



THE STOCKPORT COUNTY SUPPORTERS' TRUST



Stockport County Supporters Society Limited. Register No. 29273R
Registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965-1978

Trust Meeting 7th July

DH: Welcome and Introductions NB / MM / Anthony Elding / DH / SB / RD / GH / ME / GK / PK / AW

DH: Update on where we are with the Trust:

One of the reasons is to celebrate the 2 years since acquiring the football club – two quite successful. The trust and the club are keen to be open to the members and have created a team that can answer questions for you.

The progress with the trust – highest membership since the day we took over the club, approximately 700 members. Finances are the strongest they have ever been, we are in good order on the financial side. We are looking to raise more money to support the football club, and have a number of plans in place. We have produced a calendar of events, we know what we're going to do and when we are going to do it. Communication – one of the problems has always been communications and getting the message out about, we are constantly looking at ways to improve it. We are continuing with Trust Talk, the website is being developed continually, and we have negotiated with the Club that we will have a page in every matchday programme to put out the message to fans. We are also having meetings like this and are dedicated to being open – we want to say what's going on as far as possible and so do the club.

Probably the most important role the Trust Board have is to hold the Stockport County Board to account in their running of the club. None of the County Board directors are in key positions on the Trust Board – that allows us to robustly challenge them on any information or any aspect of running the club. We are getting monthly reports directly from the MD on the finances and strategies and how they are running the business – on your behalf we will challenge anything we feel we need to and be as open as possible on this.

The final point is – it's your Trust. The AGM is coming up in October – please get involved – it's not troublesome, or difficult, or big business types only – if you've got time and enthusiasm we need your help! Keep volunteering, if anyone fancies being on the Trust Board put your name forward for election.

Now we move onto Steve Bedder:

SB: Been with the Trust Board for 6 months, primarily on the Communication side, especially the website. This is what we're planning for the 2007/08 season. We've put together a calendar of events to run through the season, working with the football club, raffles, membership drives – we are planning everything for the season so we know and you know what we're doing. This will be made available to everyone.



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Initiatives: Trust Base: We are looking to create a place at EP during matchdays for fans to come and chat with TB members, ask questions and learn more about why you should be a member of the trust.

Grand Raffle: Drawn on 3rd November, we are looking to sell 3000 tickets at £1 each – prizes on offer IPODs, Xbox 360 and 2 weeks in Cyprus for you and your family.

Local Business Affiliate Scheme – partnering with shops and businesses. We did some market research via the website, to find out shopping habits and we are looking to help local businesses to help us – over the coming weeks more information will be coming.

DH: Now let's get to the bit you are interested in: Pre-submitted Questions:

Q1: One of the issues/criticisms that is often raised is in relation to the openness with regard to the club's finances. Will the Trust/club consider producing a summary of the club's financial position for fans to see? I'm aware that things require auditing and that there will be matters of confidentiality, however a summary showing income, expenditure and the 'end of year bottom line' in a format that is comprehensible to the non-accountant would not only negate some of that criticism, but would also aid fans' understanding of what is involved in trying to ensure the club breaks even. Publishing the information on the website, in the programme, the local press and/or as a hand-out at the appropriate point next season are options that could be considered. No doubt there are more!

So, in essence: Will the club produce an easy-to-understand financial summary when the final figures are available and will this be made as available as possible to all fans?

Thanks in advance.
Regards

Steve Johnson

MM answers: The answer is "yes" – one of the things that I'm working on, talking from a Club Perspective, is that I'm rewriting the way we publish our financial information. This means we will be able to sit down and review each month, and create a proper Profit and Loss account. I'm working with Sedulo at the moment and we'll publish the accounts in a brochure, the same as you'd expect from a PLC company. By the nature of it, I've inherited a set of accounts that run from July – June so it won't happen until next summer.



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I'd anticipate in the meantime that the summary management form will be published in a simplified format to everyone so that we have nothing to hide, and can be as transparent as much as possible. One of the dangers of just diving into it is getting an accurate picture, so we will get an accurate version first and within a month or two we'll get detailed information out.

Q2: Shooting ourselves in the foot regarding job's for the boys

This as a hard one to put down on paper and I have in the past spoken to Norman, Magua, Bermuda, Martin White, Sunny, Stuart Cree amongst others. I believe It's a lack of communication again.

There is a perception among non trust members that due to the amount of ex-trust committee members now sitting on the board of SCFC that a culture of "jobs for the boys" is prevalent. I do think Mark McGuire will make a great MD (I've spoken to him several times and I like his approach to the job at hand and so think he is the right man for the job, only time will tell) but the argument in the pubs is that "how can you sit on the interview panel and then give yourself the job?"

I'm a committed trust member but I pride myself in being able to listen to the other side of any argument and as such I can understand how people feel and the general feeling is that, these doubter's will never join us while they perceive a "job's for the boys" culture.

Ian Dooley

ID stands to also add: I've spoken to a lot of people and their perception is that they're not getting enough information, I believe the Trust is losing members because of the feeling of job's for the boys. E.g. how long will it be before a Trust Board member's wife/family etc get a job at County? That's the perception.

NB: When the trust took over the club we inherited an MD Kevan Taylor and a Manager Chris Turner, but for different reason they moved on. We appointed a new manager and a new MD. Subsequently the newly appointed MD moved on and we went through the interview process;

Sometimes you have to change things around, that is not a criticism of Kevan, Chris or Keith, nor is it a reflection of their ability, they all did their best whilst at E-P, but if things are not working out the way you all want, it's probably best to make changes

Regarding Jim Gannon, we appointed him because we had belief that his approach was the best and he worked hardest to impress. For the MD, we went through an approach with an Interview Panel.



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Part way through, MM came to NB and said that while the candidates were good, he didn't feel that they were right and that he was considering putting his name forward himself. After long discussions, including warning MM of the implication and the "Jobs for the boys" aspect, MM went through the interview process and got the job on merit. I would rather appoint the best candidate to the job and face accusations of jobs for the boys than appoint the wrong person. MM shares the same philosophy, integrity as part of the trust – now we look back on it we maybe should have done it earlier, but I believe we already had the person who could do the job. Those that don't know him, speak to him and you'll see how good he is.

ID: That's fine, but we're not getting that across to the fans in general?

NB: Agreed – we're trying to improve on Communications – we appointed Steve for example as he works in the Communications industry and we need to go forward and develop.

Neil Chapman: Doesn't the fact that the membership is growing indicate that things are growing?

DH: Absolutely

Floor Question: If you make it clear that there are targets, and communicate it to all fans, then surely that would avoid any issues, eg a list of anyone that works at the club that is related to the Trust Board would show it.

MM: You're right – I gave the Board a difficult decision when I applied but I make no apology for deciding to put my name forward. During the interviews I realised while questioning that the candidates weren't showing the passion that I felt and after long agonising, I decided I wanted to apply, and I couldn't not say anything. I stepped out of the interview process and then had to do an interview presentation. I will be judged on merit, for example I've sat and spoken with the players, and Jim and Peter to discuss ideas. The only measure of Mark Maguire are the structures I put in place for the long term, and we have a MD, Manager and Assistant Manager that care more about the club than their immediate future.

Floor Question: Will the targets be made public?

MM: They will – I will set budgets and the P&L will be published – I am setting standards, what's important in the ethos we're trying to create and commitments that we will make in legal and community aspects of the club.

Floor Question: Are we to understand that MM applied for the job after the applications for the job were closed – it doesn't look right to allow MM to apply after the position was closed.



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NB: We were trying to interview anyone that put their name forward, and the advertisement wasn't closed, whilst we were still checking the suitable candidates and it was an ongoing process.

DH: We accept there are some flaws and the TB gave MM quite a hard time when this news was made available and I believe MM is the right person for the job

Q3: Ticket office/season tickets

Why, on 2 separate occasions, were 2 single women left feeling very vulnerable standing in outside the ticket office window, holding onto large amounts of cash while the ticket office personnel was both rude and surly because they had to deal with cash?

The last Trust news letter stated that "we will not process any cheque's etc until 21st May, yet my bank informs me that my season ticket money was taken from my account on 2nd May. Lack of communication?

Why, when my season ticket form details were all correct, did I pay for someone else's season ticket, only the good fortune that the person who'd just acquired his "free" season ticket knew me was the cock up discovered. I'd be interested to know what would have happened if the gentleman in question hadn't come forward leaving me £256 out of pocket and without a season ticket?

Ian Dooley

MM: I'll be honest – I think the season ticket promotion this year wasn't great and I'm not going to defend ticket office staff for the sake of it. What will happen this year is that in October we'll decide the prices for next season, in November we'll do the collateral and in December we'll start to communicate it out. For the first time we'll involve the ticket office staff – previously the way we've used them before has not been ideal (we don't own the ticket office, it's a service we contract out). We are working more closely with them, eg the Super 10 offer – we talked to the ticket office this time to see how it would affect them. If someone is rude at the ticket office you should communicate it to the club/trust and it will be dealt with – we need to get our house in order first, then we'll demand the best service and if there are issues with the service it'll be dealt with.

Floor Question: The leaflet for ST – it's been very confusing and misleading, and even the ticket office appeared confused.

MM: Agreed – next season will be different.



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Paul Jameson: Appreciate with the issues are but why is the ticket office subcontracted?

MM: When we did the deal to buy the club we had a 3 year deal with the current company. At the end of this month that deal expires, and I am looking to involve other companies to give the best service.

Q4: Disclosure of Transfer Fees

The club appears to have taken the decision not to disclose any details of transfers fees, either for out-going or incoming players. Can the Board explain why this is, please. Figures eventually get out in one form or another, as in the case of Anthony Elding and now seemingly, Adam le Fondre.

To quote someone else, "the problem is that the figures published by the local media are either invented, which is the price paid by the clubs for being over secretive, or they are accurate, in which case supporters will ask why they should have to rely on a third party to leak information into the public domain." (from <http://members3.boardhost.com/marionsboard/msg/1183469092.html>).

What benefit is there to the club by doing this and are such fees not revealed in accounts in any event?

Regards

Steve Johnson

MM: It is my decision – 100% to withhold them for business reasons alone.

Steve Johnson: Once we're sorted with CS, will we go back to declaring figures, unless the other club doesn't want it?

MM: Yes - I'll be open and honest when possible but at this stage it suits Stockport County

Q5: Hi there,

Really looking forward to the BBQ on sat.

Just a quick question to see if anyone knows the answer. The reported £35K we have received for Alfie seems a bit low, do we know what the "substantial" sell on clause is?

Many thanks

Jonny Quirk



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MM: We have a 25% sell on for Alfie. We got a good fee with a sell-on clause. I'm sitting next to someone who wouldn't mind me saying that after the Darlington match he told me "why would anyone one to move elsewhere when we have this at County?" but if someone wants to move on, we need to do the best for County. Jim sat down with ALF and his agent – Jim said that he was in plans, but ALF said Rochdale wanted him.

Q6: You've probably been asked this anyway, but what is the latest on Booth Street and the plans to buy back the ground.? Could the Trust ensure that there are regular updates for fans, as there seem to be long silences between events.

Regards

Steve Johnson

MM: We're flying ahead with it, and I understand the frustration about not being able to say what's going on. Our policy has slightly changed – initially we were going to buy the Booth Street land to give financial power to buy the stadium back. We submitted bid to Council, CS/Sale also put an offer in at the same time. The Council have gone away and decided to review what Booth Street should be used for. They are changing this, to intrinsically link it to the football stadium. So, we're looking to work with other parties to buy the ground back, then by Booth Street back. Our plans are always to develop/regenerate Edgeley. We have received offers to help work with the football club, so I created a 60 page prospectus to show any interesting parties with 3 phases:

- 1) Stockport County get money to buy the ground back
- 2) Buy Booth Street with developer
- 3) Couple of other bits of land available that would be useful.

One of the parties has come back and showed significant interest in offering us a mortgage to buy the ground back – the value is bigger than we'd need to buy EP back so we have some contingency. They are checking our accounts for the last two years at the moment, the key point is the valuation of Edgeley Park, which is taking place next week. We then have to do due diligence on that interested party – and check with the council plus ensure we are secure with our finances – because it's individual parties and lots of work it's difficult to keep putting comms out but once we can there will be significant amounts of publicity.

DH: Can we just review the finances?



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MM: We have AGM shortly – the finances will show a 42k loss the year before this, however, the year before we took over it was a £1.2 million loss so the progress is good, even though I'm not belittling a 40k loss. We are investing money in the training ground as well to ensure the players have a suitable environment and keep improving facilities and acting in a more professional manner.

Paul Jameson Question regarding Booth Street + grants

MM: Yes we're getting commercial investors while looking at fulfilling our responsibilities of being a community club and also getting grants:

Steve Johnson: Will we talk to CS about Edgeley Park and will the influence how we progress:

MM: At the moment it'd be easier for popularity to say that we'll chase them down the road, it's not sensible and we'll review it – the legal reality is that SCFC have a 23 year lease left to play at EP. We grant SS a licence to play at EP. If we became landlords, we'd swap and they'd have 23 years left

Steve Johnson: Sale have ideas for the ground and there are benefits to having them there and there are things that would keep them there in the future, and if we took over, for example, would we need to redevelop the Railway End and bear the cost?

MM: If CS spend money on the stadium they have to consult us first. We get 6% of the value of the improvement. There are things that need doing, the problem being if they do redevelop the Railway End we have to find more money to buy the ground, or us have to do it if we own it. We are looking at generating extra revenue streams and I've spoken regarding the issue about not getting grants from previous regimes – they were delighted we'd approached them, and the ban comes up in the next few months which gives us opportunity for more funding.

Simon Holt: Want to pick you up on Sale thing – are we paying sale 115k rent a year?

MM: Correct – in addition we pay various service costs

Floor Question: BK could probably buy the Booth Street now?

MM: Yes, but he would have to get funding and while there is an option for us to buy the ground, it does give us some strength as investors will review that we can buy the ground back from CS. The council and us are talking regularly and we are taking a different, inclusive, approach including the financial benefits of having Sale there.



THE STOCKPORT COUNTY SUPPORTERS' TRUST



Stockport County Supporters Society Limited. Register No. 29273R
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NC: There is growing thought that BK is less interested in SS – what would happen if he sold up?

MM: In term of the legal agreements it's important to distinguish between CS and SS. CS were set up to own SS and SCFC. Now SCFC have gone it's a vehicle for SS finances. The agreement has clauses that protect both parties – e.g if anyone bought SCFC from the Trust, the clause to buy back EP is not valid.

Floor Question: 1-10 how confident are you that you'll get the ground back?

MM: 8

Question: Why's the Macclesfield Game being switched to a Friday? Is it from minority of vocal supporters?

MM: The manager requested it – he goes into massive detail about everything and he identified that our worse performances were when we had 2 games in 3 days and this gives us an extra day.

Open Floor Questions:

Floor Q: Does the legal activities at Wrexham have any bearing on the ground? Eg previous chairman tried to throw out the club

MM: The value we'd buy it for is based on historic debt – in bricks and mortar it's worth more than that – however we get the extra protection from the money lender to get the ground back with this lower price. I will not recommend anything until I've done my due diligence that we could pay back the interest – i.e like any mortgage we must be able to make the repayments.

Floor Q: Have Sale Sharks given any indication that they might not be there in 2-3 seasons?

MM: We can only speculate – it'd be difficult for them to get out of things in terms of moving they have lots of investment at the moment.

Floor Q: How much money do we owe to BK/CS? Previous accounts showed a 3.4 million debt

MM: That includes other debtors – and we'd buy the ground for a £1 and the debt would be transferred of 3.8 million

Floor Q: You were talking about the finances of the trust – is there a point where money will be passed to the club?



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DH: We are doing 2 things – 1) Trust money for direct sponsorships – we were in 100 club but this year we'll do player/matchball sponsorship etc for direct sponsorship. No point in us having a surplus, we'll use it for SCFC.

2) RDF – we're obliged to have funds to safeguard Stockport County, like many clubs it's difficult to get an overdraft, so we are continuing to work on the RDF to grow it.

NB: I think from the last set of answers you've seen why MM got the job and how thorough it is. I'd like to change tack and review progress – we just avoided relegation to the conference. Last season, I suspect at the start of it, not many clubs would want to sign our players. This season, we have a number of good players that are assets and I'm confident we'll have a good season, we have a good squad and Jim is strengthening the squad.

Floor Q: (GP) 2 years down the line now, is there any indication from BK that he has remorse for what he has done to the club? Is there any sign he'd give us the ground back?

NB: I don't think we're holding our breath for that. BK is a successful businessman and was given the opportunity and he took it. You can't blame him as a person for wanting that. What we will say is that any dealings we've had with him he has been professional and a gentleman.

Floor Q: Regarding Sponsorship – what's the situation, is it growing?

MM: The reason Just Search came in was that I reviewed the figures from last season, and especially the amount of coverage we got last season, with the 9 game run etc. I asked MB to put a value on this coverage and then we reviewed how much we were getting/giving from our sponsors. I told the sponsors that I was going to change the way we were doing it, and avoid situations where the sponsor wasn't getting commercial value from it. This was seen with Parfetts, where they weren't getting enough benefit from the money they were putting in. Parfetts gave unbelievable support to this club over the last few years, including helping the Trust to take over the club, and we are looking to keep them involved. JustSearch will hold us to account every week to ensure we're giving them value for money. We are expecting 70-80% of sponsors to change as we will run them on a commercial basis – we don't want our current sponsors to leave, but we want to give value. JustSearch are thrilled to be involved with SCFC. It will take a while and some sponsors may leave but we'll progress on a commercial basis that will benefit us and the sponsorship, including the brand representing Stockport County as well.

DH: Q: for Anthony do you have any regrets of joining and what do you see next season:



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AE: I've come from Boston and it surprises me you're all talking of facilities as we used to train on a park at Boston and it's a massive difference – plus I'm getting paid – I had opportunities to go to teams in a higher league but after talking to the people here it felt right and I signed the next day. I want to do well for the club and set a target of goals for this club.

DH: You've got quite a bit of competition for your place?

AE: No, the others have!

Floor Question: We hear talk of 1 year plans and 5 year plans, we never see them what are your thoughts?

MM: We want to create a Championship football club – it's not just about getting the team together to get us there but also the off-the-field aspects of a Championship club, over the next few years we'll invest to ensure both are correct. The reason we went up then back down last time was because the structures weren't in place so we had a "boom and bust" situation. The group of lads we have now are fantastic and we have almost been catching them up as they've moved so quickly and I have told them they must challenge us to make sure that we can match them off the field.

NB: We have an exceptional group of youngsters coming through the Centre of Excellence – 196 players have come through and only 6 or so have gone on to have a career. We are changing this and are working to establish an under-21s team so we can get lads into this team and fill in all the way down and bring players through so we have a duty to move them on and give them a career. We are looking across multiple levels to give a progression of footballers coming through and the finances in place to get players such as the calibre of Elding to the club.

Paul Jameson: We have a community spirit, when we went to the Championship we lost some of that spirit, how could we keep that if we did it again?

MM: It makes me more angry than anything that the last time we were up there things didn't work out and players were sold off – I watched a DVD and worked out how much players were sold for and turned it off after a while as it was the sort of money that would buy the ground back! Plus, there is always the chance that Jim will be so successful and go elsewhere - as such we are setting up principles for all players/staff and we will keep that going forward. E.g. We have changed it so that the players wives and can all sit together at the games and once a month will meet to eat and chat at the training ground to create a bond and spirit. We will keep the bond between fans and club

Floor Question: Appreciate that plan won't be published, we can get it right on the pitch, how do we measure you (MM) if we don't know your plans?



THE STOCKPORT COUNTY SUPPORTERS' TRUST



Stockport County Supporters Society Limited. Register No. 29273R
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MM: You measure us by 1) Financial Position of the club – I've already stated my plans to distribute summaries, I can't change the past but going forward we have that covered, and 2) by the calibre of players and on pitch activity.

Floor Question: AE – is it true you wanted to sign a 10 year contract? My next question is why not 20 years?

AE: Yes! I've asked for a new deal, feel its right and have bought a new house and feel settled, it just feels right and the way the fans are with me I've never had that before anywhere else, I'll sign as long as the club want me to sign though obviously it's based on performance. I'd definitely sign a new deal if offered – my phone bill is high from ringing MM (MM jokes about hanging up on him).

Floor Question: Communication: What we can learn, what needs to be done, is clear reasons given for things. We're better at saying what is happening, but not always why and this leads to debate. MM's appointment would have been easier if we had listed skills and experience, I just think it'd be easier if we say why things are happening, even knowing commercial sensibilities.

MM: I agree – it's my job to give the football club transparency and structures in place. There are some difficult issues to deal with, perhaps in the past the club has felt under pressure and defensive – if I'm doing my job right then we will have them out.

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THE STOCKPORT COUNTY SUPPORTERS' TRUST



Stockport County Supporters Society Limited. Register No. 29273R
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Floor Question: Relationship with Liverpool – two have gone, one under agreement, other under less of an agreement – there was an accusation that we are a feeder club for Liverpool?

MM: That's not the case. There were two departments involved at Liverpool that didn't speak, and one spoke to the other about the way we were dealt with and we got an apology. With regards to Ben Robinson, we got a letter from the FL saying he was to be transferred, or go to tribunal. We got an offer of compensation which was an insult, then a second offer and had it rejected, they then sent another insulting offer so we said we'd go to tribunal. They then started to criticise the Centre of Excellence so I had a conversation with them to resolve. Ultimately we got the best deal possible. With regards to Ryan he will have a medical next week to sign when passes.

DH/SB: Right we'll finish up now, enjoy the food and thanks for coming.

POST FORUM FEEDBACK

Following the Trust Forum, attendees were invited to forward their comments on the occasion.

They were invited to score several categories for the event with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

Thirteen complete replies were received and the average scores for each category was as follows :

Publicity	4.2
Pre-registration	4.3
Venue	3.1
Organisation	4.2
Presentation	3.9
Top table	4.2
Information	4.4
Time spent	4.3
Food	4.2

The majority of 'comments' were favourable and people found it informative. The only negative 'comments' involved the venue being too small and inaccessible to disabled and others.

We will be using a different, larger venue in future.

Alan Walkinshaw (Communications)