

Walsall Football Club Supporters Working Party Meeting - 3rd December 2018

Meeting held in Executive Box 5 at the Banks's Stadium on Monday

3rd December 2018, 09:30

Present:

Stefan Gamble (SG) – Walsall Football Club

Steve Davies (SD) and Bob Thomas (BT) – Walsall Football Supporters Trust

Ian Buckingham (IB) and Stefanie Tomes (ST) – Walsall FC Disabled Supporters Association

Apologies:

Daniel Mole (DM) – Walsall Football Club

Walsall Football Supporters Club (The Saddlers Club)

Minutes: Stefan Gamble (SG)

1. Points still to action from last meeting

SG confirmed that the work to improve the Legends Bar is ongoing and hopefully this will be completed in time for the visit of Bristol Rovers on Boxing Day.

SG advised work is still ongoing regarding the increase in disabled car parking provision.

SD is still waiting on further information from Greg Oxley regarding his query around ticket prices and ticketing structure.

SG corrected last month's minutes to state that two thirds of the Amadou Bakayoko transfer money has gone to the playing budget instead of the standard 50%. The club would continue to treat each transfer fee on a case-by-case basis depending on the needs of the club at any one given time but SG clarified that the minimum given to the team manager will always be 50%.

SG stated that the plan to bring a card reader in the Bescot Bar is still in progress and this will be installed as soon as possible.

2. Update from Walsall Football Supporters Club (The Saddlers Club)

In the absence of any representative of the Saddlers Club, SG provided an update on the current status of the club.

SG advised the building has now been vacated by the steward and the Walsall Football Supporters Club Travel Section. The latter has been relocated at no cost to them by the Football Club to the old Programme Shop, situated in the University of Wolverhampton Stand.

SG noted that the Brewery, Coors, still have a charge on the lease and this matter needs to be resolved before the lease can be formally cancelled at the Land Registry and control of the building handed back to the Football Club. Once this has happened, the Football Club can consider all of the options available to move forward.

3. Update from Walsall Supporters Trust

SD reiterated that the Toy/Food Bank collection will take place at the Coventry City game on 8th December. SD to liaise with DM to confirm date of the Hospital Visit and also to liaise with Scott Brotherton of the Walsall FC Community Programme to arrange a player(s) to accompany the delivery to the Food Bank. SG advised the club will do all it can to promote the collection via its official website and social media.

SD raised the issue of queues at the Kiosks in the HomeServe Lower Stand. It was taking 25 minutes to cook the burgers. He also commented the quality of chips in the Middle and Upper Tier kiosks was not good. SG stated he would take the matter up with the catering team.

SD stated that the PA System in the HomeServe Stand and the Microphone in the Stadium Suite were not of good quality. SG stated that he would arrange for the club's Marketing Manager Dan Clarke to investigate.

SD asked about provision on matchday for smokers who sit in the Middle and Upper Tiers. SG advised a fenced off area is provided to supporters to allow them to have a cigarette outside after entry to the ground.

SD made a comment that home fans had been disappointed with the perceived lack of action of stewards in recent games following pitch encroachment by away supporters. SG noted that pitch encroachment was a criminal offence and not something the club takes lightly. SG advised that in all games the club employs the requisite number of stewards laid down in the Green Guide as well as paying for police provision. The club has also employed external stewards in recent weeks to cope with large away support. SG stated that while all of these measures are put in place, unfortunately if one (or more) people attempt to get onto the pitch it is almost impossible to stop it.

SD noted that people who sit in the Lower Tier occasionally get wet during inclement weather conditions – was there anything the Club could do to prevent this? Perhaps filling in the side of the Stands? SG stated that the Club had no control over the forces of nature and unfortunately sometimes there is simply nothing that can be done to affect this. SG further advised given the amount of times a season this is an issue, filling in the side of stands would not be financially or commercially viable.

SD noted that supporters had complained how steep the steps on the Middle and Upper stand – could rails be installed? SG stated he would look into this. IB stated that none of his members had raised this as an issue.

SD noted the Walsall Supporters Trust would like to make a donation of £100 to the Club's Academy and provided a cheque accordingly. SG thanked SD for this donation and stated that the Club would like to put this towards something specific. *[After the meeting SG discussed this with the Academy and the donation was put towards the cost of 'Resistance Bands'.]*

SD noted that Supporters Direct and the Football Supporters Federation had officially merged.

SD noted that Bradford City were putting a £5 levy on Walsall Supporters compared to Home Supporters in respect of the game due to be held on 15 December. SG stated that if this was correct it was against EFL Regulations and the Club would therefore investigate.

SD also asked if the selling of extra tickets to Sunderland fans was financially profitable over the increased policing costs. SG confirmed that it was.

SD asked if more could more have been done to help fans with pricing through this unprecedented run of home games. SG stated the Club appreciated that this was a big financial burden on Supporters and had attempted to mitigate this by significantly reducing the prices for the two FA Cup fixtures. In previous years the Club had always kept the FA Cup pricing in line with league prices (especially for high-profile fixtures).

SD asked if the Club would be holding a Fans Focus Meeting in January as per usual. SG confirmed this would be taking place and supporters would be advised of a date in due course.

4. Disabled Supporters Association

IB gave an update on the DSA membership - 57 registered members and 52 members on the Facebook page.

IB advised he made no further progress on the Audio Commentary since the last meeting and will advise when progress is made at future meetings.

IB gave an update on the questionnaire and advised this will be finalised and sent out in the new year. SG offered assist with the distribution of the questionnaire through the Club's media channels.

IB noted that at recent games some supporters had been warned that their cars would be clamped if they did not pay for parking... SG said he would investigate this matter with the Stadium Safety Officer Jim O'Grady.

IB stated that funds had been raised to provide a new wheelchair and asked if this could be stored at the stadium. SG advised that the club would be happy to store the wheelchair along with the ponchos and thanked the DSA for this initiative.

IB advised the DSA were looking to organise a trip to an away game specifically Disabled Supporters. More details would follow at a later meeting.

IB advised that the plans for the 'Legends Night' were going well and over 100 tickets had already been sold. IB passed on thanks from Dave Beckett to the Club for providing a 1998/1999 Signed shirt to be auctioned off.

IB noted that Mike Preston's books were donated to the DSA and any proceeds from sales would be retained by the DSA.

IB raised the issue of moving Home Supporters out of the St Francis Group Stand when away teams bring large followings. This has upset some home supporters. SG acknowledged the upset caused and has sympathy for those who have to move but this is done for two reasons – 1) on Safety Grounds (on the advice of WM Police) but also 2) on commercial grounds as this brings in significant revenue for the club that will be introduced to the team manager's player budget. SG hoped that fans understood the reasons and would support the club's approach.

IB raised the issue of smooth surfaces in the Disabled Toilets and that one supporter had slipped and fell. IB asked if the club could look at an alternative to a smooth surface. SG stated he would investigate.

SG noted that the wheelchair supporter's accident after the FA Cup game versus Coventry City was still being investigated and the Club will respond to the injured party and the DSA in due course.

IB stated that he would liaise with the Club's DLO Laura Greenhouse regarding the setting of a date for the next Open Meeting.

5. Club Update

SG noted that it had been a very busy few weeks with a number of high-profile League and Cup games.

Other than a number of the young professionals going out on loan there had been no movement in the Playing Squad since the last meeting.

SG noted that Joe Edwards and Adam Chambers were both close to a return to First Team action.

SG also noted that there were funds available for the Team Manager to strengthen in the January Transfer Window.

6. Trust and Club Joint Activities

There were none.

7. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

DATE FOR NEXT MEETING MONDAY 7th JANUARY 2019 AT 15:00.