

Minutes of Sunderland Liaison Group Meeting

Held at Meeting Room 2, Black Cats House on Thursday 27th October, 2016 – 5.30pm

Attendees on behalf of Sunderland AFC:

David Moyes, Martin Bain, Gary Hutchinson, Louise Wanless, Chris Waters

Attendees on behalf of Sunderland Liaison Group:

Steve Dean, Ian Dawson, Michael Ganley, Jeff Smith, Laura Johnstone, Peter Shippey

1. INTRODUCTION

Steve Dean provided both David Moyes and Martin Bain with a document highlighting the history of the Liaison Group which has been in existence for over 20 years and roles and achievements during this time.

2. APPOINTMENT OF NEW CEO AND MANAGER

Martin Bain thanked everyone present for attending the meeting and said he had been warmly welcomed by the people of Sunderland. In his three months in the role he had identified a number of areas across the club that could be improved and has started putting things in place to address these.

David Moyes highlighted that he had previously been contacted about the position of SAFC manager. He now saw an opportunity to lift the club and improve on the last few seasons.

He immediately highlighted that he would be judged on what happened on the pitch and that the changes needed could not be addressed in just one transfer window. He felt that it was not the geographical area that restricted possible signings but the clubs league position.

The challenge is proving harder than he initially thought, but by staying in the league we would be able to build year on year and window by window. The succession of managers needs to end and the club needs a period of stability.

3. STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE OF THE CLUB

Martin Bain stressed the need for the finances of the club to be self sufficient and reduce the need to rely on the owner.

He also stressed that figures quoted in the press for summer signings are not always as they seem with a number of clauses and payment terms making up the final total.

4. CONNECTING WITH THE FANS

This is currently an important focus of Martin Bain's and David Moyes as well as a focus of other staff members.

Martin Bain stressed improving this will make a huge difference to the club and David Moyes stressed the need for a greater connection between manager, players and supporters.

Open training at both the Stadium of Light and local non-league grounds (provided they were up to standard) was discussed in detail and favoured by David Moyes. The current U23 ground at Eppleton was mentioned, along with Chester-Le-Street, South Tyneside and Durham Coalfield areas – where suitable facilities can be found. The security and logistics of opening training back up at the academy on occasions will also be investigated. These sessions would also look to increase links with local primary schools in the areas where the training takes place.

The media recently attended training at the Academy in the hope of generating goodwill and positive engagement with local and national press.

Greater engagement with fans is seen as one way of generating a positive matchday atmosphere; another option discussed was asking fans to create a match day playlist of songs to get the crowd involved.

A drumming section or the use of a Colliery Band was also mooted as other potential ideas to enhance the matchday atmosphere.

The idea of introducing a Sunderland museum was discussed. Sunderland AFC have been liaising with SAFC Fans Museum owner Michael Ganley regarding this. At this time it is seen as a project to introduce in the future. Discussions with Michael and the club are ongoing.

5. PRICING AND MERCHANDISING

The prices of tickets was praised by the Liaison group with the club saying they are well aware of the need to keep pricing as low as possible to make it affordable for fans and families.

Concerns over the pricing of children's kits and the lack of availability of a women's kit were discussed – Martin Bain took these away to look into.

6. INTERNATIONAL – REVIEW AND LOOK AHEAD

Martin Bain indicated that the clubs main focus is reconnecting with the local fan base.

Gary Hutchinson added that as a result of this no further work in USA or Africa was planned but existing partnerships would be continued.

The DC United link up was originally put in place due to Washington DC's connection with the local area but as their owner also has a stake in Swansea City, they moved the relationship to Swansea City.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The club were happy with how the replacement seat process was going however stressed it would be a gradual process when time and finances allowed but all agreed it already showed a marked improvement.

The Charlie Hurley Centre was discussed with the club currently looking at options. There had been had no contact with the person in the local press looking to use the fields for junior football. Gary Hutchinson talked about a special Charlie Hurley event being planned.