

CUSP AGM 2020 Minutes

Present

CUSP: James Mills (Chair), Ben Payne (Vice-Chair), Philip Saich (Secretary), David Burkett (Mental Health Officer), Chris Neild, Paul Moffatt, Mark Mumford, Sarah King

CUFC: Ian Mather, Dave Matthew-Jones

General: Nigel Pearce

Apologies for absence: Kevin Jenkinson

1 Welcome and opening statement

James Mills opened the meeting with a tribute to Carol Looker, who has sadly passed away, and the attendees observed a minute's silence to show our respect. James then ran through the planned agenda and reminded everyone that the meeting was being recorded and that a recording would be made available so that anyone who had been unable to attend could watch it back should they wish to do so. James then introduced the CUSP members.

2 CUSP achievements

Mental health

David Burkett explained that Godric Smith has been driving the Club's mental health strategy and that, as the CUSP Mental Health Officer, he has met with Godric to discuss how to make CUFC a mentally healthy club. It is a slow burner but progress has been made. David has had conversations with a number of fans regarding mental health and has attended some of Phil Mullen's training sessions. The relationship is building and as shown in the Daily Telegraph article it is gaining momentum in raising awareness. David has taken the On Your Side course as well as a First Responder qualification in mental health.

James also mentioned that David has been instrumental in the re-introduction of ball boys and ball girls from grass roots football clubs. This has led to them coming back to future games as fans. David confirmed that there has been a lot of positive feedback and some are hoping to buy season tickets.

Fixtures board

Nigel Browne worked with Dave Matthew-Jones to create a fixtures board for the front of the ground, and this was paid for by the United in Endeavour Fund provided by Inc. The story was published on CUSP social media and was also covered in the Cambridge Independent. It has been well received by fans.

Relationship with the Board

This is something that the fans may not always see, but the last 12 months have been spent building an excellent relationship with the CUFC Board. The CUSP constitution specifies that there should be four meetings with the Club; in the first year we actually held six meetings, three before lockdown

and three during lockdown. One of the meetings was with Paul Barry when he was in the UK. We feel this is the 'unseen' achievement this year.

3 CUSP goals

Re-introduction of fans

This is probably the biggest goal for the next three to six months, and Ian Mather has already engaged with CUSP about how this can be achieved. An additional 1,000 season tickets were released for sale on 24 August, and more than 600 sold within the first few hours. Depending on the numbers there will be a next phase, and CUSP will be central to the planning and communication for re-introducing home and subsequently away fans.

Improved communication

It is a priority for CUSP to improve how feedback and questions are handled and communicated. There have been occasions where questions have been given to CUSP and the meeting minutes have given the impression that the questions were not raised during the meeting. James reiterated that we are committed to asking the Club difficult questions and we are keen to avoid the impression among fans that we are not asking them as there are occasions when we are not able to give all the answers at that time. We will improve in this area, and look to engage more with the fans.

Two-way communication

We have mooted the idea of a CUSP forum whereby we facilitate fans coming together to ask questions which the Club will answer, and also to meet to share gripes and request answers. CUSP would package this and take it to the Club.

4 Statement from Ian Mather

Ian asserted that CUSP has had a really good year. It is providing the Club with a vehicle to communicate with a broad range of fans, and the Q&A meeting was a good example of how really good questions can tease out a lot of information that fans want to hear. This sort of activity should continue. The Board are up for sharing information and making it public. There will be some information that is confidential so this needs to be managed, but 90% of the information divulged can be published.

Key things coming up include the re-introduction of fans. There is a guide to how to get fans back in the stadium and if the Club doesn't receive a safety certificate, fans cannot be admitted. Rules will be strict, such that misbehaviour in a terrace could lead to the match being stopped and the whole terrace evacuated. There will be lots of new rules but the sense is that everyone wants to make it work, but in a different way. You will need to arrive early, and you will likely be told when you can get up to leave at the end of the game. There are two upsides: fans will be allowed in, and the number of tickets might be increased. These messages need to be communicated, and CUSP has a really important role in doing so.

Subject to ratification by the EFL board, season ticket holders will be given free iFollow passes for home games while football is behind closed doors.

On the new stadium, the expectation is that something is going to happen and that if it doesn't then the project is a fantasy. Meetings have been held with architects and Marshall, and everything depends on Marshall achieving planning. If planning isn't granted, it won't happen so fans can play a role in influencing politicians in backing the project. The Club may therefore approach CUSP to mobilise the fanbase to help make it happen, and there is confidence that it will indeed happen. Marshall want it to happen, but it will take several years.

Paul Moffatt asked for clarification regarding iFollow for non season ticket holders, and Ian confirmed that they will be able to log in and watch home and away games at a cost of around £10. The majority of that £10 will go to CUFC. Having 1,600 in the ground is great but it's only around half of the average gate, and some of that shortfall can be made up with iFollow. It is also important to create an environment where fans become used to watching the U's via a streaming service as it might carry on even when fans are allowed back into grounds. This will require a deal to be done with Sky. Leyton Orient don't use iFollow but have invested in streaming. CUFC are looking at ways to make pre-match, half-time and post-match on iFollow more interesting for fans.

James decided to jump to item 5b to request ideas for improving iFollow. Ben Payne suggested that fans could be encouraged to send in videos and support messages which could be featured before the match. Philip Saich asked whether Coconuts could maybe feature a classic match or former player profile/where are they now. Nigel Pearce thought that CUSP could go out to fans and ask for ideas, and James confirmed that we would do this on social media.

5 Points for discussion

Proposed constitution changes

It was proposed that the constitution be updated to allow five existing CUSP members be retained at re-election time as the relationship with the Board could be lost if all CUSP members were replaced every two years. The proposal was that the five top-performing CUSP members in the vote would be retained, with the remaining six members being selected from the top-performing new candidates. Nigel Pearce was in favour of this change, and understood that this was the result of the constitution being tweaked through the experience of the first year.

The proposal was that the Chair and Vice Chair would be able to be in post for a maximum of two years, unless no other candidate(s) put themselves forward.

Co-opting worked successfully with Sarah King who expressed interest in joining CUSP and was voted on by CUSP members. Any co-opted member must stand for re-election with other members.

Endeavour Fund

One suggestion for this was a new scoreboard, and the balance could be funded through crowd funding, although Dave Matthew-Jones explained that he will be meeting with a potential supplier and that funding may well be in place for the scoreboard. David Burkett suggested that following feedback from fans we could increase visibility around the ground by wearing CUSP branded garments to supplement the lanyards. Could we invest in some spare Hummel kit and add the CUSP logo? CUSP facemasks might be a possibility, and fans would be asked for suggestions.

Amber Heroes

This idea came from James and revolves around creating a number of Amber hearts around the ground which could feature the names of U's fans who had made a brilliant contribution during the pandemic. The fund could be used to buy the paint and pay for the match ticket(s) given to each Amber Hero. Fans could nominate a potential Amber Hero and CUSP would work with the Club to have a lasting legacy at the Abbey.

6 Questions from the floor

Kevin Jenkinson asked a question about Carol Looker and the possibility of a suitable tribute, ideally when the ground is as full as it can be. Ian Mather responded that the Club will provide a suitable tribute and would welcome suggestions from fans on this. A virtual book of condolence has been opened, CFU are looking into a memorial plaque and a 'One Last Raffle' is being launched.

Kevin also asked about the trial that the Club is to be part of, along with Charlton, for the return of fans. Ian was unable to give details of this at this time but confirmed that discussions were taking place.

David Burkett asked how the players were feeling about the situation and how close we were to seeing our final signing. Ian confirmed that the players are really happy to be back playing. The training ground is looking great – it's a lovely setup and the players are enjoying it. There is the odd place in the squad to fill and that may happen at a later date as the transfer window is open until October. The key focus is on getting the squad working together and the atmosphere is really good.

7 Any Other Business

Nigel Browne asked for it to be recognised that Dave Matthew-Jones did the bulk of the work on the fixtures board.

Nigel Pearce wanted to give CUSP a pat on the back as an outsider looking in. He believes that CUSP has had a really good first year and has created a really professional impression in terms of our website and social media presence. He believes that year one has been spent establishing the relationship with the Club and that year two can now be spent cementing the relationship with the fans. The return of fans to the Abbey can allow CUSP to do that.

8 Closing statement

James thank everyone for attending and confirmed that the video and minutes would be made available within 48 hours, and that CUSP would then canvas fans' opinions on areas such as the Endeavour Fund, iFollow and the return of fans.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 21.00.