

Saints Voice Panel Meeting 15th May 2019

In Attendance

Saints Voice

James Whitworth
Katie Maidment-Smith
Yasmin Wiseman
Tara Doel
Michael Sadler
Mark Middleton
Louise Burke
Zoe Wilson

Southampton Football Club

Toby Steele Managing Director
Paul Boon Director of Catering & Events
Kate Tarry Brand & Marketing Director
Khali Parsons Senior Supporter Relations Manager
Matthew Silvester Ticket Office Manager
Daniel Whittington Senior Supporter Relations Advisor
Aaron Heskins Supporter Relations Advisor

Apologies

Mark Chee	Anthony Cole-Johnson	Director of Sales
Oliver Boast	Tim Greenwell	Director of Legal & Risk
	Kate Tarry	Brand & Marketing Director
	David Thomas	Commercial Director
	John McWilliams	Director of Operations

Minutes: Welcome

Updates From Previous Meeting

Merchandise Focus Group – held a focus group on 8th April.
Predict the Score – announced on post-match emails.

Catering

Mike S – We feel that there hasn't been a massive improvement around catering or queuing as a whole.

YW – Queues in Northam are quite slow and it isn't too clear that the food/ drink carts are cash only. However we haven't received any comments on pricing and feel the beer vouchers are working well.

TD – Would there be a possibility of buying your drinks in advance for future games – as in a voucher book?

PB – We are looking at ways to improve and develop the beer tokens for next season. We have received great feedback from our staff on kiosks. The general feeling around beer vouchers has been positive and there is a large uptake each game. We do have challenges although queues are on the agenda. We have some great data for queue times and service times and have identified some areas for development.

TD – Would there be a possibility of getting vending machines?

PB – The problem with vending machines is, would it make a difference with queue times during our busy spells? We are busy for 30 minutes before kick-off and at half time – outside of these times, we have the capacity.

Fanzone

MS – Where are we with the Fanzone?

PB – We are still awaiting planning permission. The public consultation period has finished, and we are now awaiting the next steps from Southampton City Council. Our wishes are to have this ready for the new season and we remain confident of this happening.

Condition of Seats

TD – We have noticed that the seating is faded and going pink.

TS – We did a trial with a company, where they tested a technique to return faded seats to their original colour, which didn't work. The next option is to physically replace these seats, which is considerably more expensive than the treatment option. It is something we would be keen to do but is not prioritised over other essential maintenance at this time.

Half Time Entertainment

MM – We think the interviews are working well with ex-players, in particular, Francis Benali after his challenge. As for the entertainment, not sure what else we can do.

KT – The matchday entertainment focus group was very useful, we covered pre-match and half-time entertainment. Some of this we have started to implement - now we are looking at ways to develop for next season. Some matches are led by our sponsors, so we have less input, but we are certainly working on some of the new ideas.

Totem Sign, Front of the Stadium

Mike S – The totem sign outside the front of the stadium is right in front of the Ted Bates Statue – are there plans to move this?

KP – We are very limited in where we can put this sign due to access for emergency vehicles and the team coaches to the front of the stadium so it is unlikely to move in the near future.

Bricks and Pavers

Mike S – Any progress on bricks and pavers?

TS – The decision at the moment is to leave the bricks/ pavers where they are. We have no records of ownership. We are, however, looking at potentially introducing something new for dedications and memorials in other parts of the stadium.

Virgin Media

Mike S – Could you clarify what the new deal with Virgin involves and how does LD Sports fit in?

TS – Virgin made the decision to go with the sleeve, which left us with opportunity to find a new sponsor. Being Chinese owned, this opportunity presented itself through Mr Gao and the links in China – myself and David met LD Sports and felt comfortable this is someone we wanted to work with. They meet our aims in terms of it being a sport content platform and in a part of the world we want to grow. If we want to grow our fans, we need to do this globally. This will create more followers, more followers bring us bigger sponsors, providing us with a bigger reinvestment in football, which is our number one priority. We appreciate that their site is not live and raises questions, however we are comfortable that this will be live come the summer. Although they are named LD Sports, they have no connection with Lander Sports.

There were other opportunities for us around the same mark but we felt this was the most exciting. I read somewhere that the Club would not morally have betting sponsors, but we have not said that. We would prefer not to, although we would not rule it out in the future.

JW – What do LD Sports do?

TS – LD Sports are a sports media entertainment platform website, which cover primarily football and basketball. This is targeted at the younger generation in Asia.

KT – They are very open to helping us grow in China, by increasing our following and raising brand awareness. A lot of our content will be going out through their channels as well.

With regards to Virgin Media, in place of the Twenty is Plenty initiative they have been working on a soft launch of Super Saints, which will see more ‘Surprise & Delight’ moments throughout next season.

MS – What is this surprise and delight?

KT – There have been some social campaigns that have celebrated our fans, and some surprise benefits such as lucky dip vouchers for free drinks and food on a matchday. We are working Virgin to develop this initiative throughout next season.

TS – We will keep you updated on further plans.

App and Connectivity

ZW – It was quite evident that supporters couldn't gain access to internet on the last game of the season when it is important to fans to check other scores and so on. Are there any further steps in introducing this?

KT – This is absolutely something we want to improve, however as you are aware installing WiFi is a huge project, costing a couple of million pounds. We are working on 4G connectivity, and potential solutions or improvements. We have worked with a couple of businesses offering solutions although this is not a quick process, due to the infrastructure and gaining permissions. We are driving forward with this.

We really want to produce an app, but we want to get this right for our fans which takes a lot of research and development.

Sea City Museum

MS – What is the update?

TS – We have started work on a new pitch facing lounge for matchdays and non-matchdays. The theme around this is early history Saints, based around 1885 to 1905, and we will be using this area to connect to our history. Moving forward we would like to be able to do more with the historical pieces, although it is important to note that it would be difficult to replicate the fantastic display at the museum.

KP – Please note that a huge amount of the museum display was owned by private collectors and individuals, not ourselves.

Environment & Sustainability

Mike S – Is there a policy and what do you do?

KT – This is a hot topic for us and we recognise that there is more we could be doing. We are having an audit to look into our energy, plastic usage and waste. This will help us look at where we are, what we can do, and what targets we can set.

We have already stopped using plastic cutlery and straws. We are working with our suppliers to ensure that our food is not wrapped in plastic, and we have removed all single use plastic cups for staff. At the training ground we are removing plastic water

bottles by installing more water fountains and providing reusable water bottles. We are also introducing reusable pint glasses next season.

LB – What about food wastage?

PB – In the last 3 home games we have been measuring our volumes and wastage and working on how we can make the best use of food wastage – there are different options, and we are currently looking at turning waste into energy.

Discrimination/ Racism/ Text Reporting

Mike S – What is happening with reports of Antisemitism and racism we see in the papers, and what does the 60060 text report number do?

KP – Sadly there has been an increase in reports of bad behaviour, not just at Southampton Football Club but across the Premier League. The text reporting number has been in place now for a couple of years, and has been promoted across matchday programmes, crowd facing boards and on the big screens as well as on our website. We have relaunched this recently to further raise awareness and introduced posters, on tickets, and other marketing.

Receiving a report on the day in real time gives us better opportunities to deal with the behaviour, and if necessary, with the police.

When we receive reports after the match it can be more difficult to address retrospectively, harder to gather the necessary evidence and to identify persons in order to address effectively.

We pursue complaints with the police via the courts and seek a Football Banning Order which is a criminal offence when appropriate, we can issue Club bans, or work with supporters to educate and deter bad behaviour through the use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts. The more information we get from fans regarding bad behaviour the easier it is to address effectively.

ZW – Does this number work for away games?

KP – Absolutely – whilst we are not always at the games ourselves, we are in contact with our counter parts at other clubs, as well as the police, who attend each away game.

Mike S – What do you include in the text?

KP – Text SFCREPORT to 60060 and include as much information as possible. Including seat details, a description of what the offender looks like and quotes of exactly what is being said or the behaviours witnessed is really helpful.

Mike S – How about away fans in the home end? Can the text report number be used to report this?

KMS - I have been asked to raised this because for the Bournemouth match there were so many away fans in the boxes.

KP – Hospitality/ boxes are different to general admission, as we do allow away supporters into these areas, which is the same across the Premier League. We would say that the text report number is not to be used for this, as it is not discrimination, abuse and anti-social behaviour. We would rather our Head of Venue Safety & Security speak about this, as this is their area of expertise. We can ensure they are at the next meeting.

TS – We can note this as an action point, to ask Mark to respond to questions around away fans in home seats.

MS – spoke around issues we face with tickets being sold on to away fans

Conversation around scenarios and solutions for this issue.

Mike S – spoke positively about the involvement for Saints Voice with the ticketing strategy for next season.

Renaming the Stands

Mike S – What are your thoughts behind renaming the stands after some ex-players?

TS –We wouldn't rule this out, and we can see some merits in it. There would be some differing opinions from fans though! We do like the fact that the stands represent the city, some fans prefer that over the potential for Ex-Saints. So while we wouldn't rule it out it may be that we look at other ways to honour some of our players.

Girls & Women's Matches at St Mary's

Mike S – Raising the profile of women's football – any consideration for them to play games at St. Mary's?

TS – Yes but only for one offs rather than their regular venue. We have a great partnership with AFC Totton, which is a fantastic ground, and the crowd of 300-400 creates a great atmosphere which we couldn't replicate at St Mary's as yet. We would recommend going to watch a game there and we can discuss this at future meetings once we have been able to build the attendance.

ZW – How are you looking to raise the profile of the women's game?

TS – We have tried to build the momentum on covering the women’s team and promoting them as much as possible. We recognise that the team is very young and that we don’t want to over awe them. As we push up the leagues, we will look to grow the team and their profile as much possible.

KT – From Marieanne’s perspective, when she started the season she wanted to break the team in gently and not over publicise them. Then over the season we started to build some really great behind the scenes footage and cup games and as the season went on with them clinching the league. We have to use our media team resources across U23’s Friday nights, U18’s and the first team on Saturday/ Sunday’s and now the women and girls on Saturday/ Sunday’s. This one team covers all of these games pre-match, during the match and post-match. We do however want to do more coverage around the women’s team and Marieanne is very much open to this.

Review – The Club and the panel spoke individually about how they feel about the first year of Saints Voice

Southampton FC – has found the engagement really positive and useful and look forward to continuing to develop the panel and the relationship.

Saints Voice – The Club have been open and responsive, sharing their thoughts and information on various subjects. Taken on board feedback and suggestions and acted on them. The subgroups have been very helpful. Expressed their desire to reshape the page on the website and to promote the panel more – discussion around social media and raising awareness of the group.

Action Points

- Arrange next meeting
- Raise with MH what fans should do when they believe away fans are in home seats
- Update the website page
- Further discuss potential for new members