

CUSP CUFC Meeting

The minutes of the CUSP CUFC Meeting held at 7.00pm on 15 July 2021

Present

CUFC: Ian Mather, Godric Smith, Shaun Grady, Dave Matthew-Jones

CUSP: Ben Payne (Vice-Chair), Philip Saich (Secretary), Nigel Browne, Chris Neild, Mark Mumford and Paul Moffat

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from James Mills and David Burkett.

Are there any plans for a further promotion celebration?

The Club are not planning a promotion celebration, although there may be scope to mark the achievement at a home game in the new season. Covid has made it difficult to plan and execute an event that would have encouraged large gatherings. The players are also no longer together as a group and the focus is obviously on the coming season.

What will Dion Dublin's role be?

The Board is always looking to make the football club stronger and more 'Cambridge United'. It was decided to make a formal approach to Dion at the end of the season and he accepted and wants to be an active Board member. His role will evolve, and he brings a wide range of skills and experience to the Club. Everyone on the Board was unanimous in their support for his appointment, and Dion was flattered to be invited.

What are the plans for the matchday programme?

The Club will continue with the digital programme next season, but an additional subscription model with a cover price of £5 including postage is a possibility. Making the printed programme available to away fans would be challenging because then home fans would expect to be able to buy them. We are potentially in a transitional period between solely printed and solely digital. The intention would be for the printed programme to arrive before the game. One benefit of the digital programme is that it allows advertisers to include clickthroughs which they like. The Club are open to suggestions as to how to improve the content. Another alternative would be to have a printed monthly magazine, but the most likely route is a printed subscription-only programme with a minimum subscription period. The Club is now actively canvassing views, so if anyone wants to express an interest they should do so now.

Will the Grand Arcade shop stay permanently?

The deal is for the shop to be there until 28 December. Commercially it's a good deal and the Grand Arcade acknowledge that we are driving footfall. The situation will be reviewed in November.

Hummel are staffing the shop and have provided the technology, so if the numbers stack up the aim is to stay, but if not there may be other retail spaces available. The shop will help test the Club's retail

strength, and the shop at the ground will open on matchdays only. The Grand Arcade store will sell match tickets.

Are there plans to use the American owners to develop overseas links?

The Club is keen to engage with fans wherever they are in the world. The interest in UK football in the US remains low and is yet to gain traction, so the easier and larger market is in Cambridge and the surrounding areas, and that will be the focus.

What is the rationale behind CFU managing away travel?

The majority of other clubs have supporters' organisations running away travel with the support of the club, so it was felt that CFU were a good option. Greys are the chosen provider as they guarantee to send another coach if the original one breaks down. The policy regarding under 18s is based on safeguarding as all under 18s are classed as children. Other clubs and supporters' trusts are being consulted to understand how they manage the issue, and CFU are currently reviewing the coach policy.

What are the plans for iFollow?

This will be discussed at an EFL meeting but the starting point is that there will be no iFollow next season because it was provided as an exceptional service when fans were not allowed in the ground. One possible exception might be for long-distance away games – most likely midweek – that fans are unable to get to, as having iFollow would not necessarily affect the gate. It will continue for overseas residents. If it were to be available for away fans there would be some form of revenue sharing.

Are there plans to reward early season ticket committers from last season?

Early committers were eligible for a reduced price this year and had the opportunity for a photo with the trophy. Attending the training ground is not feasible, but there is a possibility for a commemorative wall at the ground. The Club would listen to any good ideas in this area. CUSP suggested that a signed print of the squad might be a cost-effective solution.

Are there plans to integrate coverage of the Women's teams further into the Club?

The Club is looking for a sponsor and to build up the profile of the Women's team. Information will be included on the main website for the first time and they will play two matches at the Abbey. Everyone is really keen to move the Women's team forward and the Club would welcome suggestions as to improvements that can be made.

How is the £1M investment being used?

This was earmarked for capital projects. The floodlights have been painted for the first time since the 1980s, some grass lights have been purchased, the pitch has been thoroughly refurbished and the South Stand roof has been repaired, so the funds are being put to good use. The training ground has also been improved, especially regarding drainage, and the showers have been improved. There will also be a catering solution onsite, with a chef cooking light breakfasts and nutritious lunches for the players. While not hugely glamorous, these things do help to attract a better quality of player and improve all-round performance.

Has the change in Mayor affected the new stadium plans?

Ian Mather met with the new Mayor recently. He is a football fan (Newcastle United) and is supportive of Cambridge United.

Is there scope to reward NHS/key workers?

The Club is looking at this, potentially offering free tickets to a match, and something will definitely be done.

How will the matchday look?

Currently there will be no restrictions. It will be recommended that people wear face masks, but this won't be policed. The staff and stewards will be wearing face masks. People won't be distanced in seating, but stewards will be instructed to allow people to move to empty seats if they would prefer to be separated. There will be no 'one way' flows, so the matchday should feel reasonably normal. The Club is also encouraging everyone to get their jabs. The Abbey Arms will be open but there will be no Fanzones elsewhere in the ground, although there may be a simple Kids' Zone.

Where are we with the first team squad?

Training is going well and Mark Bonner and Ben Strang are very positive about the squad. We have already done some good business, and done it early, so it remains to be seen whether another player will be added.

Date of next meeting

This will be confirmed in due course.