

CUSP CUFC Meeting

The minutes of the CUSP CUFC Meeting held at 7.00pm on 16 December 2021

Present

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

CUSP: Ben Payne (Chair), David Burkett (Vice-Chair), Philip Saich (Secretary), Nigel Browne, Ben Phillips and Chris Neild

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

CEO recruitment

There were 222 applications for the CEO position and the recruitment process is anticipated to be completed in the new year. There will be a handover period so the new candidate will be in place by the end of the season having worked out their notice period.

Catering

There have been a couple of Habbin-side issues on matchdays, especially around alcoholic drinks. The Club now have a keg supply (to replace the cans) in the away end and the Habbin. The Club has moved from Greene King to Adnams, who are very enthusiastic. Adnams will provide a couple of mobile units on matchdays so fans can more easily buy drinks. Some bars are working up to pre-pouring. The Club is struggling to attract consistent staff so they have extended their commitment to shifts of six hours from four hours, at £10 per hour, to make the offer more attractive. Anyone interested should contact the club on info@cambridge-united.co.uk. The Club is keen to improve in this area, with staffing being the key. Speed of service at the Abbey Grill is still an issue, but the Club is supplying new card readers to speed things up. The Club knows it needs to continue improving the fan experience, which will also increase revenue.

The Dublin Bar

The Dublin Bar appears to be shutting when people are still looking to drink there, but the Club is open to keeping it open until 7pm if there is demand. CUSP and CFU will raise awareness and help direct customers to the bar. Home supporters from all areas of the ground can use the bar after matches.

Grand Arcade Club Shop

The agreement runs until 28 December. The Grand Arcade is keen for us to stay but no final decision has yet been made as discussions are ongoing. There is an iPad for ticketing.

Transfer window

Some funds will be available for strengthening the squad, but Covid is making things tricky, especially with the postponements that are taking place. The EFL have stipulated that if clubs have 14 fit players, including a goalkeeper, then they must fulfil their fixtures. Loan players would

potentially be depleting the parent club's squad, so there may be some nervousness to release players on loan.

Covid

The Club is doing everything it can to keep everyone safe. Last Wednesday, there was a call with the Safety Advisory Group (SAG), which includes Cambridge Public Health, whose representative emphasised that Covid rates were rising very rapidly. As a result, they have extra powers and asked the Club if they would voluntarily bring in Covid passport checking, while acknowledging that it wasn't compulsory to do so. SAG and Cambridge Public Health have significant influence over the Club and it was decided to introduce random checking – including paper vaccination cards – in order to work with them. In certain age groups in Cambridge the take up of vaccines is relatively low, so there is a chance that fans may not have been jabbed. The Club received some cancellations for Saturday's match but the perception is that the bulk of these were due to the fear of contracting Covid rather than in protest against the Covid passport checking. Overall, Public Health England are happy with the Club's approach. The Club is overbooking stewards to compensate for any who may be lost to Covid, and although it costs money this approach does work.

Inevitably, some matches will be lost to Covid, but there appears to be no desire to suspend or even cancel the season. A delay to the fixture programme is possible, however. Behind closed doors as an interim solution can't be ruled out, but the first step might be to stop away fans attending so that home fans can more easily be socially distanced.

FA Cup match pricing

Compared to Newcastle tickets, the Exeter pricing seemed high, but the Club viewed the match as an opportunity to generate much-needed additional revenue. Newcastle have a long-standing policy of charging £10 for cup matches.

Fan-led review

The Club supports the fan-led review, and an independent regulator with real power would be beneficial for everyone. Fans lobbying their MP would be desirable – CUSP and CFU can help to promote the concept.

Ball boy/girl experience and mascots

The Club is happy to oblige – and to provide waterproofs for the pitch forkers – so David Burkett will liaise with Gareth Daniels.

Programmes

Negotiations are ongoing with the digital programme provider to reduce the costs of this and an announcement will be made in due course.

Coconuts

The version currently played includes a quiet intro and talking so could it be played sooner after the final whistle, swapped for an alternative version or remixed slightly so that more fans leaving the stadium get to hear it? The Club is open to suggestions so Chris Neild will look into this.

Half-time entertainment

Mick George are very keen on the chip in the skip, and it's in their contract, but getting kids on the ground at half time is also a possibility. At this time, having more kids and people on the pitch generally is a Covid risk, however.

Injured players

Providing more regular updates on injuries is a tricky area as Mark Bonner is reluctant to give too much away to opposition clubs.

Lack of recognition for loyalty point holders

The assumption was that the ticket allocation for Newcastle (5,000, and potentially more) was more than sufficient for the likely demand. The Club accepts that the perception might have been that it was not paying due respect to fans who had accumulated points for this very purpose, and this has been noted.

Choice of kit

The choice of kit is influenced by colour blindness, but can also be as unscientific as not looking like the opposition's kit.

Atmosphere

The Club is always open to ideas to improve the atmosphere to help the team, including what more it can do to liven up the atmosphere for home games. Could the pre-match music selection be improved, for example, or a giant flag be passed along the NRE?

Date of next meeting

This will be confirmed in due course.