

# **Last night the Club's Chairman and Vice-Chairman held a meaningful and productive meeting with the Supporters Committee at the KCOM Stadium.**

This extra meeting was announced by Vice-Chairman Ehab Allam in an open letter to supporters two weeks ago, in an attempt to reconcile differences which led to protests at the match against Nottingham Forest.

The meeting, which lasted three-and-a-half hours, covered an agenda which was raised by the Supporters Committee members. No topics were excluded.

## Attendees

### Club

Assem Allam: Chairman

Ehab Allam: Vice-Chairman

Tom Rowell: Marketing, Communications and Ticketing Manager

### Supporters

Barbara Wilkinson: Senior Tigers

Geoff Bielby: Hull City Supporters Trust

John Williams: Hull City Official Supporters Club

John Sherman: Electric Eels (Disabled Representative)

Chris Wilde: South Stand

Kate Leeming: West Stand

Joanne Warrington: East Stand

Julie Alderman: West Stand

### Apologies

Richard Campion (South Stand), Tony Munzer (North Stand), North Stand Member

### Agenda

1. Concessionary pricing
2. Supporter engagement
3. Branding

4. Supporting the players – on and off the field
5. Keeping a civil and open dialogue between supporters and owners

#### 1. Concessionary pricing

Alongside the open letter two weeks ago was a proposed revision to the match ticket pricing which would see the return of a traditional concession pricing model. Ehab Allam had asked the Committee to review this prior to the meeting in order to provide feedback for discussion.

The Vice-Chairman reminded the committee of the initial reasoning for the change to zonal pricing, the abuse of concession tickets by adults. There was a suggestion by one Committee Member that stewarding the turnstiles could eliminate this issue. EA responded that the safety certificate dictates a minimum flow rate through the turnstiles. If there were more thorough stewarding, we would fall below this minimum rate and risk failing the safety certificate.

He then asked the group if the issue was one of affordability or the principle of a concession. As an example, in 2010/11 (the first season of current ownership) for the lowest category game, an adult and two under 10s tickets cost a total of £27 (£21+£3+£3). Last season in the Premier League the same combination of fans could have attended for £27 (£9×3). So, despite seven years of inflation and a VAT increase the price in the Premier League was the same as in the Championship.

The Vice-Chairman accepted that some fans would have to move to access these prices but stood by the principle that the offer of affordability exists with Zone 1 (now covering two whole stands).

The Committee felt that the priority was more the principal of concession and having a clear differentiation between an adult and a concession/junior price.

#### *Actions*

- The Vice-Chairman asked the Committee to go away and consider a pricing model that they feel would appease their concerns. There must be an acknowledgment that a return to pre-Membership pricing would have to include an increase in adult prices. These have been halved in some cases so it is impossible to maintain at these levels and then drop significantly again to include a concession.
- The Club will review the possibility of adding students to the concession bracket and also the possibility that a Member could buy a concession/junior match ticket without an adult match ticket.

#### 2. Supporter engagement

The Committee welcomed this meeting as a sign of increased and improved engagement and accepted that the current four meetings a season exceeds the FSF recommended two. They raised that the meetings needed the Vice-Chairman to attend in order to be credible. EA challenged this stating that the Senior Management team was able to represent the Club and feed back to him as it isn't possible for him to attend all meetings. It was also highlighted that it is extremely rare for a Club owner to meet directly with fans and that they rely on their senior staff to liaise. Ehab was conscious that whatever the Club decided there was likely to be criticism from some quarters.

The constitution of the Supporters Committee was questioned on the basis that some of the previous groups are no longer represented. EA responded that the current setup of the Committee

is consciously designed to represent the established supporter groups (Hull City Supporters Trust, Hull City Official Supporters Club and Senior Tigers) who between them have a declared combined membership of 2,200. The rest of the Committee is made up of supporters who have applied and been chosen at random from a pool of 167 applications. These supporters are equally distributed across all four stands, male/female and various ages represented. It is felt that this is the optimum way to represent the true mix of supporters and that to change the existing group at this stage would be unfair and open to criticism.

The Vice-Chairman feels that the Club is able to communicate with the entire supporter base through the publishing of minutes and actions to be published after the meeting, supporters' groups are also welcome to publicise their perspective from the meetings also.

It was agreed by all that the continuation of constructive ongoing dialogue is the key to bringing those disenfranchised supporters closer to the Club.

#### *Actions*

- The Vice-Chairman committed to maintaining the Committee's frequency and even suggested increasing the meetings to bi-monthly if required. It will not always be possible for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to attend every meeting but there will be an increased effort to attend. This was welcomed and seen as a positive step by the Committee.
- The current Committee is due to expire at their final scheduled meeting in February at which point there would be a refresh with the opportunity for new Members to apply.

### 3. Branding

The Supporters Trust suggested that the strength of the nickname is in the use of 'the' in the nickname – 'The Tigers' rather than just 'Tigers'. This, it was suggested, differentiated us from other clubs who have tigers as their nickname. EA responded that there have been large periods of time when the Club has had a crest with just a tiger's head, which is similar to the current concern. A Committee Member (Chris Wilde) suggested that the name change process has made the use of an unnamed tigers head unpopular with some fans. If the process hadn't been undertaken, then the current crest wouldn't have been an issue.

The upcoming Hall of Fame event was used as an example of the use of Tigers rather than 'The Tigers' which may have upset a section of supporters. EA stated that it is unworkable for the name of each and every event or promotion to be discussed with supporters and clearer guidelines need to be established to remove the negativity around the use of the Club name.

#### *Actions*

- EA offered the Committee the opportunity to come up with amends to the brand guidelines which are easy to follow, consistent, and would create a clear set of guidelines for the Club to follow.
- There was an offer to consider a change of the crest after supporter consultation. EA asked for a proper process and sufficient time allowed for groups to consult their members, it deserves time and effort not a quick fix.

### 4. Supporting the players – on and off the field

EA repeated previous statements that the players and Head Coach need and deserve to be supported. The purpose of the meeting is to remove these issues in order for supporters to feel able to fully back the team. Committee Members agreed that all supporters should be supportive of the players and recent examples of individual players being booed and criticised on social media was counterproductive to performances and atmosphere.

The Chairman stressed that protests outside of the stadium are not a problem as they are away from the pitch and players. Anything which affects the match is destructive and serves no purpose. A Committee Member stated their anger at the protests and how much they and supporters around them were opposed to protests on the pitch.

#### *Actions*

- EA hoped that this meeting would encourage the supporter base to continue supporting the players through a positive atmosphere. The offer of meaningful constructive dialogue is designed to separate the off-pitch issues from a matchday. Backing the team is crucial to improving performances.

#### 5.Keeping a civil and open dialogue between supporters and owners

All sides agreed that the most important action from the meeting was to continue the momentum created by this dialogue.

EA was keen to meet the Committee again at the earliest opportunity in order to make tangible progress on the areas discussed. An offer to meet again in 2/3 weeks was made and accepted by the Committee Members to return to the table with the feedback of their members.

The meeting was brought to a close at 10pm, with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman encouraged by the discussions and committed to continuing the dialogue at the next meeting.