

SUPPORTERS' COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY 25TH AUGUST 2020, 6pm
KCOM STADIUM

ATTENDEES:

- Senior Tigers: Barbara Wilkinson (BW)
- Hull City Official Supporters Club: Kathryn Townsley (KT)
- Electric Eels: John Sherman (JS)

West Stand Representative:

- Lisa Champion (LC)

East Stand Representatives:

- Mike Yardley (MY)
- Ben Andrew (BA)
- Mark Tomlinson (MT)

South Stand Representatives:

- Jamie Kelwick (JK)
- Bob Carroll (BC)

APOLOGIES:

- Ash Durham

CLUB REPRESENTATIVES:

- Ehab Allam – Vice Chairman
- David Beeby – Club Secretary
- Kevin Hickson – Facilities Manager
- Joe Clutterbrook – Head of Commercial & Marketing
- Karen Clark – HR Manager
- Carol Raper – Ticket Office Manager
- Garry Neal – Safety Officer
- Steve Coultas – Operations Assistant
- Ann Holland – Fans Liaison/Disability Liaison
- Gareth Griffiths – Supporter Communications

CLUB/FOOTBALL UPDATE:

EA Fans have asked why we have kept Grant McCann as Head Coach despite the disappointing end to the season. We don't believe this was entirely down to one person. There were several mitigating factors and we have to put it behind us and start again.

MT Other teams have got the best out of their players and we didn't. It wasn't just the fact we went down it was the way it happened and how we went down.

EA We had a very young squad last season and we lost the Captain and Vice-Captain at a difficult time. Without the maturity of older and more experienced players it was difficult to manage some of the very young players. You can see how we are looking to improve that by the recruitment this summer.

MY The problem started after Bowen and Grosicki left. The Brentford game was a disgrace.

EA We had the same defeat the season before. We lost 5-1 to Brentford with both of those players.

MY The difference is we followed the loss this season with a lot more bad results.

MT We have stuck to the same formation throughout the season no matter what.

DB There have been times when Grant McCann has changed formation from the 4-3-3 and he has the freedom to do that. We had recruited for 4-3-3 and Grant was brought in because he played that formation.

EA We have to allow the Head Coach to do his best with the team he has.

BA It was the worst form record at Championship level since records began. Are you saying it's just because we had young players?

EA There are many factors and after considering them all we made the decision to stick with Grant McCann.

JK Do you regret not bringing in a Neil Warnock type of manager during lockdown?

EA Who knows if that might have made a difference. We took a decision to keep Grant and I still believe he will do a good job for us.

BW What was the plan he kept mentioning?

DB It was to review what went wrong and bring in experienced players in key positions to support the talented young players we have, which we are doing. No other club in League One is spending the money we are spending. We want to be back in the Championship and that's the aim for next season.

BA You said at the last meeting you wanted to adopt a Brentford model. What's the philosophy now?

DB We still want to do that but we have seen that with a young team when things are not going well you need to have experience around them.

MY You said in February, Ehab, that you thought we would not be relegated.

DB There are a number of factors. For example, just after we sold Bowen and Grosicki we had 12 injuries.

MY In 14 of the last 20 games we didn't take any points.

EA I still say it is not about Bowen and Grosicki. The reasons for us failing last year are not because of them. 21 other teams stayed up without those two players. You can have other

players in your team and stay up. We have gone down for other reasons not because of those two players. We have addressed issues internally and have all taken a look at ourselves over several departments and we are learning from our mistakes. We are a team and it's a group effort.

MT What makes you think Grant McCann can get the best out of the players?

EA In the first few months Grant showed us he can manage a team well. The reasons for the decline are down to other factors. If I thought it was down to him I would have made a change as I have in the past. We had a poor season and now we need to focus on a promotion push for next season.

DB We are all behind Grant. The decision has been made to keep him in place.

MY Where does the accountability lie? How far into the season will we go, if we are in the bottom half for example after the first ten games?

EA We need to be positive.

JC I think the intent has been shown by the amount of money that has been spent and in terms of recruitment there are potentially more to come. David Beeby can give you an insight into how the salary cap works.

DB We were one of seven clubs that voted against salary cap. The way it works is that every club is able to spend up to £2.5 million on player wages for players over the age of 21. This levels the playing field. A smaller club who could only afford a £1m player wage bill can have it topped up to £2.5 million by their owner whereas a bigger club who could afford £4 million can only spend £2.5 million. It doesn't stop all clubs losing money but it limits what the bigger clubs can spend. All of the bigger clubs in the division voted against it. 16 votes were needed for it to be passed and exactly 16 clubs voted for it so we have to work to a cap of £2.5 million. This includes anything paid in relation to player salary, agents fees, bonuses etc.

EA It also includes what we pay on behalf of the player to agents but not our contribution. As part of the transition if we sign players before a certain date that amount can be included at the average salary, and we have signed some players before that date.

DB Any player we had under contract are put in at cap level. There is a financial penalty if you overspend up to a certain level then further action which could be a points deduction if you go over that.

EA Because of the averaging we will be paying out around £4.5 million this year in player wages due to the excess being averaged out in existing contracts.

DB Most League One and League Two clubs have lost a large proportion of their income. Our payment from the League has gone from circa £7m down to circa £2m. The Club spent £2m on the Academy alone last year.

DB Most football clubs are struggling at the moment because they haven't had any gate income since March. In the lower leagues teams need gate income to survive. It forms a bigger

proportion of a clubs income compared to the Premier League teams. We are fortunate that we are currently in a good position. The Jarrod Bowen sale has helped.

EA A football club is expensive to run. The family have put £3m in this month but are in a reasonable financial position due to previous player sales.

MY Will we see more players leaving?

EA We intend to retain the squad we have. We may lose a couple but have a couple more to bring in potentially.

BA How does the optional year work with the salary cap?

DB It's classed as an extension to the contract and will go in at the actual level not the capped level.

JC Can we move on to the question of potential sale of the Club?

EA No update on the sale. There are a couple of interested parties, as there have been in the past. The price will be determined by the league we are in and it will be market price.

DB Buying a football club isn't a particularly attractive proposition at the moment especially with all the restrictions being imposed and no certainty when we will be back to normal in terms of playing matches. Stadiums are only going to be able to operate with a lot smaller percentage of fans than they are used to.

MY I presume there are less people looking to buy football clubs at the moment.

EA Surprisingly we do still have interest. We are in a different league, and the price is lower, and we still have lots of money to come from the sale of JB. Compared to some other clubs we are in good shape.

MY If the price is coming down does that mean there will be some sort of debt write-off?

EA Yes. There would be a write-off if we sold in League One.

KT Can I go back to the conversations we had about ticketing last year. When we were discussing the numbers you said they had been shared with a prospective buyer. Are they still one of the interested parties?

EA There have been more prospective buyers. One, in particular, has been an interested party for three years.

MY What would be your priorities this year? Would it be promotion or selling the Club? What would be highest on your list?

EA The priority has to be promotion.

DB As EA has already said they have invested £3m in the last three weeks, that's an indication of where we want to be.

EA We need to focus on promotion and if a sale comes it comes, if it doesn't it doesn't. We are investing from the sale of players. We like to pay up front for our players as I have told you before.

EA and DB left the meeting.

COVID-19 / STADIUM PREPARATIONS / MEMBERSHIPS

JC introduced the SMC team to give an overview of plans to get spectators back into the stadium once Government guidance allows.

SC We plan to share with you all the information we've been given from the Sports Grounds Safety Authority and the EFL in relation to the safe return to the stadium of spectators. I have a short video for you to watch on how the safe return of spectators will work. AH will send the link out to you.

The video was shown of plans for the safe return of spectators to the KCOM stadium.

SC Our plans will be sent to the EFL and Hull City Council for approval.

GN This is just the start of the process and we will be engaging with supporters and also the rugby club so everyone is aware of the conditions that will be in place if they want to come to the stadium to watch football or rugby. We have a draft version of the spectator code of conduct we are working on which we will share with you, the website will have information and there will be a walk-through video for you to watch so you know what to expect. We are looking to external areas to alleviate congestion at half time.

MY Are there any plans to relax the rules of drinking in seats?

GN It could be looked at but it's not high on the agenda with the Government.

BA Will concourses be open?

GN They will be open for entry and exit but it's still under discussion whether they are open for food and beverages.

GN explained the complexities of social distancing on the concourses and allowing queues for food and beverage.

MT How many fans will be allowed back in?

GN That number still needs to be approved following discussions with the local authority and the SGSA etc. The national guidance shows a variation of between 17% and 33% of the stadium capacity would be allowed to attend.

MT How could you choose who can come and who can't come?

CR Members need to come back to us with information on their social bubbles. We need that information to be able to configure the seating plan and that will determine how many we can get into the stadium. We won't know how many we can get in until Members have returned their forms. If we can get every Member in they will all be given a new access card just to use for the games affected by Covid. This will mean you won't need to apply for every game as that card will stand for the remainder of the Covid games.

KT Will there be away fans?

GN No. Our capacity may be a similar number to the number of Members we have. We need to look after our Members first. It may be that when you are moving around you will need a face covering but when seated you won't. There will also be a one-way system when entering and leaving seats.

KT Will that impact on the number of stewards?

GN Yes. We may need more stewards especially if we are using the outside areas for the sale of food and drink.

JK Will you be looking at using apps for ordering concessions?

SC Yes, we are looking at all options.

MY There has been previous concern about the cleanliness of seats. What will be done to make sure the seats are clean and will they be sanitised?

KH There has been a deep clean of the concourses this week. The next stage is the toilet area and then we will be moving onto the seating area. The seats will be cleaned after each game and you will sit in the same seat each time you come to the ground.

LC Will disabled fans be in the same seats?

GN That will depend on numbers and social distancing.

JC All information will be communicated to fans and that is why GG has been brought in to help AH.

MT Have we had any new Memberships. And how are we going to attract new Members?

CR We are prioritising getting our current Membership into the stadium at the moment so anyone contacting us about new Memberships will go on a waiting list.

JC Our main focus at the moment is to look after the Members we have. Attracting new Members going forward will be a combination of things, on field performance, matchdays, supporter communication, marketing, utilising the Tigers Trust etc.

BC How many members do we have currently?

CR 7,400 but we still have this month's cancellations to take off so the figure should be around 6,500 at the start of the season.

MY asked for clarity on social bubbles.

CR explained how Friends and Family social bubbles would work and explained they could be groups of up to six people so long as they were happy to be sat together.

GN That comes down to your own self risk assessment and the fans code of conduct.

MY Would you be able to guarantee friends could sit together even if they were not in a social bubble?

CR There are no guarantees on which seats or stands you will be allocated. Copies of the code of conduct will be sent out with your new Membership cards.

JC We have to be honest that we can't guarantee everyone can sit where they want because there are so many restrictions on us.

SC There are trillions of possible seating combinations.

GN The onus will not be on SMC to check people who have agreed to be in a bubble but we will be inspected for our first few games for compliance. Fans won't be allowed to move around and change seats on the day.

KT Do you have any indication on numbers for bubbles with the Friends and Family groups you already have?

CR We have tried to look at that but not all Friends and Family are Members.

MY Are you able to use the ticketing software for fans to log-on and book their seats?

CR No. If we do that on a match by match basis it will mean everyone has to log on and book every game. It will be easier for everyone to keep the same seat while these restrictions are in place.

BC What about Members who are not confident about coming back? Could the Membership be suspended?

GN They need to do a self-assessment and individuals may need to speak to AH or ourselves for reassurance so they can feel safe coming to the matches.

BW Will we be able to have our own seats back when the Covid restrictions end?

CR Yes.

MY The short notice on the August direct debit payments wasn't good PR.

JC We apologised for the short notice on the Direct Debit payments in a recent Memberships update and accept that could have been communicated better. We did communicate Membership payment holidays on a monthly basis but we didn't say that we would pause payments until further notice. Financially the club has had a lot of expense. We have spent £150k so far on testing, £25k on PPE and signage for example.

KT Another payment is due on 1st September so what will Members get instead of a seat at the games?

JC We may have more information on streaming tomorrow. Things are ever changing at the moment but we are making all decisions with the best intentions. We don't know if fans will be allowed in at the beginning or end of October yet so we are not sure what fans will be owed. Hopefully Members will only miss one home game. We will work out how much we owe Members so they don't lose out, for example we may offer streaming, retail credit or cup tickets.

MY Will prices change to reflect being in League One?

JC No. We are not the cheapest in the league but are certainly not the most expensive.

MY Will there be an increase in prices if we are promoted?

JC I don't think so. The Club's view has been that pricing is not determined by the division we are in.

MY In relation to finances and the owner-fan relationship, do you think fans would be more understanding of the finances if the relationship with the owners was better? You might need a better understanding especially if we see a second wave of the virus and what are you going to do in the community to engage youngsters?

JC If you look prior to the Chelsea game in January and the work we did together - pricing, engagement, Grant McCann being proactive, kids playing football on the pitch etc. Since then it's been a case of what can go wrong will go wrong, on the pitch, Covid etc. We are not able to have more kids in on a matchday or do ticket offers at the minute. For obvious reasons we are limited in what we can do.

KT Is there a reward for loyalty?

JC We need to improve communications and make fans feel part of the Club so more access to players and the manager, for example maybe a weekly press conference where fans can ask questions. We did something similar where fans could ask EA questions. GG will make our output more relatable to individual groups rather than us sending blanket emails. We are opting in to the EFL Digital Collective and will have a new video site and new main website. A new app is also being developed.

BC That is what fans want to hear, you need to communicate that to them.

BW The lack of communication coming from the Club has at times annoyed fans causing some of our members to say they were not going to continue their membership.

MT I don't understand why the Club has banned the Hull Daily Mail.

BC You should tell us why so we can understand what is going on.

JC explained that the relationship between the Club and the HDM has been an uneasy one for some time and that, with the way in which people consume content changing, the level of access the HDM has previously had was due to be reviewed. There was an acceptance, however, that the timing of the ban wasn't ideal.

MT It seemed Phil Buckingham for years has been supportive of the Club and owners, yet when he disagrees with the Club they ban him. That's how it is perceived.

JC I still speak to Phil regularly. The HDM had a meeting recently with EA. Dialogue is still open between both parties.

BW Can we go back to stadium safety? We have a Senior Tigers member who has been ill who wants to represent our members with disabilities. There is a problem with going up and down the stairs from some of the seats. Is there any way we can have rails on the stairs?

GN There are restrictions because of the width of the stairwells. Rather than go to the expense of putting in handrails on all stairwells we would look at offering alternative seats that are more accessible.

JC Some seats are more accessible than others. AH is here to offer help with this sort of thing.

BA Are we going to be able to sing and chant at matches?

GN The studies are saying there is no more risk from singing to talking but singing is being discouraged.

MY Will you be getting a PRS licence?

GN The guidance is that we don't play music at the moment or have TVs on the concourses to stop gathering. We are also looking at staggered entry times and opening the stadium

earlier. We will have a cleaning company to clean the turnstiles and a one way system on the perimeter bowl. There will be no parking on the bowl.

SC Not all turnstiles will be open at the same time to allow for cleaning.

JK Could you suspend Memberships if there are people who don't want to come?

JC We need to be fair to those still attending and paying and we need to be understanding of those not wanting to come. Hopefully we can keep everyone happy.

JC The plan is to get as many fans as we can in the stadium and keep the experience as near to normal as we can whilst keeping everyone safe.

GN There could be a situation where someone tests positive for Covid who have been to a match and the authority could cut the capacity. It will be a different experience from what you have been used to over the years.

KT Could I ask if the Official Supporters Club, who usually have their pre-match meeting in the Arena, are still allowed to use it?

SC Yes.

JC We have announced our new shirt sponsor for this season. The home kit will be coming later this week.

A.O.B.

JC Looking at the future of the Supporters' Committee the plan was always to give other people a chance and not to carry on with the same people. We will communicate the next steps to you on any plans for the Committee. In terms of the Supporters Trust, there have been some changes to their Board and we have a date in the diary for EA to meet with them in the next few weeks.

MY Asked for full minutes to be produced as some items were missing from the last ones.

JC We had to miss some of the contract discussions out of the minutes last time.

BW We have a Premier Club member paying £120 a month over eight months who doesn't have access to a computer. What can you do for him?

JC He just needs to contact us and we will always try to find a solution.

BW Some people have been very critical of the £25 fee for re-joining the Membership scheme.

JC There are terms and conditions in place and we have to be fair to everyone.

KT Will streaming of the away games be available?

JC There will be availability but you will have to pay for it.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.