

LEYTON ORIENT SUPPORTERS REPRESENTATIVES

**Minutes of the Meeting be held at
The Breyer Group Stadium, Oliver Road, Leyton, London, E10 5NF
on Thursday 23 January 2020 at 7.30pm**

In attendance:

Kent Teague ("KT")	Keren Harrison ("KH")	Paul Bushell ("PBu")
Martin Ling ("ML")	Linda Broughan ("LB")	Caroline Burkinshaw ("CB")
Danny Macklin ("DM")	Steve Dearing ("SD")	Julian Furne ("JF")
Dave Toyn ("DT")	Mat Roper ("MR")	Berl Goldbart ("BG")
Peter Bennett ("PBe")	Paul Arnup ("PA")	Sam Churchett ("SC")

Apologies received from Nigel Travis (who had hoped to attend via video link).

1. Introductions

KH thanked everyone for coming.

Everyone then introduced themselves with a short introduction as to their connection with the Club/fan base.

KH reiterated that the fan base also had the opportunity to raise questions/concerns through any of attendees and that she was aware that Leyton Orient Supporters Club ("LOSC") and Leyton Orient Fans Trust ("LOFT") had received questions from their members and that she had received some from people who were not members of either body.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 16 September were agreed between DM, KH and the representatives of LOSC and LOFT who attended the previous meeting.

KT checked with DM that they had not been amended since they had been sent to the Board, DM agreed.

3 Welcome from the Board

KT said that he was interested to hear what the supporters wish to raise.

KT said he kept abreast of supporter comments on social media and understood the fear of relegation.

4 Matters Arising

4.1 Ticketing and General Administration

Away Tickets

KH raised (a question received by email) that sometimes communication in relation to all ticket/pay-on-the-day information can be late from the Club with no response from the @LOFCTickets Twitter account. Can this information be shared on the main account so all fans are aware?

DM/DT reported that due to the departure of Elliot Byrne from the Media Department this had put extra pressure on to the remaining members of staff with getting information on to the website. However, DM further reported that there have been times when the away teams have not forwarded the ticket allocations in good time to allow

PBu asked what the ticket allocation was for the forthcoming fixture against Forest Green Rovers ("FGR") and what would be the requirements for ticket entitlement. It is envisaged that this would be a popular fixture for supporters as it was a new ground for the "hoppers" and due to events surrounding the home fixture. DM reported that there had been no interaction with FGR to date and that as soon as they got in touch ticketing details would be made available via the website.

MR asked if there was a League rule regarding sending tickets within a certain timeframe before fixtures. DM replied that there was but that not all Clubs abide by it and on the flipside there were those who sent their tickets months in advance with varying price points.

CB reported that she had used the ticketing website to purchase tickets for away games recently and even though she was impressed she felt that the £1 booking fee per ticket was rather steep. DM said that this charge was instigated by SeeTickets and not the Club and charged to the customer penny for penny so therefore the Club are unable to remove this.

DM/DT reminded supporters that they should keep away ticket stubs as not all away tickets are purchased through the Club's system. In was not certain that these would be required but if they are kept they could be used when away tickets have a limited availability.

Loyalty Scheme / Ticketing System

KH asked (on behalf of the same person) if there will be a loyalty scheme put in place to avoid issues surrounding ticketing for important matches in the future.

DM reported that SeeTickets had served notice on all football clubs they represent and the Board were looking into alternative providers to replace them. However, the Board acknowledged that this gave them the opportunity to review ticketing procedures and would seek to introduce a

loyalty scheme with the possibility to allow discounts in the Club Shop as well as other rewards. The Club were looking at a prepayment card scheme (similar to that at Colchester United) that will allow people to purchase tickets/food/merchandise but that wouldn't be in before the 2021/22 at the earliest.

All prospective ticketing partners have the facility to allow season ticket holders to "release their seats" for individual matches although, in practice, this would only be activated by the Club for those games where tickets are scarce ie Football for a Fiver during international break weekends.

SC asked if the process for applying for free tickets for season ticket holders could be streamlined.

DM/DT reported that with the recent website upgrade that they were looking to improve it by having the ability to complete a form via the website rather than printing it, scanning it then sending it in to the Club via email. DM also noted that the uptake for this offer had increased and a reminder would be sent to season ticket holders to remind them that it was available.

4.2 Academy

ML reported that the Academy was now fully functioning as a CAT3 Academy and they had recently sold a player to Chelsea. However, under the Elite Player Performance Plan ("EPPP") rules this deal was not as financially rewarding to LOFC as it could be for Chelsea due to the bias towards the Premier League clubs. ML explained some of the EPPP rules in those players who have been with the Academy since age 9 would generate a higher fee but those who have joined the Academy at later stage would generate a lower fee. In an ideal world a player would have (say) 100 games under their belt in the First Team or Reserves and this would generate a higher fee. MR asked if EPPP was discussed at Football League meetings and DM confirmed that it was and that 72 teams were against it and 20 teams were not. ML confirmed that the Club did sell on the contracts of a few youngsters last season on the basis that a return to the Football League was not guaranteed so therefore the prices they charged were higher because there were subject to EPPP restrictions.

ML further reported that Academy staff were also involved in running the Summer Camps in the US and various Holiday Clubs which kept them extremely busy and also allowed them to scout for new talent.

CB said that she was very pleased to hear that Kevin Lisbie had joined the Academy staff as Striker Coach. ML reported that Brian Saah was also involved in the Academy and had recently been promoted within.

KT said it was important to not only develop playing staff but to also develop the backroom staff too. ML said that employing former players and staff of LOFC works well as they understand the ethos of the Club.

BG said that watching former players who had come through playing in the Academy playing in the Premier League made him feel proud and congratulated the Academy on their efforts.

4.3 Media

It was reported that Elliot Byrne's successor would be starting in March and that in the meantime Dan Walker, along with other members of staff with experience, would be "holding the fort".

Streaming

KH reported (a question received by email) that the streaming service had worked well when used for the Newport County away game in December. DM/DT said that this was good to hear and that with the new app being launched it was hoped that now that the service becoming more and more reliable and supporters can watch on mobile devices that subscriptions to this service will increase.

Post-Match Interviews

SD reported that it too far too many clicks to view post-match interviews. DM/DT said that they hoped to reduce this with tweaks on the new website.

Social Media

MR (on behalf of a fan) asked if matches could be listed as events on Facebook. DM/DT said they would look into this.

Fixtures

PBe mentioned that it was difficult to find the fixtures on the Club's website. After discussion the consensus was that most people actually found match day results on the other websites.

4.4 Hospitality, Commercial and Events

The Club have a number of events planned between now and the end of the season. DM/DT reported that there was An Evening with Nigel Travis due to take place on 31 January; An Evening with the 69/70 Champions due to take place on 26 March and plans were being made for An Evening with Ross Embleton.

LB reported that she was working along Lucy Gammons in arranging the Annual Star Man Awards Dinner and Dance this year which is to be held on Sunday 26 April. LB further reported that there had been a good uptake for tickets from Supporters Club members and despite not having a promotion to celebrate she felt that supporters will still support this event in good numbers.

DM reiterated that funds raised by the use of Club facilities on non-match days all contribute towards the playing budget and supporters were encouraged to spread the word.

CB suggested that maybe the Club could hold an open training session at the Training Ground. ML said that parking could be an issue as this can be a struggle most days. Suggestion was made that this event take place in half-term when Chigwell School may allow access to their car park for visitors. ML suggested to DM that if this session took place at The Breyer Group Stadium people could get there easily by public transport and capacity and car parking would not be a problem. DM/DT agreed to consider this.

SC said that both he and his brother had experienced the 12th Man package in recent years. They were considering purchasing the same package for their Dad but on comparing what both had experienced and with the recent significant price increase they decided against this. DM said that this package was being reviewed in February/March.

LB asked (a question on behalf of a LOSC member) how many seasons remained on the Dream Team sponsorship, what with betting companies being scrutinised. DM reported that Dream Team were not classed as a betting company and were therefore not under the same scrutiny. LB replied by asking if a sponsor would be considered who was not a betting company so that parents and children can have matching replica shirts. DM replied to say whilst he understood that was good idea from a marketing perspective (for selling shirts), if a betting company came in and wanted to sponsor the Club they would not be turned away.

MR (on behalf of a LOFT member) asked how long remained on the New Balance deal. DM reported that this was year 1 of 3. ML said that the quality of the kits were excellent. DM reported that replica shirts were able to be ordered up to 4XL and anything larger was not financially viable due to minimum orders required. SC asked whether there would be a Kit Vote (as happened a couple of years ago) but DM said that the ordering process could take some time so in order to be prepared they had already ordered the kit for 2020/21 so this would not happen this year.

4.5 Marketing

4.6 Retail

MR asked (on behalf of a LOFT member) whether there were plans for a 2018/19 Championship winning DVD. DM/DT reported that it was hoped that this would have been released before Christmas but due to extenuating circumstances closely followed by Elliot Byrne's departure this had been put on hold until the new Media Manager arrives. The Club were hoping to launch this for the one-year anniversary of promotion.

KH asked (a question received by email) if the ONut will be a more regular occurrence as person asking had not been able to sample one. KH had found out that they sat in the South Stand and informed the meeting that she had already been in touch with DM/DT asking them to put more in the South Stand in future to which they agreed. There was a discussion as to the cost of individual ONuts being quite expensive at £2 each and that supporters preferred to purchase these in multiples with a small discount (3 for £5). DM reported that no profits are made from individual ONuts and a loss was made on multiple purchases as the base cost for each item is high and then there are impacted shipping costs as they are made in Spain, imported to Sheffield and then forwarded to East London.

4.7 Stadium and Safety

West Stand

MR asked (on behalf of a LOFT member) whether a couple of flip up seats could be placed in the West Stand catering area. DM said that this would likely cause congestion and that this would not be possible. Food and hot drinks can always be taken back to the seat in the stadium to be consumed. MR further said that the same member had commented on how the food had improved.

MR said (on behalf of a LOFT member) that the space between the Gallery and the Balcony seemed wasted space – this was agreed and KT/ML/DM said “watch this space”.

MR asked (on behalf of a disabled supporter) whether a raised platform could be considered for the disabled section at the southern end of the West Stand. DM said that there was no space to do this as they would lose capacity for disabled supporters.

MR (on behalf of a fan) asked if there were any improvements to be made to the West Stand concourse, maybe some named bricks or perhaps a painting ie the Club’s crest or something else Club related. DM said that there were no plans to do this at the moment.

There was discussion regarding supporters standing in the hatched area in the corners of the West Stand towards the end of the game. **DM to remind stewards that these areas are to be clear at all times.**

East Stand

MR asked (on behalf of a fan) if the word “Up” could be added in dark coloured seats above “The O’s” in the East Stand. KT and DM did not see any benefit in this and therefore this was rejected.

MR asked (on behalf of a fan) if there were any plans to upgrade the facilities in the East Stand. DM/DT said that the Wyvern Suite was now open and that hot water was now available in the toilets but due to the age of the stand any works were done on a “make do and mend” basis. DM said

that any improvements to the roof would require planning permission from the Council due to asbestos considerations.

PA and BG both asked if there was an upgrade planned for the East Stand. It was reported that whilst it is deemed safe by the relevant authorities there are no plans to upgrade at the moment. KT said that if the right business opportunity presented itself then there was always the possibility of a rebuild but there were many issues to consider like pitch maintenance and Right to Light of the residents of Brisbane Road.

South Stand

No specific issues were raised in relation this stand.

North Stand

CB stated that the hand-dryers in the North Stand were of poor quality and did not work well. DM said that when the units are checked during the week and on the mornings of games and that they work well. It is believed that a surge of electricity output at half-time could result in a loss of power. **DM said he would review the quality of the hand-dryers during in a match day environment.** BG said that he had recently purchased some reconditioned Dyson units for his work and that they were reasonably priced. This may be considered dependent on the outcome of DM's review.

Stewarding

SD commented that the stewarding at the area between the home and away supporters seemed inconsistent as where he sits there is a vocal supporter who is often threatened with expulsion as he can, at times, provoke a reaction from the away supporters by waving his scarf and singing. SD felt that the away supporters were not stewarded in a consistent manner. **DM to speak to the Stadium Manager to remind the stewards of their duties.**

MR asked if the role of the steward included getting involved in on-pitch altercations. DM said that this was not usually the case but as there was a supporter trying to access the field of play a steward went towards the incident to stop this. Stewards are to concentrate on off-field incidents and would only get involved in on-field incidents in extenuating circumstances. It was noted that whilst a stewards role is primarily crowd control their assistance in calming on fields incidents may desist the crowd from trying to become involved.

PBe reported that as a carer who sits in the disabled area on the East side of the North Stand it was not acceptable that at the end of a game many supporters stand in front those in the disabled viewing area. It was suggested that hatched areas are placed in front of these seats (and other disabled areas within the stadium) and DM said that stewards would be reminded to move people along.

General

MR asked (on behalf of a fan via Twitter) if the removal of bottle lids was still necessary. **DM said this was a stipulation from the Council and he would review this at their next meeting.**

KT said that whilst the Club was under his stewardship we will not be moving from our current location. A discussion followed about the current ownership arrangements of the stadium and KT confirmed that it was owned by Matchroom Pension Fund and that Leyton Orient Football Club paid an annual rent (with incremental rises versus RPI) for the use of the same. KT thanked Barry Hearn for being an understanding landlord.

4.8 General Matters

KH asked (a question received by email) if there was a contingency plan should we be relegated to the National League. KT responded that there are contingency clauses built into players and staff members contracts should relegation or promotion occur but there was no contingency in place for the tragic circumstances that took place in the summer. The Club has a three-year plan for both scenarios so can budget accordingly.

KH said (a question received by email) it was reported in a recent podcast the owners discussed bringing in League One quality players, does this also relate to management and coaching staff as well? KT said yes and that talent is talent whether it be playing staff or coaching staff.

There was a discussion surrounding the appointment and departure of Carl Fletcher and the appointment of Ross Embleton as First Team Manager. ML said he was disappointed that the appointment of Carl Fletcher had not worked out but that Ross is equally as qualified to take on the role and that Ross is actually more qualified than ML was when he took on the same role in 2003. KT and ML urged the supporters to believe in Ross as the Board believe that if we work together success and stability will come.

KH asked (a question received by email) if the Club could elaborate on new investment brought in over the summer. KT said that the Club were constantly looking for new investment either through sponsorship. KT confirmed that NT was correct when he said the Club were looking for new investment. However this was mainly for specific projects – see below.

5 Any Other Business

Transfer Market

PBu asked if there would be any activity in the January transfer window. ML said that there was a Transfer Committee who were constantly looking to improve the quality of the squad but that they would not bring in “just anyone” in for the sake of it. KT confirmed that serious consideration would be given to League One capable players due to lengths of contracts and the Club would not panic buy.

ML explained that the Transfer Committee had a “Top Ten” for each position so there were usually 1,100 people on their “Watch List”. Chief Scout, Steve Foster, attends matches nearly every day and keeps a watchful eye over targets.

Investment

KT asked the Supporters if they wanted to follow the “Salford model” by trying to buy success. It was agreed that whilst success was important it was just as important to be sustainable and not to spend beyond our means.

KT and BG agreed that there needs to be a balance between planning for promotion and the crisis of relegation.

PA asked (on behalf of LOFT) if there had been any additional investment in the Club since the summer. KT said that Board members are always looking for investments whether they are old friends or new friends. See above, NT is currently talking to people regarding investment for specific projects.

ML said that one way to generate extra revenue would be if we had a SIS pitch (which is 75% grass and 25% turf) like Borehamwood. The pitch can be used up to eight times as much compared to a turf pitch. There was also mention of the “Bournemouth model” where by the Club have purchased an old golf course and are developing this to ensure all the training facilities and academy are under one roof. This is not something that is being looked into at this time but something we can aspire to achieve should the Club receive a windfall investment.

SLO role

MR/PA asked (on behalf of a LOFT member) the SLO to describe the role and remit and was it time limited. It was further asked if there would be an election for the next SLO or whether it was a permanent position and would there be more than one SLO.

KH started by saying that it was a volunteer role and that it was a requirement of the EFL that all clubs have one. KH explained that prior to her appointment the role was carried out by Matt Porter but when he departed she was asked by the previous CEO if she would take on the role due to her role and profile within the Supporters Club and that the current Board had asked KH to continue in the role since their takeover on the same basis.

KH said there was not a job description as such but it was considered that the role was to be an approachable and visible supporter and to act as a link between the Board and the fan base. KH explained that she is often contacted by SLOs and supporters of other clubs asking for assistance regarding forthcoming matches and also from our own supporters with queries regarding stewarding, ticketing and other more general enquiries. Sometimes she is able to answer the question herself but if not the query is directed to the correct personnel within the Club for a more instant response.

KH also explained that she attends regular Independent Advisory Group (“IAG”) meetings which take place alongside the Metropolitan Police and members of other supporters’ organisations of London based football clubs to report any issues or share any concerns. This is sometimes with a Committee member from either LOSC or LOFT.

MR asked whether there would be additional “match day SLOs” with a higher profile. MR explained that whilst there are no hard and fast rules regarding the appointment/election of SLOs there are good practices and case studies which supporters can find on the FSA website. MR suggested that the Club have a model like Doncaster Rovers with at least two (if not three) SLOs certainly for home games as one can look after away supporters arriving at Brisbane Road. DM said that stewarding was to be reviewed and that this would be something to consider.

LGBTQA+

KH asked (via Twitter) what is being done to attract LGBTQA+ Community as it was felt that very little has been done under the current owners and also felt that the Rainbow Laces campaign was half-hearted. DM/DT explained that dates and promotional material for FA/EFL sponsored campaigns (such as this) are often given to clubs at short notice and they have to promote it within a specific two week period. In this instance, the Club were tied as to when they could take part as there was only one home game within the two week period given. KH further asked if the Board would consider encouraging people from LGBTQA+ to use the facilities which in turn could encourage them to attend matches. KH finally asked if the Board would consider having a volunteer LGBTQA+ coordinator to raise the profile of the Club with the guidance of other clubs. KT and DM both responded immediately asking **KH to approach the person asking the question to see if they would be willing to take on such a role.** KH agreed to do so.

PBe offered to initiate a Disabled Supporters Association to highlight disabled supporters’ issues. **PBe to liaise with DM to progress with this.**

MR/PA asked if KH could report to the meeting how many applicants there were for the balloted spaces. MR asked (on behalf of a LOFT member) what the criteria was for allocating the balloted spaces as a member had applied twice and had not been selected on either occasion. KH explained that for this meeting there were a total of twelve (12) applicants of which one (1) had already attended the previous meeting so was removed from the ballot; the remaining eleven (11) names were put in a hat and five (5) names were selected (all whilst being videoed for transparency). However, on this occasion one of those selected was unable to attend so the remaining names were returned to the hat and that a first reserve had been offered a place, which they had accepted. There was a discussion as to whether if someone has applied previously that they are automatically selected for the following meeting. It was noted that in the paper drawn up between LOFT, LOSC and the Board all additional places available would be selected by way of a ballot.

Leyton Orient Trust

LB reported that the Trustees of the Leyton Orient Trust would like to place on record their thanks for the access to players and the support from the Club. They are proud to facilitate the representation of Leyton Orient within the community with their school and hospital visits.

6 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place at the start of next season (around September) and that KH would liaise with DM to announce details for the ballot places in good time.

Minutes taken by Keren Harrison

Approved on behalf of the Board

Approved on behalf of the Supporters

ACTION POINTS

- 4.7 *North Stand* **DM said he would review the quality of the hand-dryers during in a match day environment.**
- 4.7 *West Stand* **DM to remind stewards that these areas are to be clear at all times.**
- 4.7 *Stewarding* **DM to speak to the Stadium Manager to remind the stewards of their duties.**
- 4.7 *General* **DM said this was a stipulation from the Council and he would review this at their next meeting.**
- 5 *AOB* **KH to approach the person asking the question re LGBTQA+ to see if they would be willing to take on such a role.**
- 5 *AOB* **PBe to liaise with DM to progress with this.**

Approved on behalf of the Board

Approved on behalf of the Supporters