

Minutes of Sheffield Wednesday Supporters Engagement Panel meeting

Date: Saturday 12 February

Time: 8:30am via Zoom

In Attendance

Panel Groups: Simon Hodgkinson (North Yorkshire Owls), Paul Holmes (Wednesdayite), Ashley Rogers (Wednesday Week)

Panel Individuals: Dave Buttery, Paul Hodgetts, Philip Rushforth, Steve Scotthorne, Alan Smith

From the club: Dejphon Chansiri (Chairman), Liam Dooley (Chief Operating Officer & Chair), Trevor Braithwait (Director of Communications), Rob Cox (Executive Head Chef)

Agenda (set by panel)

- Terms of Reference document (ToR)
- Kiosks
- Catering operation
- Entertainment & engagement
- New members to the panel

ToR

The updated document was distributed to the panel by TB ahead of the meeting. PR said the panel would look over and feed back to the club in due course.

KIOSKS

LD explained a range of significant and positive change regarding this meeting's agenda items, primarily a state of the art tilling system hosting 94 tills in total around the stadium which has been installed in the last month. Asked about the average fan spend per head on matchday, LD confirmed a figure of between £1.50 and £2. Service and queuing times will be dramatically improved by the new tilling system, which will reduce the average transaction time from 37 seconds to approximately eight seconds. Mobile bottle bars were trialed but did not have the desired effect on queuing times. DB asked if kiosk space could be hired out to third parties, LD and RC said they could but club revenue would be severely impacted so would not be prudent. DB asked if the club could use more local companies and products and RC confirmed that almost all food and drink products are locally sourced. LD said the new tilling agreement was implemented after a thorough selection process involving four providers and trial periods over the first part of the season. Sales can now be monitored in real time and products distributed around the stadium where necessary.

PR explained his daughter has a job in the kiosks at Hillsborough on matchday and has said how much better and more user friendly the new system is. LD attended staff training sessions himself and agreed with that feedback. PR asked about staff turnover on matchday and LD said this remains a concern throughout the entertainment and hospitality industry. Turnover and difficulty with recruitment have no relation to salary or terms and conditions, it is the current transient nature of casual staff, who are paid for training as well as matchday duties. Having and maintaining experienced members of staff in kiosk areas is central to a smooth operation. Other clubs in the area experiencing exactly the same issues. LD and RC issued open invitations to all panel members to shadow them on matchday to gain a first-hand understanding of the matchday operation.

AR asked about future technology involving season cards to incentivise supporters to arrive early and buy in-stadium products, LD said the club are working on the potential of for example £100 of credit to receive £120 of products. The club have recently installed vending machines in the North Stand and South Stand on a trial basis are also pursuing the possibility with local businesses of additional vending machines, selling merchandise as well as snacks and drinks. LD confirmed that children are permitted entry to the Wednesday Tap after games but not before given licensing regulations.

AS suggested promotions such as meal deals could be broadcast on the big screen on preceding matchdays, to which LD agreed. AS said the matchday communication side has improved dramatically, LD said the big screen operation has now been brought in-house and operated by a Sheffield-based company.

SHOP

LD explained that new technology has allowed the club to be more flexible and gave examples of promoting and selling merchandise in corporate areas. LD has embraced initiatives from clubs around Europe and from box holders themselves. PR said the club's Meadowhall store did not stock enough products and observed that staff did not appear knowledgeable on the products. LD said he is in the process of switching staff between the two sites as an increased training mechanism.

ENTERTAINMENT & ENGAGEMENT

LD said a significant amount of resource and investment was dedicated to the Family Area in the Grandstand, which helped the club achieve Family Excellence status. However, the pandemic dictated many activities had to stop and it's hoped the area will revert to normal in time now the country appears to be exiting restrictions. The club are liaising with a leading gaming company to provide and host new entertainment for young supporters.

Asked on the potential of open first team training sessions, DC said these have taken place in the past but were stopped at the request of the manager at that time. That policy has remained in place and DC said very few clubs, if any, currently host open training sessions on a regular basis. In addition, the training ground will remain all but locked down as a result of the pandemic.

LD said children are randomly selected from the crowd at night games to be flag bearers on the pitch. During a time when mascot packages are/were not permitted due to the pandemic, the community flag bearing provides a great connection between the club and young supporters.

PH asked about the prospect of an increased Supporter Liaison Officer presence on matchday and LD invited panel members to take such roles.

PH asked if meeting dates with the panel could be in the diary over a course of the year. DC explained that is a possibility but there is a strong likelihood that dates would change given his busy schedule and the prospect of 11th hour meetings when in Thailand.

AS asked if the club utilise 'mystery shoppers' for engagement and feedback purposes, both LD and RC confirmed this is something already in place.

DIVERSITY

Both the panel and the club feel the panel should be more diverse and discussed ideas on fresh recruitment.

AOB

With there being no further business or questions, the meeting was closed.

Date of next meeting

To be confirmed