

CUSP CUFC Meeting

Notes from the CUSP CUFC Meeting held at 7.30pm on 8 March 2022

Present

CUFC: Ian Mather, Dave Matthew-Jones

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

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Ben Phillips, Shaun Grady and Godric Smith.

Ground update

The news of the ground purchase broke before the meeting. It was agreed that this is a fantastic step forward for the Club. It required detailed negotiation but now means that the Abbey is home and will be redeveloped over time. Further details of this and the arrangement for the Golden Share(s) will be released in due course.

Club shop/Youth matches

Concern was raised that we may be missing out on revenue by not opening the Club Shop when hosting youth matches. The shop was open for the Leeds game and takings were low, so a commercial decision was taken that it was not financially viable to open for future youth games.

Queues at turnstiles

It was noted that entry for the Luton game was smoother with two stewards pre-checking tickets to ensure fans were using the correct entrance. There is a new sign at the front of the ground (funded by the CUFC Lottery). Also, an Abbey Helper is usually on hand, but when available the Club will allocate additional stewarding to help with this issue.

Moving between the NRE and Main Stand

This should not now be necessary as it was largely happening to access the toilets and there are now more portaloos in place around the ground.

Cashless stadium

Despite announcing that the Abbey is cashless, cash is still taken in three areas: programmes, 50-50 and the Premier Food outlets. It is unlikely that these three areas will all cease taking cash, so it is a case of having more clarity when communicating the cashless concept.

Last match of the season kick off time

While unsatisfactory for a large number of fans, this is dictated by the EFL and broadcasters, so cannot be changed. It is acknowledged that a large number of fans who work or play football on Saturday mornings are likely to turn up late – or even at half time – so messaging is required around which turnstiles will still be open.

South Habbin opening

This has been a success so the South Habbin will be open for home fans for as many matches as possible next season. The North and South Habbin will, however, need to be kept as two separate entities so the South Habbin can be allocated to away clubs with a larger following to maximise revenue. The Club will announce the availability of the South Habbin for home fans earlier in the week preceeding the match so that fans are aware.

Catering

There has been a general improvement around the ground but this is an ongoing project. New caterers have been appointed, and a new Catering Manager has been recruited to oversee all aspects. The Club still welcomes feedback in this area.

North Habbin puddles

This is an inconvenience to fans, especially when there is very heavy rain, so the Club will investigate how to repair and/or relay the ground.

Coconuts

The Club has now stopped making announcements directly after the final whistle, so Coconuts is being enjoyed by more fans while exiting the ground.

Pre-match build up

The flags were well received at the Shrewsbury game. CUSP will survey fans as to what music they would like played in the build up and to see whether there are any ideas for improving the atmosphere pre-match.

Fan behaviour and foul language

There is concern at a deterioration in fan behaviour in some sections of the ground, as well as the increase in foul language. A number of female fans have felt intimidated in the NRE, so CUSP will work with the Club and fans to find a way to ensure that everyone feels comfortable wherever they are located.

Fanzone

This is an ongoing project and an announcement as to progress will be made shortly. It is planned that the Fanzone will be open for next season and the Police are supportive of the initiative.

Dublin Bar/Abbey Arms

With the promotion to League One there has been a sharp increase in demand for hospitality, which is great for revenue. This means that it is possible that the Dublin Bar will be given over to hospitality for most games, with the Fanzone and Abbey Arms/marquee offering food and drink to fans.

Sniffer dogs/searching

This has been implemented due to the increase in the number of fans trying to enter football grounds with illegal drugs, alcohol and pyrotechnics. The Club has acknowledged that the application has been a little random and illogical and has agreed to improve communication and execution around this issue.

Temporary capacity

The club has debated this issue long and hard, and has evaluated every possibility, but it is not viable to increase capacity temporarily from a financial or safety perspective. SAG have also vetoed several suggestions in this area.

Radio Cambridgeshire/TV

The balance of reporting on Radio Cambridgeshire is an editorial decision, so the Club has no influence. Next season, highlights are moving from Quest to ITV and will be available on catch up.

Season ticket holder rewards

This scheme is ongoing and rewards are being redeemed, so the Club will improve communication here.

Long distance fans' priority for away games

Sadly this is too complicated given the restrictions of the ticketing system.

Away ticketing for groups and families

This is possible, so fans are encouraged to contact the Club. CUFC have no control over away match ticket pricing, sadly.

Mascot package pricing

This appears to be high compared to some other League One clubs but the Club needs to maximise revenue in all areas. The Club will review pricing to ensure parity and also explore adding a shirt/kit to the package.

Fans Led Review

The Club will be working with Tracey Crouch and the FSA to implement the Fans Led Review and shape the Golden Share. Options include the creation of a Shadow Board.

Date of next meeting

This being the last CUSP CUFC meeting before the changeover in Chief Executive, Ben Payne thanked Ian Mather for his sterling work during his tenure and looked forward to building a relationship with Ian's successor.

The date of the next meeting will be confirmed in due course.