



## MINUTES OF THE 1<sup>st</sup> MEETING OF THE SUPPORTER CHARTER GROUP

DERBY COUNTY FOOTBALL CLUB

THURSDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> FEBRUARY 2018, PRIDE PARK STADIUM

### DCFC Supporter Representatives (Alphabetical order):

David Mortimer <b>(DM)</b>	RamsActive
Kevin Hepworth <b>(KH)</b>	Rams Trust
Lynn Hemsworth <b>(LH)</b>	Derby County Official Supporters Club
Paul Watson <b>(PW)</b>	DCFCFans
Pav Samra <b>(PS)</b>	Punjabi Rams
Simon Penney <b>(SP)</b>	1884 Group

### Apologies:

Andy Ellis <b>(AE)</b>	Derby County Collection
Gary Dempsey <b>(GD)</b>	Derby County Disabled Supporters Club
Joel Clyne <b>(JC)</b>	DCFCPodcast – Group now folded
Nick Webster <b>(NW)</b>	Independent

### DCFC Senior Management Representatives (Alphabetical order):

Faye Nixon <b>(FN)</b>	Head of Global Engagement
Mel Morris CBE <b>(MM)</b>	Executive Chairman
Paul Tyrrell <b>(PT)</b>	Chief PR Officer
Sarah Poplar <b>(SP)</b>	Supporter Liaison Officer

These minutes were produced from written notes taken by SP at the Supporter Charter Group Meeting.

## 1. Welcome and Meeting Introduction

- 1.1. PT opened the meeting by thanking all Supporter Representatives and Senior Management for returning to the first meeting of the Supporter Charter Group this year.
- 1.2. PT went through the questions that were received from DCDC, DCFC Fans, Nick Webster, and the Rams Trust, the questions were as followed: these were sent to all on Thursday afternoon prior to the meeting.

**Q Why was there no hot water in the gents toilets in the West concourse on Saturday (Norwich game)? There was hot water in the ladies, also when water is sorted can somebody look at its temperature? It is seriously hot, hot as in scolding!!**

A We have investigated this and ensured that the hot water was on for the Leeds game. Our maintenance staff have also adjusted the thermostat to ensure the temperature is acceptable.

**Q The lifts in West Stand seem to be increasingly out of order, which does cause some issues for our elderly fans on match days – is this just the age of them (20 years) and they need replacing or should be looking at escalators instead.**

A We have experienced persistent problems with the lift concerned and it has been frustrating for everybody.

Ultimately, we have been required to commission a specialist company to make a bespoke part (as the lift is 20 years old) which is being shipped from Europe. This part, which has life-expectancy of 10-15 years, will take a week to fit and we hope it will then be back in use for the Cardiff game.

**Q RamsTV has stopped showing contentious decisions which is a disappointing for the paying customers. Will this decision be reviewed and changed as it affects what is a first class service provided by the club to fans all over the world?**

A Our RamsTV's match coverage is simultaneously broadcast to global subscribers and in the stadium via the big screen and the concourses. EFL rules stipulate that contentious decisions must not be shown during the game; therefore, we wait until after the match to screen them.

Both our commentary and presentation teams explain this ruling – and how we deal with it -to viewers during the matchday coverage.

Our post-match analysis always covers any contentious decisions in a comprehensive manner.

**Q Can the club/Delaware keep at least one kiosk open in each stand after each game so fans who can't get straight away due to parking issues and maybe want to watch RamsTV for replays and interviews etc?**

**Extra sales income, I'm sure they must throw loads of food away that they maybe could sell off, another suggestion, turn the volume up in the concourses after the games done at this time also?**

A We will be trialling opening the East Stand lower concourses after the game for Fulham on March 3. The experiment will be communicated to supporters. Some food pricing will be discounted and we will look to make sure that TV volume levels in the concourse will be at the correct level.

When running a trial such as this, we should be mindful that there will be an increase in wage costs for ClubDCFC as staff who are normally released at half time will be required to serve in the concourse. There will also be additional security wage costs as we also need to keep stewards working in the concourses and staged at the appropriate exit routes during this extended opening time.

We will report back progress to SCG.

### **Season Tickets**

**Q Well done on the price promise for next season. A very nice gesture. Whilst ST sales remain high I can't help think it obvious to the fact that match day attendances have clearly dropped. For being 2<sup>nd</sup> in the league as I write it doesn't seem right that we only got 27k for the game against Norwich. Take the away allocation that was short of 1500 that still leaves 5000 empty seats? Are we pricing too high for match day tickets? I know Cardiff is a great offer but why are fans not turning up that are not season ticket holders? I know it has been discussed that we are in line with what other clubs offer but do we perhaps need to look at ourselves before we compare?**

A Pricing Matchday ticket in comparison with Season Tickets is complicated and often difficult. We are always mindful of ensuring that those people who make the commitment of purchasing a Season Ticket are not financially penalised by the Club offering lower average prices for match tickets.

This season the average cost of a Season Ticket, per game, this season is £18.47 - while the average cost of a matchday ticket this season is £19.11. This matchday ticket average is 51p down on last year and we price dynamically, varying according to the perceived attractiveness of the game. This year our lowest average matchday ticket price was £12.6 for the Hull game with the highest £25.19 for Nottingham Forest.

We have already committed to both the free season ticket offer for current holders if we make it into the Premier League and a price freeze if we do not. We will continue to monitor price levels and we also welcome any specific ideas on pricing.

**Q I'd like to know what can be done about the terrible traffic leaving the ground as it's getting worse. Lots of other clubs use the police to allow traffic to flow (as lights aren't set up for that amount of traffic) it's really bad now from the west side of pride park and just seems to be getting worse.**

A We who work at Pride Park and experience the delays and disruption on a daily basis, understand and sympathise.

The club pays for a specialist traffic management company to operate around the stadium on a matchday. This is widely recognised within the sporting events industry to be a better option than asking police to handle traffic management.

The large-scale roadworks on Brian Clough Way have had a negative effect on traffic flow. While we are mindful that not a great deal can be done to change them, we are meeting with Derby City Council in the next couple of weeks to discuss if there are any further measures which can be put in place to at least alleviate some of the difficulties. We will be exploring options to increase parking spaces following the closure of 'The Derby Fireplace Centre' car park and are reviewing our travel plan with the city council.

We will keep SCG members informed of progress following that meeting.

**Q Does the club have any intention of providing supporters with the option of a season-ticket for an area for pre-match food & drink? Currently McFarlands Bar and The Yard are only available on a match-by-match basis, which means supporters have no option but to go to other outlets on occasion - which risks losing customers long-term.**

A McFarland's Bar is occasionally reserved for 'bigger' games but is generally available for most home games. The Yard is available for supporters at all home games on a first-come, first-served basis.

We are currently evaluating how we can improve the Fans Zone area near to Starbucks, which is also open every game, and will keep SCG up to date with any plans we are working on to develop the facilities there.

2.0 PT then went on to introduce the topic of conversation for the evening, these were the questions extracted from the original questions submitted by the supporter groups.

## **2.1 Planning Applications**

**Q We have heard a couple of planning applications in the last couple of years for various alternations around the stadium, as well as Moor Farm. The ones around the stadium include changes to the North Stand for additional entrances and possible office expansion, East Stand fans plaza – which of these are actively being progressed? Gary Dempsey- DCDSC**

FN started the answers by talking about the plans of the Fan Park, FN explained that we are currently looking to accommodate a varied fan base and improving provision for one particular age range of supporter – those in their early teens.

Our existing provision is opposite the Clough Taylor statue, adjacent to the Ticket Office. This is in operation pre-match and we host live bands and a DJ on site.

however, we are looking for a larger area to further enhance the match day experience.

**FN** also stated that it is our ambition to try and get fans to the game earlier. The concourse heating helps and we provide lots of early bird offers on food and drink within these areas.

**MM** added, that there will be little in the way of major new infrastructure projects until promotion is achieved. He confirmed that we already have lots of work ongoing at the Training Ground including building a Judo room and a new classroom and they are high priority for players health and wellbeing.

**MM** confirmed the following priorities for the next few months.

1. Academy resources
2. Recreation sundries for both First Team and Academy
3. At Pride Park, creating more two-way concourses.

**KH** asked a question on the Euro Car Park situation - currently there is a large board saying the Euro Car Park have obtained the property, (this is the old gas works ground opposite the stadium near the Yard, **MM** said he hasn't seen any plans for this, but the club would investigate further and report back to the group.

## 2.2 Future of Rams TV

**Q Considering the current league position (and possible promotion) along with the ever growing list of sky selected games, where does the club see the future of Rams TV? David – DCFC Fans**

**MM** explained that RamsTV has been a fantastic tool to showcase not only first team football, but also Academy and community links. This would not change, irrespective of which league we were playing in. As well as top quality matchday coverage, there is a big focus and depth of programming on the Academy. Topics covered include what is like to be in the Academy, the development of players and the experiences of our players currently on loan. We hope these programmes will provide our supporters with more information about the excellent work in the Academy, increase their knowledge of our players and build potential transfer values of our talent.

**FN** and **MM** talked about the piece that RamsTV aired a few weeks ago on #myramshero, a story about a young boy called Macauley who was presented a season ticket for next season by his hero Scott Carson. This received a tremendous amount of footfall from fans and in fact received four times the engagement than any other club digital media offerings. It is also a fine example of a community project.

**MM** asked the group what other content would you like to see on Rams TV, please feel free to feed this back to **SP**. **PW** said he would like to see more of Kevin Hector on RamsTV. **FN** stated that it was great to have him contribute to our recent community event on dementia and we are hopeful of him working with us further.

**MM** asked the group what content would you like to see on Rams TV, please feel free to feed this back to **SP**, on a different note **PW** said he would like to see more of Kevin Hector and if that's talking on Rams TV, **FN** stated this is something we are currently considering and we can update you in due course.

### **2.3 Q What is our position on gambling advertising? David – DCFC Fans.**

**MM** said gambling advertising is a popular form of sponsorship within the game and there is increasing regulation of the gambling industry. It was also an excellent revenue which allows the club to make decisions such as year—on-year season ticket price freezes.

### **2.4 Question: Are there plans to stream RamsTV on Sky? If not, why not? There was a feed on Nynex 20 years ago, surely, they could be by now? David – DCFC Fans.**

**PT** explained that getting RamsTV on a digital platform such as Sky is possible but would cost a tremendous amount of money and would not be a justifiable expenditure. **FN** added that Rams TV is very easily accessible on all platforms already and is free to watch and free to air. As people continue to migrate from watching traditional TV to viewing content on mobile devices, accessibility will further increase.

### **2.5 Q How is the current system running? Is this working where are our scouts based? How many players in the last three years have we signed off the back of a recommendation from a recognised club scout?**

**MM** stated that recruitment for the first team is always challenging whilst in the promotion mix, a few years back, we cut back on the way we used to recruit and we have put more of our concentration into the Academy, we have reviewed the whole operation of how we scout and as you may be aware we have Joe McLaren (Steve's son), in the past our scouts have been so remote and have been representing lots of other clubs, Joes responsibility is to do the player profiling on both the 1<sup>st</sup> Team and Academy, Joe focuses on identifying player talent, we of course get Gary's involvement for the first team.

A lot of our scouting is done electronically and using videos and of course seeing the players in action on the pitch.

**MM** Stated also that Gary attends all the U23's game and most of the U 18's or views via video link.

### **2.6 Q As a community leader, I believe we have a responsibility to push forward with improving grassroots football specifically for the Derby City region. Should we gain promotion to the Premier League would be in favour of a tax for the grassroots football?**

Currently the Premier League donate around 20 million per year but something more needs to be done. We can have the best available facilities at our training ground but all these players begin their life playing on absolute shocking pitches in and around the city. That is when games are on which this year has seen far too many called off.

With the Moor Farm expansion, have we looked at making any of the 3g pitches available daily for clubs located in the city to play on either a Saturday or Sunday that wouldn't impact on any other of the academies training/playing? Do we feel that Derby County could do more to help these kids play and develop with the facilities we have at our disposal? Nick - South Stand

**MM** started the topic by saying we already have a strong link with the community, **MM** puts a lot of money into the Derby County in the Community projects in and around the city along with the Premier League and Football Foundation projects that are linked with DCITC already, Soccerstars is also an organisation that DCFC contributes towards in order to get young people active in the community. We will always look to do

more in the community and if there are more ways to do this then we would be more than happy to explore. This could include sponsoring a local football league such as the Derby city.

In place already at Moor Farm, we conduct training courses for local coaches delivered by DCFC staff.

**FN** said that we could communicate this out at stronger level. **PT** also said that the elite football has in recent years, contribute more and more to grassroots level. UK Sport's funding of extreme minority sports such as Curling and Bobsleigh would build a large of number of quality football pitches. He pointed out that local league finals days are often held at Moor Farm and the club also occasionally invite local teams to play friendlies at the facility.

He added that Pride Park's Head Groundsman runs a course for the Derbyshire FA, providing free advice and help to volunteer groundsman to make the best of local pitches, this is offered to grassroots level clubs across the county.

SCG representatives made the point that should we bring more local community football to the Training Centre this may defeat the object of a youngsters aspiring to reach Moor Farm.

**MM** felt that bearing in mind the demands the academy and first team have on resources at Moor Farm, the level of support we currently give grassroots organisations was appropriate.

**2.7 Q How is the current Scouting system operated? Is it working? How many players in the last three years have we signed off the back of a recommendation from a recognised club scout? Nick – South Stand**

**MM** stated that recruitment for the first team is always challenging whilst in the promotion mix. A few years ago, we cut back on the way we recruit and have concentrated more into the Academy. The entire scouting operation has been again been reviewed with Joe McClaren pulling all elements together.

Joe focuses on identifying player talent and ensuring that the all recruitment at any age is integrated with the overall first team strategy. He works very closely with Gary and his coaching and technical staff.

A lot of our scouting is done electronically and using video analysis, together with seeing the players in action on the pitch.

**MM** stated also that Gary attends or watches all U23's game and most of the U18's or views via video link.

This season we have adopted a strategy of getting more players our on loan – currently 11 to date - and they all have excellent reviews. This has provided the players with exposure to senior football while also giving those players still with us a real opportunity to grow.

**MM** said that although he was very happy with the current scouting provision, international scouting is always a challenge and we still seeking ways to improve. **LH** mentioned that in the Jim Smith days players internationally were recruited in pairs which seemed to work well.

We have a record number of players out on loan currently, 11 to date and they all have superb reviews, the academy players have a model that it has to pay the way and we nurture all the talent.

MM stated that international scouting is always a challenge and we seek ways to improve, LH mentioned that in the Jim Smith days players internationally were recruited in pairs.

**2.8 Q With so many players leaving in January – permanently or on loan with no recall – and the subsequent injury to Sam Winnall, the squad now looks very thin for a promotion campaign. Are there any other options we are not aware of? Jim W – Rams Trust**

A key objective for the season has been to build the Unity within the club and especially within the squad. At the end of the January window Gary was keen to ensure that the entire squad was aligned. Johnny was consistently resistant to renewing his contract and it emerged that he was adamant about a move to the MLS. This would result in a total loss of the player's value and risk the player being nervous of the risk of injury, and the huge consequences given that he would be out of contract and unable to secure a new contract until he was fully recovered.

As a result it made sense to enable Johnny to be sold in the January window.

This means that all remaining players are fully aligned and fully committed.

**MM** added that Winnall's injury was very unfortunate but Palmer has made an immediate positive contribution.

**PT** also pointed out that EFL rules on loans have now changed and there is no recall available during the season.

**PT** then concluded the meeting and said the club would update SCG members on issues such as parking, after-match concourse opening and Fans Park plans in the coming weeks.

There was then a further conversation about the traffic issues being experience in the area around the stadium and elsewhere in the East Midlands before the meeting closed at 10.30pm.