



RoDs of Huish Park Survey Meeting
Wednesday 16th November 2016 – 5.00pm

Present on behalf of the Board of Glovers Trust:

- Brendon Owen – Chairman
- Adam Forster – Vice Chairman
- Stuart Burrell – Communications Officer
- Andy Richardson – Supporter Liaison

Present on behalf of Yeovil Town Football Club:

- John Fry – Chairman
- Andy Rossiter – Director
- David Lee – Director/Company Secretary
- James Hillier – Stadium Manager
- Clive Robinson – Corporate Hospitality Manager
- Alex O'Loughlin – Press Officer
- Jean Cotton – Associate Director/Club Secretary
- Kirstie Baker – Club Secretary

Adam Forster opened the meeting with the formal introductions of the Glovers Trust representatives. He then made a presentation with slides showing the results from the survey that the Trust conducted with its members.

He concluded by saying that the Trust want the best for fans of Yeovil Town Football Club and we are prepared to achieve by unity. He then invited the Club to share the findings of their survey.

Alex O'Loughlin indicated that whilst the Club had not fully completed the assessment of their own survey, preliminary findings were in line with the Trust's results. An obvious area of discontent with fans was the scruffy and dirty appearance of the stadium's outer walls. It was agreed that the perception given to fans attending Huish Park was one of neglect.

ACTION: The Club in anticipation of the Trust's findings have made contact with a specialist company, who have agreed to give the outer cladding of the Stadium a thorough power wash within the next few weeks at no cost to the Club. It was agreed that this would be done annually.

Following on from discussions regarding the power washing, it was raised that Trust members had observed that there was a dangerous amount of mud accumulating on the flat surface in front of the Screwfix stand. James Hillier explained that despite the strip drainage system running along

that area, water from the car park would often spill over and run down the slope towards the stand, bringing with it mud. Efforts had been made with hired mechanical cleaning device to remove the mud and moss that it attracted, but this had caused additional damage to the tarmac surface. James felt that the only remedy was for a couple of people with shovels and a wheelbarrow to remove it. It was suggested that jobs of this nature could be carried out by volunteers on a Saturday afternoon when no football was being played at Huish Park. It was suggested that the Club could make a fun occasion out of it, for example, give regular updates on, or broadcast over a radio, how the team were doing away from home, offering tea, coffee and snacks in order to make those volunteers feel valued.

ACTION: The Club will put out an appeal through affiliated supporter organisations and generally for volunteers to help the Club out.

Another area of the feedback from the Trust survey, and in line with the Clubs preliminary assessment of its own survey, was the unsightly collection of objects and deteriorating portakabins at the back of the Thatcher's Gold Stand. The Trust attendees likened the scene to that of a junk yard and asked that these items be looked at and any that were not vital to the running of Huish Park be disposed of. James Hillier said that only last week a quantity of scrap was taken to scrap merchants and £75 was received. The Trust members pointed out that fans were expected to purchase hot food from a burger van situated in the middle of mess and stand and eat in an area that was often waterlogged and filthy, and that this was not a good start to a match day experience. James Hillier explained that many of the items were necessary and the Club would like to store them safely and out of eye sight but storage facilities were badly lacking.

ACTION: The Club would look again at the amount of unnecessary equipment and try and reduce it. Consideration to be given for better screening, for example the frost and water covers for the pitch that needed to be stored in that area might be better fenced off than at present.

It was then noted that ticket prices were a concern for many supporters and the Trust members specifically referenced the unpopular price increase that takes place on the day of a match. It was suggested that perhaps this should be scrapped as it could be a factor for people not attending matches when considering it as an option at the last minute. Kirstie Baker said that the Club had experimented with removing the surcharge but it did not appear to make a difference to the attendance figures. She said it would be difficult to implement at this stage of the season but did point out that the price increase is only in effect from 12pm on a match-day and so it is still possible to purchase tickets on the day at the standard pricing tariff. She also indicated that the Club would soon be offering half price season tickets but had to be careful about other discount offers because season ticket holders often felt aggrieved. John Fry advised that ticket prices for next season were already being considered and that he was keen to get input from the Trust and other supporter organisations ahead of a final decision being made.

ACTION: The Trust to be invited to talks with the Club regarding ticketing prices for the 2017/18 season.

As feedback and suggestions on catering featured highly on both surveys, a discussion ensued on the state of the tea bars and cooking facilities and whether they were fit for purpose in the modern age. The Club said that it might be time to look at outsourcing the catering but a profit had to be made. It was agreed that the catering issues were a significant area for review and it would be best to hold a separate meeting to discuss the problems. Clive Robinson said that he wished to say a big thank you to the Glovers Trust members who helped to keep the bar operating in the marquee before the FA Cup 1st Round game against Solihull Moors when agency staff failed to attend. He said that it was more and more difficult to get agency staff to work at the Club. Andy Rossiter asked in order to avoid these problems whether supporters might like to help out regularly in the marquee. The Trust said that they were glad that their members had been able to assist and that this was a potential area that the Trust may be able to help in future. It was pointed out, however, that the Trust has not been set up to provide either money or

volunteered labour for the Club. As an independent organisation the Trust will act as a conduit for its members to voice their concerns and constructive criticism to the Club. It was explained that as a benefit society the Trust has a duty not only to engage with the Football Club but to reach out to the local community and be of service to it.

John Fry spoke of the need to look at the last twenty five years and what had been achieved. He accepted that better ways of moving forward were now needed. He welcomed the Trust's involvement and hoped that together improvements could be made. He moved on to financial matters, indicating that there was no spare money in the Club's budget and that all elements of the club need to be run with financial impact in mind, each aiming to make a profit independently, this included catering, the academy and although a totally separate business, the Ladies team.

He said that when the Club was in the non-league pyramid, fans would regularly volunteer to do odd jobs around the ground but since the Club became fully professional and joined the Football League volunteer numbers had dwindled. He cited the Ladies Team as an example of how help from volunteers has transformed the atmosphere at their games. The Trust attendees suggested that goodwill had been reduced on both sides and that the supporters felt very little goodwill coming from the Club and so in turn there was very little appetite to offer goodwill back. It was pointed out that it would be necessary to make the fans feel valued and needed and only then would help and assistance perhaps flow back from supporters. The Trust attendees cited Exeter City as an example of good volunteer practise. It was also suggested that if the Club needed supporters to help it should perhaps initially approach the affiliated supporter organisations and also consider a marketing strategy to make volunteering an attractive proposition.

David Lee said that there seemed to be problems of which all who were present at the meeting agreed could be solved with a little help. James Hillier questioned if volunteers might stay behind after the games and assist with littering clearing. He explained that at present the Club employ four litter pickers and a supervisor and that the work takes approximately 50-80 minutes to complete. The Trust attendees re-iterated that perhaps incentives of some kind could be offered and that these requests needed to be advertised in the correct way in order to attract supporters to these tasks.

It was agreed by all present that communication was very important and the Club admitted that they had not been as good as they should have been in reaching out and engaging with the supporters.

It was agreed that the involvement of the Western Gazette reporter, Tom Seymour would be useful to help cascade information relating to Club and the Trust setting out their intentions for cooperation and implementation of improvements.

ACTION: The Club's Press Officer and the Trust Communications Officer to liaise together and involve Tom Seymour in a joint article for the Gazette.

It was agreed that Kirstie Baker should be the primary point of contact for the Trust when engaging with the Football Club.

ACTION: Contact to be made as soon as possible to arrange two further meetings; one meeting to discuss the issues relating to catering and the other to discuss further issues raised from the two surveys as soon as the Club had finished collating their results which Alex indicated will be the end of November.

All parties announced that they had found the meeting to be extremely positive and looked forward to further progress at future meetings. The meeting then closed at 7.00pm.