

Preston North End And Preston Supporters Collective



Minutes of scheduled meeting held on Wednesday 13th September 2023 at 6pm in the Boardroom at Deepdale

Attendees: Ben Rhodes, Jonathan Counce (PNE), Ben Astley, John Billington, Kim Ramshead and Jo Harwood (PSC), Jack Gayne (Sodexo).

Apologies: None.

1. Catering Update

Jack Gayne from Sodexo kindly came for the first part of the meeting and updated on progress since their arrival in mid-July. He explained that all bar upgrades had almost been completed now, with just a small number in the Finney to be finished and this then allowed more options in all kiosks. Non-alcoholic beer was also now available in all beer kiosks. Food offerings were continuing to be developed, with butter chicken curry (which is Halal) available from Plymouth on each home stand and pie, peas, mash and gravy available in all home stands. BA expressed disappointment at some of the pricing levels of some alcohol compared to 2022/23. JG added that pricing had now been finalised and agreed by the club, and will not change throughout the season. He explained that Sodexo do thorough competitor analysis and that the prices at Deepdale were still some of the lowest in the league. He also said that prices were the same in the Gentry Bar, the concourse and in hospitality. JB asked about offers after the game in the Gentry Bar. JG added that there were now an additional 80 till points on the concourse to help reduce the queues. He said there was still work to be done, but improvements were still being made. A further discussion was had about opening the Gentry Bar prior to coaches leaving for away games and JG agreed to look into this. BR discussed e-Bars (self-service beer dispensers) and said that a fire specialist was doing an assessment on whether these were possible on the concourses. JG said recruitment was still ongoing too and JH said they should target Preston and Newman Colleges. JG said feedback had been very positive from hospitality food and that a lot of work had gone into IT infrastructure to ensure payment in hospitality was easy after issues at the opening game. JG explained that the 'mobilisation' period after their arrival was now moving on to 'stabilisation' and after that more development will continue into next year and beyond. The fanzone was also discussed and JG and BR confirmed a licensing specialist was going to be asked to look at speaking to the council/police about further extensions (i.e. outdoor licence) to the Gentry Bar. JH asked about a sink/tap for those using the facility when the bar was not in use (Sporting Memories etc), JC said he could look at this. JG left the meeting after this section was complete.

2. Review Of Minutes From Last Meeting

BA said that the pre-season trip to Spain was well-attended and asked if any plans were in place for next summer. BR confirmed that was not on the agenda yet as the start date for the 2024/25 season was not confirmed by the EFL yet, but would share an update at the next meeting if anything had changed on that. BR provided an update on fan engagement proposals and said that progress had been made and that the Government bill was due in parliament this Autumn session and that the club hoped to finalise next steps alongside

that. He also said that they were discussing a forum to be held some time in the Autumn too.

3. Ticketing Update

BR said that with demand currently high for away games, there may be a number of games where the loyalty point system may have to be used for the allocation of tickets. He also explained that the club would need to implement a new ticketing system in the next 12 months, but there was no plan to replace season cards with mobile *only* ticketing. JB asked if the club could again publicise the season ticket upgrade to hospitality opportunity; BR said he would ask the media team to do this. JB asked whether the club would consider opening the Kop again if demand required it. BR said that if all areas were selling out, it would be silly not to consider it, but with the additional costs and problems that were caused by it last season, the demand would need to be there first.

4. Merchandising Update

BR provided an update to say that the club had been delighted by the quality of the new kit from Castore and with the sales at the shop. The club continued to engage with them about more stock, as many lines has been delayed, including all accessories, but they hoped to have much more stock in across a variety of ranges and prices over the next few weeks in the run up to Christmas. He also said the club would explore some signing sessions in the shop in the run up to the holidays. JB raised an issues about dressing the store and BR said he would feed this back to Castore. BR also confirmed that Castore were working with a number of partners for more retro shirts, as well as other partners who would provide concessions within the shop, including a new gold partner for accessories. BA also raised the idea of a 'pop-up' style shop on the opposite side of the ground and BR agreed to explore this with Castore.

5. Ground And Facilities Update

JC said it had been the busiest summer since he had been at the club and provided an update on all the upgrades to the stadium over the period since the last meeting, including the Town End roof. He said the next proposal would be an improvement in the floodlighting system, to be looked at in the summer of 2024. He discussed the bricks around the splash statue and explained that when they were first installed (17 years ago) they had a ten-year guarantee on them, but that the club were looking at ways to further develop this area and try and incorporate the brick names. BA asked about a second screen at the other end of the ground. JH asked about in-stadium Wi-Fi. BR explained this had explored a number of times, with a number of partners, but the volume of people in the stadium did not make it easy to have bandwidth that could meet the demand without it costing a significant outlay.

6. Community Update, Including Women's Team

BR said that staff had been appointed to the heritage scheme and JH said she had met him at Sporting Memories. JB asked about the use of the old Pavilion stand gates. JC agreed to look to get hold of them and look to have them refurbished and used. The retirement of the Deepdale Duck was discussed and BR explained that the club and the Trust would be working together to look to fill the void left by the duck and that the fanbase would be involved in the process. He also confirmed that Simon Nash and his family would be at the West Brom home game to thank him for his service. The women's team and their excellent

start to the season was discussed and JH suggested advertising their next game on the digital perimeter, the tannoy and the back of women's toilet doors; BR agreed these were good ideas and would take them back to the media and commercial teams to look at what could be arranged. BA asked whether it was possible to hold a women's team game again at Deepdale in 2023/24.

7. Academy Update

BR explained that the club were still exploring moving to category two, but that an indoor dome would be needed. He confirmed that the council chief executive had put in writing confirmation that the council were not interested in partnering on this, despite publicity to the contrary.

8. AOB

8.1. BR discussed Gentry Day with those in attendance and also said he had discussed this with John Kelly from pne-online. A discussion was had around the Watford game on 6th April 2024 as an appropriate game, especially given John Goddall (Invincible and Watford's first manager) being buried in Vicarage Road cemetery. BR said he would further explore this with the police and Watford with the hope of an early announcement.

8.2 BA spoke about the media coverage so far this season by the club's media team and congratulated them on the good work so far.

9. Date And Time Of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for the November international break, date and time to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.