



MEETING MINUTES

Date : September 4, 2013

Location : Tyneside Irish Centre

Agenda

1. CHRONICLE 10 QUESTIONS

2. ALAN PARDEW'S TRANSFER STATEMENT/JOE KINNEAR'S ROLE

3. FANS' FORUM

4. WONGA/SPORTS DIRECT STADIUM ADVERTISING

5. AWAY TICKETS ENHANCEMENT FUND

6. SINGING SECTION

7. @NUFCOFFICIAL TWITTER ACCOUNT

8. NUFC FANS UTD COMMUNICATION

9. AOB



MEETING MINUTES

1. CHRONICLE 10 QUESTIONS

The meeting opened with a short introduction from Steve Hastie who then handed over to Lee Marshall, Supporter Liaison Officer at NUFC, who wanted to respond to some of points from the ten questions put by fans and raised via that day's edition of the Chronicle. Lee admitted that this was not an easy thing to do, that his answers would be limited but that he would be "as honest and candid" as possible.

Regarding the £30m loan Mike Ashley gave to the club following relegation to keep big players and help promotion; this was interest free. Last year just over £11m was paid back. The remaining £18m+ is still with the club, to be paid back at a date in the future. This was documented in the last set of club accounts.

Lee stated that as far as he is aware, Mike Ashley is not actively trying to sell NUFC.

Regarding why Mike Ashley doesn't communicate with the fans, Lee responded that not many owners of other clubs have a dialogue with supporters. Several examples were given, including Roman Abramovich and the Glazers. A response from the floor said that Abramovich doesn't need to talk as Chelsea's success speaks for him. Lee stated that the new Fans' Forum will give supporters the opportunity to speak to those who run the club.

The Chronicle raised concerns over the new Sports Direct News website as the site had launched with a story that Wayne Rooney was joining Newcastle and another story on deadline day on the site stated that Man Utd were late bidders for Yohan Cabaye. Lee stated that the site is a joint venture between Sports Direct and My London News and that they had received no information from NUFC regarding either story.

Lee acknowledged the question as to whether Mike Ashley has a blueprint for NUFC and was asked from the floor if the blueprint was the same as the 'grand plan' Derek Llambias had talked of some time ago in which Arsenal and Aston Villa were cited as models to follow. Lee did not know if this was the same as the plan currently in place but would seek further clarification on this.

As the questions had just been published that day, Lee had not been able to cover all the points thoroughly, but he would attempt able to clarify some issues further at a future date.



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2. ALAN PARDEW'S TRANSFER STATEMENT / JOE KINNEAR'S ROLE

Several comments from the floor expressed displeasure at the press statement released by the club, attributed to Alan Pardew with regards to the club's transfer business over the summer. Lee stated that it contained some 'salient points' in that there was money available for transfers, but that it was felt that the opportunities to bring the right players in at the right price did not occur. Lee said that they could have used the money to bringing in a number of players during the transfer window, but that they would have been 'bodies' filling up the dressing room rather than the right players for NUFC. He went onto say that a number of deals done in January had originally been earmarked for this summer, but had been brought forward. He said had Yoan Gouffran and Moussa Sissoko been signed this summer rather than in January, then the signings of these players along with the loan deal for Loic Remy would have changed fans' opinions and that NUFC have been amongst the biggest spenders regarding transfers during the 2013 calendar year and of the current premier league clubs we were the eighth highest spenders over that period. It was pointed out from the floor that choosing dates to suit he would counter that over the previous 6 years we were bottom of that spending group.

Regarding Joe Kinnear's role, Lee stated that Alan Pardew manages the team and as far as Lee is aware, Pardew and chief scout Graham Carr work together on identifying transfer targets, which they then take to Joe Kinnear for him to justify to Mike Ashley.

One comment from the floor said that although they disagreed with the points made in the statement, they were pleased to see the club communicating with the fans. The speaker felt that this was a positive step and hoped there would be more communication in the future. And that perhaps had the Club managed fans' expectations more effectively then a lot of the current anguish could have been avoided.



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3. FANS' FORUM

Lee spoke some more about the Fans' Forum. As discussed in previous meetings, NUFC Fans Utd are one of three fan groups (alongside Newcastle United Supporters Trust and Newcastle United Disabled Supporters Association) to hold a permanent seat on the forum. There were questions from the floor over the make up of other fan representatives. One comment asked why representatives had been picked on areas of the ground. It was felt that supporters wouldn't know whom their representative was and may hold completely different opinions. Lee stated that representatives could be contacted via the club website. However there were more concerns from the floor that this would mean the club themselves would be in control of how fans contact their representative. Further comments from the floor suggested that it would have been fairer to have representation from more fan groups, websites, blogs, fanzines etc, which may hold more similar opinions than someone who happens to sit in the same area of the stadium, and where the ability to contact and discuss matters with them are more open, and independent of NUFC. Lee stated that "observer roles" may be created for the fanzines. Lee pointed out that advice and guidance from the FSF had been sought on how the formation of the fans forum and that the formation was very similar to those adopted by many other clubs.

A point raised from the floor regarding overseas/ long-distance fans and how they could be included and/ or represented by the Fans' Forum, Lee acknowledged this situation and said the Club were exploring solutions to this.

A further question from the floor asked if it would be possible to stream the fan forum meetings online. Lee stated that this would be difficult as the Media team was not resourced to provide such a service at this time. It was then pointed out that technology makes this a simple task and that lack of man-power wasn't really an excuse. Lee countered by saying, that rather like with our meetings - if there is no press and no "recording" he and the Club feel they can be more candid and have a more open discussion.

4. WONGA/SPORTS DIRECT STADIUM ADVERTISING

A question was raised from the floor as to why Sports Direct signs are so prevalent when Wonga are the main club sponsors. Lee replied that the Wonga advertising in St James' Park replaces that of the previous sponsors, Virgin Money. Therefore the Sports Direct adverts and their placements remain unchanged.

5. AWAY TICKETS ENHANCEMENT FUND

As discussed briefly at the last meeting, the FA have given each club an Away Ticket Enhancement fund to encourage away travel. Lee said that as yet NUFC have 'no firm plans' how to spend their allocation and that 'the best people for ideas to come from are the fans'. One idea suggested would be free away travel with every away ticket.

Whilst ticketing was being discussed, it was raised from the floor that there were still serious issues with the ticketing system - away ticket travel groups being broken up and tickets being sent to the wrong travel group member etc. Lee acknowledged that this is a problem and that in the first instance fans should seek support from the box office. This was countered from the floor that as the box office is now tied into the club shop at St James' Park that the level of knowledge of staff can be limited at best and that solutions are not generally forthcoming.



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6. SINGING SECTION

Lee has spoken to the Division '92 fans' group about reinstating a singing section. The initial idea is that they, along with any other interested groups or individuals will create their own charter and standards of behaviour to adhere to which the club would then agree. Only those signing up to the charter would be permitted to be in the designated area. The club would also look at providing flags, banners and other 'stadium decoration' for the area, with fan input and even fans designing the banners themselves. Lee cited the impressive displays by Dortmund fans and stated that this is the sort of thing 'NUFC should be doing'. Lee is arranging for the group to meet with the club to discuss this specific matter further.

This led onto a point from the floor made about the Joe Kinnear banner briefly displayed during the West Ham match and was forcibly then taken down by stewards. It was felt that the club should have taken it with a bit of humour and they should be less quick to censor fans' voices.

7. @NUFCOFFICIAL TWITTER ACCOUNT

Concern was expressed about the content tweeted by the club's official twitter account. It was felt that the vast majority of tweets made from the account concern club shop merchandise, and that people follow the account for news, views and communication from and with the club. It was felt that fans get little response trying to contact and communicate with the club via the twitter account. The question was asked if it would be possible to have separate accounts, one for club news and views and another for merchandise. Lee felt that if that were the case, the commercial department would not be happy as nobody would follow the commercial account, it was agreed that some of the merchandising related tweets have been ill-timed, that the club shop need to have better judgement and be more savvy re their tweets. Lee hopes that the account can become more balanced and engage more with Newcastle fans.

8. NUFC FANS UTD COMMUNICATION

Some comments were made from new attendees who had recently learnt of the group's existence. Although impressed by the meeting, they felt that Fans Utd needs to improve communication beyond the internet. The speaker said that he does not use fans sites, blogs or social media and had only learnt of the group recently via a friend. He felt that there are many NUFC fans who are the same, but who would be interested in attending Fans Utd meetings. Another comment was also raised regarding the Fans Utd website. It was felt that the website should be revamped and contain more information. This was acknowledged and will look into making improvements to the site. The point was made that those involved in Fans Utd do this in their spare time and have other commitments and jobs and that as the group is open, anyone is welcome to help out.



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9. AOB

Steve Hastie talked about the Fairs Club and their campaign for a plaque commemorating Joe Harvey; he said that NUFC Fans Utd with Wraith Promotions were hosting the "Mackem Slayers" dinner on October 17th at the Lancastrian Suite in order to help raise funds for the plaque. Someone from the floor enquired why there was no statue of Joe Harvey and why the campaign was for a plaque rather than a statue. The questioner went on to say that with modern fundraising platforms like Kickstarter that getting the necessary funds in place to have a statue commissioned seemed entirely possible. Someone else from the floor suggested the Club should rename the East Stand in honour of Joe Harvey. All of this will be relayed back to Bill Gibbs and Harry Watson from the Fairs Cup Group who are in charge of the Joe Harvey Memorial Fund.

Steve also brought attention to a talk on the life of one of our most successful players Colin Veitch being held at the Corner House, Heaton on Wednesday 25 September at 7pm. At the talk you will hear about his part in the history of Newcastle United, the PFA and the People's Theatre – and what his story tells us about the Edwardian era and life in Newcastle and Heaton at that time. More information can be found [here](#).

- [Tune into [Toon Talk Radio](#), every Monday between 6pm and 7pm
- [Time is running out to get your tickets to Steve Harper's Charity Match
- [Newcastle United Foundation are looking for your memories of NUFC for an exhibition and an online archive in partnership with the Sporting Memories Network. You can share your memory and read others [here](#)