

# **FCG – Minutes, October 2010**

## **Present**

Tim Waddington, Matt Hudson, Sean McQuaid, Alex Hales (all CUFC), Jon Burns, Roger Westlake (both CUSA), Ryan Whitear (Essex Police), Luke Ealden, Richard Blythe, Doug Fenner, Keith Beechener, Steve Hunt, Laurie Lane, Richard Smith, Matt Smith, Graeson Laitt, Rob Knight (FCG)

## **Apologies for absence**

Paul Moss, Ali Smith, Colin Hutson, Karl Groome, Alan Watkins

## **Introductions**

Members of the group introduced themselves, their reasons for getting involved and their history of support of the Club, as well as their social and working backgrounds. There was a pleasingly wide range of groups represented, with various lengths of support evident. The Club were also represented, as well as the CUSA and the Police.

## **The Purpose of the FCG**

Tim Waddington outlined the remit of the group and its intentions going forward. The Club has made good progress in resolving many of the teething problems for the stadium since the transfer from Layer Road in July 2008, but it has been identified by the Club that there are still some ways to improve what people are experiencing when they come to the stadium on the matchday.

The Club goal remains to achieve promotion and be re-established in the Championship, which in itself will resolve many of the perceived problems about the sizes of crowds, but the club is keen to include the constructive feedback from supporters to ensure that the matchday experience grows alongside that.

The Club is aware that ideas are suggested but there is a perception that they don't always get enacted. By mobilising this group and other supporters, along with closer working with the club staff, we hope to drive ideas and campaigns to reality in the future.

Supporters present gave some idea of the expectations of what the Club has in its power to change but overall everyone is keen to find the best solution to lifting crowd levels and ensuring a positive matchday experience.

It is hoped that the fans who attend the FCG meetings can be the Club 'eyes and ears' on the ground to hear what the types of issues are out there in the stadium and to be a conduit through which supporters' concerns can reach the club. It was discussed how this might be

achieved and, in the future, it is hoped that we can provide contact details for each section of the supporter base's representative.

There was a feeling that the one key issue is that of perception – there are many good things going on, it is a question of how this story will be told to the wider public.

### **Issues & Solutions**

As this was the first meeting held by the FCG, the floor was opened to attendees to suggest the key issues that they feel face the club at the moment. Many overlapped, but the key list was as follows:-

#### *Issues for the FCG*

- Ensuring female representation on the group
- Making sure fans know who their 'reps' are to allow an open channel of communication
- identifying realistic time frames in fixing a problem

#### *Issues for the club/stadium*

##### *a) Ticketing*

- to develop a realistic aim of building the crowd by capturing the key markets (young fans, commuters etc)
- how to maintain current 'steady growth'; how to continue to achieve value for money for the supporter; changing the misperception of pricing; removing perceived barriers to entry for various supporter groups
- development of ticketing incentives
- the grading of games and how it works
- clarity of information on the 'price of the whole day' – can there be examples so people know the likely cost of their day (e.g. station car parking prices)
- investigating the possibility of a mobile/portable ticketing solution, going to market rather than waiting for people to come to the club (university/train station)
- feedback presented regarding the concessionary pricing structure
- The Junior U's scheme and the possibility of providing variety of events etc for a potential split in the ages involved (e.g. 8-10 v 11-14)

##### *b) Travel*

- the Shuttle bus service: after two and a bit seasons, to look into the bus service and re-evaluate to see whether it is serving all appropriate areas in the town and in a cost effective manner; Adapting the service route to allow repeat journeys; publicity of the service to increase awareness
- the issue of lighting on Boxted Road and further investigation of the pushing for lampposts or temporary lighting from appropriate organisations
- Car park and its surfacing; impression on visitors

- investigating the provision of a footpath from the water tower 'Water Lane' on Mill Road
- ongoing issues with the awareness of the Matchday Rover ticket

*c) Inside/around the stadium*

- catering and prices
- stadium steps and their safety, ease of access to seating and disabled decks for those with walking/mobility issues
- 'matchday experience' and how to improve the 'visual feel' of a smaller crowd
- PA quality
- further developing the matchday pre-match experience
- providing further information about ground regulations and why things happen in certain instances (e.g. why are bottle tops taken at point of sale).
- provision of feedback forms to supporters by FCG/insert in programme/U's Central/matchday sales

In summary, there was a consensus that more communication was required – for example, the wide range of opportunities for people to visit the stadium as well as the good work that the club was doing in all areas. The matter of improving perception was key.

It was agreed that the FCG members in attendance would be sent the list of issues raised and ask them to consider them before the next meeting is held. The group were keen to 'tick off' some issues quickly to make progress, before looking at the more difficult issues and ways in which the FCG can help to provide a successful resolution (if possible).

**AOB**

No additional matters were put forward, but all members have provided contact information which may be made available at a later date.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held at the Weston Homes Community Stadium on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 6.30pm.