy Hughes (ADH), Chief Financial Officer. **Representing the LFC Supporters' Committee:** Sam Armstrong (SA), Female Fans; Anna Burgess (AB), Away Fans; Bob Humphries (BH), Chair and Season Ticket Holders & Hospitality Fans. **Representing Spirit of Shankly:** Keith Culvin (KC) and Jay McKenna (JM). **Representing Spion Kop 1906:** Ian Hobin (IH) and Andy Hudson (AH). **Facilitator:** William Montgomery (WM).

1. Welcome and introductions:

- 1.1. WM opened the meeting by stating that it was not uncommon for the Supporter's Committee to meet with the Club outside the four official meetings that take place each season to discuss matters arising in more detail.
- 1.2. BH, in his capacity as Chair of the Supporters' Committee, suggested during the last meeting on 30 November that it would be opportune to open up the discussion on the emotive subject of ticket pricing to other interested groups that represent the views of fans.
- 1.3. To this end, WM welcomed all present to this ad hoc meeting, specifically Keith Culvin (KC) and Jay McKenna (JM) from Spirit of Shankly plus Ian Hobin (IH) and Andy Hudson (AH) from Spion Kop 1906 who had joined the meeting.
- 1.4. WM suggested that a good use of the allotted 90 minutes would be for the representatives of Spirit of Shankly and Spion Kop 1906 to have the opportunity, along side the committee members, to express any concerns and issues, and share ideas, on behalf of the fans they represent; for the Club to respond and, where necessary and/or appropriate, agree what action needed to be taken.
- 1.5. JM said that the four of them met with BH the previous evening and it was agreed that they were not expecting anything to be resolved today, and that they hoped this meeting would be the start of a regular dialogue that would lead to some solutions to the problem of ticket pricing.

2. Main discussion points:

- 2.1. BH opened the discussion by saying that one of the main reasons the Committee asked for a meeting to be attended by some other fans groups was throughout the four years the Committee has existed the main 'bone of contention' with fans is ticket pricing.
- 2.2. BH continued by saying that the Committee had tried to 'chip away' at the issue, working with some of the peripheral groups, and that some progress has been achieved. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of fans believe that tickets are becoming more and more unaffordable, and that it was important to listen to a wide a selection of views as possible.
- 2.3. BH suggested that it would be good if the four invited representatives had an opportunity to express their concerns and issues before the Club took the opportunity to respond.

- 2.4. JM said that, as a union, Spirit of Shankly feels that ticket pricing is a priority, and that it had held two meetings with Premier League officials on this matter. The general view of fans is that tickets need to be reduced, across the board, and not just at Anfield.
- 2.5. JM continued by saying that the three main political parties would be including significant pledges on reducing ticket prices in their party manifestos in advance of the next general election.
- 2.6. JM continued by stating that he believed that there had been a marked change in the last three to six months in fans' perception of ticket pricing and how unaffordable they are now becoming. Whereas previously fans considered attending a match a priority, it is no longer the case.
- 2.7. JM said that it was their intention to continue with the national campaigns, but that they felt it was important to try and work with the Club to effect a change at the local level, hence the recent letter that was sent to the Club for comment. If a solution is not found quickly, then we will all lose in the long-term.
- 2.8. IH said that specific examples of fans' struggles were raised at the last Committee Meeting, and whereas the Club will say it can't dictate policy to other clubs, it can lead the way in what it does at Anfield with regard to ticket prices.
- 2.9. AH said that it is getting unaffordable for him and many others. He can no longer afford the season ticket that he has held since 1995 and that this season alone, he'd already spent in excess of £1,000 on tickets, £400 of which was in the last two months.
- 2.10. AH said the purpose for Spion Kop 1906 is to design and display the flags on the Kop, but for many members it is simply getting too expensive and some have already stopped attending games on account of affordability. A recent example would be the home game against Basel, when only a few members attended and displayed their flags.
- 2.11. KC said that it would be good to know what the Club's vision is for what it expects the atmosphere at Anfield to be in, say, five years time. The atmosphere is no longer what it once was in is in real danger of 'dying on its feet'. The stadium may well be full in years to come, but the atmosphere will be like a 'morgue.'
- 2.12. IA said that he recognised the points raised, but before solutions could be found, it was important to look at ticket pricing in the wider context of the challenges facing the Club. In answer to the specific question of the vision for the Club, he said that it should be what it has always been, a great atmosphere in the stadium, supporting the traditions of the Club.
- 2.13. ADH said that he had produced a couple of slides that explain the dilemma or constraints faced by the Club. Going back to 1990, which was a point in time quoted by fan representatives, and taking information for the statutory accounts, match day revenue was £8.30 per head per game. In 2013 it was £38.40, representing an increase (above inflation) of an average of 6.9%. Wages over the same period have escalated by an average of 15.3%, whilst wages and transfer spending combined had increased by 15.7%. In summary, the Club's costs have grown significantly faster than both inflation and match day revenues. Using a five-year rolling average, match day revenue growth

was ahead of inflation in the early 90s, from the OOs the trend has been to follow inflation.

- 2.14. KC said that from 2008/2009 when the credit crunch started, LFC and other football clubs took the decision to either freeze or lower ticket prices, which was commendable, but this would have an affect on the figures shown about inflation.
- 2.15. IA, in response to some challenges from the data shown, said that one of the key issues is that the Club's costs are increasing at a faster rate than the rise in ticket prices. Whilst ticket prices are not the biggest part of the Club's revenue, they are an important part and the Club is trying to keep rises broadly in line with inflation. However, there is a wider issue involved here, and whilst we want to think of the Club as nothing more than a football club, the reality is that it's a business and the costs associated with the business are rising at a ridiculous rate.
- 2.16. JM said that fans rarely look at ticket pricing in isolation, they take a view of what they are paying in relation to how much the Club is generating from ticket sales, sponsorship, and other commercial deals. Fans recognize that players' wages are a significant cost to the Club and, as a union, SOS will have no reservations in taking the matter to the Profession Footballers' Association (PFA). Other supporters' trusts from across the UK have expressed similar concerns and intentions to do likewise.
- 2.17. PD offered a summary of junior and reduced price tickets, the highlights of which included: 2.4m general admission tickets sold over the last four years; 3.5% of general admission tickets sold to junior supporters; 555,000 adult tickets sold with a price of £30 or less (being 24% of total adult match day ticket sales); cheapest current junior season ticket is £200, down from a high of £350 in 2008/09; cheapest current junior match ticket is £5, down from a high of £12 in 2008/09; two thirds of season tickets registered to a Liverpool or other local postcode.
- 2.18. KC asked PD how many season tickets were there available to U16s. PD said he would have to check but thought it was in the lower hundreds, He then asked how many of the season ticket holders are near their 17th birthday which would make them pay full price and their season ticket would not be replaced. PD again said he would have to check.
- 2.19. IA, in response to some challenges from the figures shown, said that one of the key issues about allowing more junior fans into the ground is that it has to be at the expense of others. There is a season ticket waiting list and for the Club to allow more kids in, other groups will be affected. The Club would like to see more kids, and local supporters, in the ground but the solution to the problem is not an easy one and has to be thought through clearly before any large scale changes are implemented.
- 2.20. PD said that there is a great deal of debate around the £59 tickets, but in reality there are only 1,600 of them issued for each Premier League game. There are different price points for different people, so using the term affordable tickets means there has to be a range of ticket prices to accommodate the different needs of the wider fan base. It will be difficult to find an affordable ticket for everyone, but we can accommodate the needs of many.
- 2.21. IA said that it was vital that supporters recognised that there has to be a

range of pricing at different price points. There is no solution that simply sees the Club dropping all tickets to an affordable price that is not sustainable.

- 2.22. BH said that, as part of the wider discussion the Club needs to look at the membership scheme that evolved from the original fan card. Some people are now paying £30 for a membership and only managing to purchase one ticket a season. So, adding the annual membership fee to one or two ticket prices has a punitive affect on the fan.
- 2.23. PD said that the Club is committed to having affordable prices, and having multiple tiers is one way of doing this effectively. However, the Club is constrained by capacity, and that it is not currently easy to move season ticket holders from one part of the ground to another. The Club wants to stretch the prices so that there is an entry-level price that people do consider affordable. Unlike most clubs, Manchester United does not categorise their home games and has one price point for all games, the cheapest ticket being £31.
- 2.24. KC said that one of the issues the Club needs to address now is the price of tickets in the main stand. It will be two years before the new main stand is open and meanwhile fans are paying premium prices for sub-standard facilities. This issue needs to be looked at now as part of a wider review of ticket prices.
- 2.25. JM said it would be good to know the Club's strategy with ticket pricing and for the fans, with whom there is a large amount of distrust, to be engaged. The fans don't want an atmosphere of distrust, and a consequence of this is that fans now have a voice. One practical way of achieving a common goal is to establish a Working Group, separate to the Supporters' Committee to focus solely on ticket pricing.
- 2.26. WM asked for clarification for the need of a separate working group when there is already in place a Supporters' Committee of 12 that are elected by the fans to represent their views on all matters, including ticket pricing.
- 2.27. JM recognised the legitimacy of the Supporters' Committee for what it is in place to discuss, but there are problems with engaging with the wider fan base, which is not a fault of the individuals on the Committee. There are wider interest groups, all of whom want to get involved in the debate. It is the role of the Committee to bring matters affecting fans to the attention of the Club, but not necessarily their sole role to help solve them.
- 2.28. KC suggested that on certain issues, particularly ticket prices, the Club appears to hide behind the Committee. The establishment of a Working Group would help negate this perception. The purpose of the Working Group would be to look at the challenges faced by fans that regularly attend games.
- 2.29. IA said that the Club has no problem with establishing a Working Group to look at the issue of ticket prices; in fact the suggestion is a laudable one. The issue of ticket prices is raised often by the Supporters' Committee, so the advantage of passing this issue to the Working Group will free up the Committee to concentrate on more wider ranging issues that affect the fan base.
- 2.30. AH made an emotive plea that the making of banners and flags was helping create an atmosphere that everyone can be justly proud of. However, members of Spion Kop 1906, and other fans, are now really finding it difficult

to continue to afford to attend games, both home and away. The Club appreciated the efforts and recognised that affordability was a key issue and one that the new Working Group would seek to address.

3. Key actions from this meeting:

- 3.1. Club to clarify how many junior season tickets, at £200, are in circulation and how many of these fans are approaching 17 years of age.
- 3.2. Club to consider if entry into the knockout stages of the Europa League afforded the opportunity to reduce prices.
- 3.3. Club, Committee and Representatives to determine who should participate in the Working Group as a matter of some urgency.
- 3.4. A first meeting of the Working Group to be arranged in early January 2015, during which working practices, governance, and modus operandi will be established.