

## Supporters Parliament Meeting – 11<sup>th</sup> Sept 2018

### Opening

The regular meeting of the Supporters Parliament began at 7pm on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018 in the Sovereign Suite at the Montgomery Waters Meadow

### Present

Chris Wynne; Roger Groves; Mike Davis; Brian Caldwell (CEO); Jamie Edwards (STitc); Lawrence Ellerby (Safety Officer) Ian Whitfield (Media Manager); Joshua Wynne; David Allsopp; John Bailey; Harry Challoner; Rachael Dilloway; Helen Hall; Malcolm Lane; Marion Lane; Rob Lewis; Peter Nottle; Joyce Pulford; Rosie Sabin.

### Apologies

Paul Coyne; Ian Jones; Ian Payne; Selwyn Plant; Steve Price; Colin Storey.

### Approval of Agenda

The agenda was as follows:

1. Jamie Edwards – Shrewsbury Town In The Community / Fanzone
2. Ticketing (i) General  
(ii) Safe Standing
3. Media Update
4. Progress with steel work painting
5. Stadium decoration
6. Staff changes
7. Open Day
8. Junior Shrews
9. Youth Academy
10. Postcode Giveaway Update
11. Ticket Offers
12. EFL- ifollow/Wembley/ referees
13. AOB

## 1) Jamie Edwards Presentation

Jamie started the evening's meeting with a presentation outlining what the STFC ITC have been doing in the local community during his time working for the organisation, displaying several videos available on the STFC ITC website.

Jamie went on to explain how well received the FanZone has become since they received the original funding for the project and explained how well attended it has been. He went on to say that going forward he and Brian are hoping to have a more permanent physical structure for better shelter for the supporters using it, currently MPM pay in full for the marques which is used on a match day.

STFC ITC match day experience for £10.00 offers children a chance to have a tour of the stadium then to watch a training session before heading back to the community hub to take part in a FIFA gaming tournament. The children are then taken into the ground to wave flags on the pitch as the teams comes out, the experience is then completed at half time when they play a game of football on the pitch. This, Jamie explained, has been fully booked for nearly 3 years now with at least two groups of children taking part.

Jamie mentioned the new purchase by STFC ITC of large match day flags which are used by some members of the youth team both male and female from the under 11's and under 13's.

The STFC ITC has three main aims which are

- Improving Health & Wellbeing
- Creating Better Life Chances
- Creating Safer & Stronger Community

STFC ITC are working on a new project in association with Healthy Shropshire's 'Help to Change' and Shrewsbury Council/Shropshire Recovery Partnership's 'Together Stronger'. They are working on Mental Health projects with Omar Beckles presenting in association with the charity Mind. Other projects include working to reduce child-hood obesity and working to help the elderly to become more active, and people who suffer with drug and alcohol abuse.

*"Together we can make Shrewsbury Stronger"* is the main theme.

Jamie went on to explain that they are involved with Kick Cancer charity to help people stay fit and active while recovering from cancer, then explained briefly that the walking football group which operated out of the community hub is expanding further.

Currently STFC ITC has 12 degree-level students studying through the organisation studying 'Community Football & Development Degree' based at the University of South Wales with lectures transmitted to the Hub. The students are also gaining hands-on experience to augment what they learn during their studies. Jamie expects the number of students studying to expand with more degree students as well as a new BTEC qualification with 37 students currently which he believes will also expand further.

Advance Development Centre is a part of the STFC ITC which allows young players from grass roots football to develop and gain experience with the chance that some of them may receive a trial with the football club's academy if they impress. Jamie then went on to explain that the new girl's academy is up and running providing chances for under 10's, under 12's, under 14's & under 16's girls to play football with the aim of making their way to the senior team.

NCS (National Citizen Service): Jamie explained that it is STFC ITC's flagship project to create a safer and more cohesive society which is aimed at 15-17-year olds allowing them to build the skills they will need for work and life, such as: first aid courses; safe sex courses; ironing & preparing food. At the end of the course, they are sent out to raise money for charities in the local area as they cannot raise money for STFC ITC. Jamie informed everyone that this year's group have raised over £29,000 this summer for a range of local and national charities.

Jamie moved on to explain what the STFC ITC do in south Shropshire, using Ludlow football club in partnership with the Shropshire FA. Two full size pitches are on site, one of which, he explained, is grass while the other is a state-of-the-art 3G pitch along with several smaller pitches allowing around 600 people use the facilities. They hosted here a summer tournament with around 780 grass roots players taking part from within and outside the county which allowed them to offer any players of interest a chance to visit the ITC's development centre as a possible chance to impress those at the club's academy.

Jamie explained the ambitious plans for the community pitch in between the community hub and the FanZone following the completed construction of the Lidl supermarket. Shrewsbury Town FC have granted the STFC ITC a long-term lease on the pitch, currently they are undertaking a feasibility study to put a full size 3G pitch with flood lights and expanding and improving the current community hub building, this is all part of a new ten-year strategy to allow STFC ITC to expand and continue to help the local community.

Finally, Jamie explained about the **#SHREWS4ALL** after showing a **#SHREWS4CORBIN** video full details of which are on the 'Shrewsbury Town In The Community' website under "Who we help" tab. He continued by explaining about past and future fund-raising events such as "Bike to Barnsley" following the previous "Bike to Pool", "Golf day", "Sleep out" which has raised over £8000 of which £4000 went to Shrewsbury Arc and a Shropshire three peaks challenge.

Brian explained how proud he is when he looks at all the different originations operating in their own way but are able to help each other out with campaigns to benefit the football club and the local community.

Brian and Jamie then explained a concept idea for this year's Christmas Carol concert, floating the idea of holding it at the stadium by utilising the newly installed Safe Standing area. Mulled wine, minced pies, brass band on the pitch playing the carols tunes, children school choirs and perhaps having some kind of big screen to allow the STFC ITC a chance to display to those who attend the progress they have made this last year.

Rob asked a question on behalf of the OSC from some of their members with regards to the FanZone's MPM operated bar. Brian explained that this is something that he and Jamie have been investigating, and from what they understood staffing issues for the first game of the season against Bradford was the main cause of the long queues, combined with the removal of the bottle bar which previously was in the food stand. Speed of service and quality issues, Rob explained, were the main complaints received so far to which Brian explained that going forward they will both continue observations of the FanZone and continually trying to evolve and improve all aspects of the experience. Part of this, he went on to say, was to create a more permanent roofing over the FanZone to provide protection during the colder, wetter winter months but still maintain an open-air style for the venue during the warmer weather as opposed to hiring a marquee.

## 2) Ticketing

### (1) General

Brian explained that there have been issues with season ticket holder's cards not scanning correctly & that TicketMaster have been in several times to review and try and rectify the issues. Old season ticket cards being used by some supporters instead of the new ones sent out has been an issue too.

West Stand Ticket Office: Brian asked the room if the football club should consider moving the ticket office from its current position at the centre of the West Stand to in between the West and South Stands opposite the FanZone. His belief is that this will improve the queuing situation and allow them to sell Safe Standing tickets here as well as in the main ticket office, as a result speeding up queuing for tickets on a match day.

### (2) Safe Standing

Safe Standing sales are going well with an average of 423 people (76% occupancy) using the area so far this season, including season ticket holders and match day ticket buying supporters.

The atmosphere generated by the Safe Standing continues to improve, Brian mentioned, which was echoed by Lawrence and by many in the room and how it travels down the length of the stadium.

Brian explained that with people moving from Block 19 over to the Safe Standing area it is allowing people in Block 18 who previously have had no choice but to stand due to people blocking their view while standing to actually sit down and enjoy a match.

Lawrence went on to explain about the wrist bands used in the Safe Standing on a match day. Each game he hands the stand supervisor the exact amount of bands to allow for quicker counting of who is in the stand. Lawrence went on to say that he and Dave Wynn, who is in charge of the Safe Standing on a match day, have been looking at ways to speed up handing out the bands to supporters to save them queuing and waiting around too much, including identifying the supporters outside the ground as they queue to scan their ticket for entry to the ground and issuing them the wrist band this is an issue which is constantly under review.

People in the room asked the question why are the football club using the wrist bands in the first place, to which Lawrence and Brian explained that they are used to ensure that only Safe Standing ticket holders can access the area in a speedy manor for the stewards. A suggestion was that an information poster explaining the reasons why these bands are in use could be put up around the South Stand, this idea Brian has left with Ian to investigate further.

Brian requested that any feedback from supporters who use the Safe Standing area be given to the club by contacting them directly so they can try and make improvements.

However, it was felt amongst the room that Safe Standing had been a huge success and was running very well. To that end Mike Davis wished to place on record his thanks to Dave Wynn and all the stewards for their role in making it a success.

### **3) Media Update**

Brian explained to the parliament that it has been noticed and commented on by supporters, that some issues with the media department's content which has been put online contain, for example, some spelling or other errors. He went on to say that he and the media team will be working hard to ensure that these issues are addressed and that the content put out by the football club is correct. All elements of the media department are 100% produced in house and that he, Ian and his team are working hard on new ideas to engage with the supporters online which will allow Shrewsbury Town FC to stand out more and not just produce similar content that is produced by other football clubs around the country.

Ian explained that a lot has changed and the media side of the football club has evolved and expanded. Eighteen years ago, when he began working for the club, it only had a website. Over time this has expanded with the introduction of a message board, followed by Myspace, which then expanded to other social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Brian's investment in the media team allows the department to produce more interesting content for each platform. A question was asked about the content located on social media platforms not being available on the club's website. Ian replied that some content is on the website, but not all are available currently.

### **4) Progress with Steelwork Painting**

Brian explained to the parliament that the steel works on the West Stand are now completed and that they have begun work on the North Stand while continuing with both ends of the main Roland Wycherley Stand. He continued to say that the team doing the painting are currently progressing well and are, at the date of the meeting, 17-weeks into a 40-week program & it is starting to look like a brand-new stadium.

### **5) Stadium Decoration**

Brian wanted to enquire if there are any other areas of the ground which supporters felt required possible decoration or updating.

It was asked by someone in the room if extra panels can be displayed in the other three home areas of the ground depicting those who donated to the Safe Standing project, Brian offered to look into this.

### **6) Staff Changes**

Ticket office supervisor Martin who has been in the position for a few weeks is trying to resolve the issues in the ticket office and is working to resolve them.

Brian began by explaining that Jack Taylor from the Media department has left the football club after two years to take up a new career in teaching, both Brian and Ian who worked with him wish Jack all the best in the future. Jack has been replaced by a media graduate named Scott.

Matt Burgess who produces the clubs graphic design as well as create many of the videos including the drone and Safe Standing video is doing more work for the football club.

Lewis is a university student who has come to work in the media department on placement until the end of the season which brings the combined staff in the media department to four including the manager Ian Whitfield.

Finally, David Parry has been the clubs company secretary for over 20 years and has taken the decision to retire from his role, Brian Caldwell has taken on this role himself.

## **7) Open Day**

Originally the concept for this season's open day was Bank Holiday Monday at the end of August 2018. Multiple issues then came into play to hinder the organisation of this event for that date, the involvement of the whole playing squad is required and due to fixtures the CheckaTrade match against Manchester City's Under 21 team was the following day. As a result, this would have meant that a large selection of the squad either would not have been available for part or all of the Open Day which would have not been right for the fans. Coupled with this both Jamie and Brian were away on holiday around the same period in the build-up.

Brian is still keen to try and organise an open day at the football club with the full player compliment, stadium tours, etc.

Brian went on to explain the restructuring work which has taken place to the football club's home changing room. He described that when you visit other clubs, the home changing rooms are always bigger than the one offered to the away team, which was different to what we have had since the stadium was built. As a result, they have converted the home changing room's gym into the new Home changing rooms. The new specification for the Home changing room has individual pods for each player, he asked at the time that it be kept secret as the players did not know of the changes and he wished to make it a surprise for them when they arrived for the Southend United match.

## **8) Junior Shrews**

Junior Shrews was the next element that Jamie wished to explain about to the meeting, he explained that nearly 160 children have joined the program that the STFC ITC took over from the football club. He explained in more detail that currently 120 of the 160 Junior Shrews are Gold members with the remaining 40 taking up the free membership offer.

Increasing attendances on a match day is not the main aim of the STFC ITC Jamie said, but it is a welcomed benefit supported by the football club and they provide a small batch of tickets to each game.

## **9) Youth Academy**

Brian explained how happy he is with the development of the Youth Academy set up at the football club. He went on to explain how the academy had a recent audit and received a glowing report and as a result this means that the club have received a new three-year licence with no new audits required. Brian is happy with the progress made by both Ryan Sears and Ryan Barnett as they have both played for the first team, making what he saw as “Man of the Match performances.” It fills him with confidence to continue to try and promote the youth teams more and potentially tap into and sign local talent which may no longer get a chance of being part of first team setups at clubs such as Wolverhampton Wanderers, since their promotion to the Premier League, compared to here at Shrewsbury Town where these youths may get a chance to play.

## **10) Postcode Giveaway Update**

At the time of the meeting, 40 people have taken up the offer from the clubs Postcode Giveaway. Brian is delighted with such high numbers after the vouchers had been posted to the relevant addresses.

## **11) Ticket Offers**

Brian wanted to enquire of those in the room to come forward with any ideas for future ticket offers which people believed would be welcomed by their fellow supporters.

A recent offer was the Safe Standing one of three matches in the Safe Standing area for £50 which was well received by supporters who took it up.

A free match day programme offer for season ticket holders was proposed to be investigated so as they did not feel left out with offers that were made to non-season ticket holders.

## **12) EFL – i-Follow; Wembley; Referees**

Brian began by clarifying that on the Wednesday before the Portsmouth away fixture, the EFL sent an email to the Shrewsbury Town and other League 1 & 2 clubs saying that as it was a full international weekend, the EFL matches played on that weekend would be streamed live for UK supporters to purchase and watch on the iFollow service for £10. He went on to explain that this did not go down well with some football league clubs for multiple reasons such as low crowd attendances, etc. Brian said that he is attending the next meeting of EFL clubs a week after the meeting and is certain that this will be brought up and discussed.

Wembley was next on Brian’s mind that he wanted to inform supporters of. He has requested a full list of the costs of hiring the stadium and other charges made to the football club for EFL staff working at the fixture for CheckaTrade final. These figures he said would scare people in the room and so he is understandably not happy and intends to carry on his discussions with the EFL backed by Lincoln City who also faced the same huge charges.

On referees, Brian fired off an email to the head of referees explaining his disappointment with the officials at the Portsmouth match not awarding a “clear penalty on Alex Gilliead”, after the final whistle he spoke to the referee assessor. The assessor, when asked by Brian about the 60<sup>th</sup> minute decision not to award a penalty, said that he would need to “review it”. Brian pressed him calmly

what decision would the assessor have given if he were refereeing the match and he responded “I don’t know”. Brian also mentioned the clear penalty not awarded at Doncaster for the foul on Shaun Whalley. He said that if such big decisions in a match and are not awarded, then video clips are sent from the club showing the inconsistencies of the refereeing decisions to the EFL for review. He said this is almost a weekly occurrence.

### **13) A.O.B.**

Brian believes that the current scoreboard we have is not big enough to display the videos that the club produce to properly do them justice for all to see from match highlights to STFC ITC videos showing the work they do.

Concourse Kiosks names was brought up, requesting whether they could be individually be named with ideas such as ex-managers names, Charles Darwin, Roger & Mikes, Bizzy Pinches & Micky Brown bar, etc. Then other ideas such as the coracle, old score board, Riverside, Wakeman, Tech end and Station end were talked about. One supporter suggested that by using these old Gay Meadow names for the kiosks, they could use imagery relating to their names. For example, the coracle could have images relating to it including Fred Davies who used it to fish footballs that were kicked into the River Severn.

John brought up a matter with regards to the away ticket confusion at Portsmouth, in particular no tickets being available on the day from the ground, then a £2.00 increase for tickets bought on the day, to tickets must be purchased by the Friday before the game. Brian explained that originally match tickets would have to be purchased in advance and would not be available to purchase on the day. Then the club received an email from Portsmouth on the Wednesday/Thursday before the game stating tickets can be purchased on the day, but that Shrewsbury Town FC could not advertise these tickets were available for some reason.

Bird fouling at Montgomery Waters Meadow was brought up and Brian will look into it further.

Next meeting **Tuesday November 6<sup>th</sup> at M W Meadow 7pm in the Sovereign Suite**