



## WEST HAM UNITED SUPPORTERS' CLUB

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**MINUTES – 18<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024 – 7pm**

Item	Notes
1	<b>Chair's welcome</b>
2	<b>Apologies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Colin James – Treasurer</li><li>• Cliff Sparrowhawk</li><li>• 56 x member who completed the attendance form could not attend but had the opportunity to vote</li></ul>
3	<b>Adoption of 2022 AGM minutes</b> <p>In favour of adoption 72 Against 7 Abstentions 23</p> <p>Apologies for the lateness of circulation, future minutes will be shared on time.</p>
4	<b>Chair's report</b> <p>Membership has now re-opened. Current member 403 renewed</p> <p>Membership currently 1786 adults and 120 juniors.</p> <p>Chair thanked the Committee members who have continued to support the Supporters' Club through difficult times for the organisation.</p>
5	<b>Treasurer's report</b> <p><b>Accounts 2022</b> In favour of adoption 73 Against 7 Abstentions 23</p> <p>Accounts for 2022 have now been adopted. Questions were raised and were answered, these were circulated to members.</p>

A follow up question has been raised concerning charitable donations. 2022 accounts £1,004 charitable donations recorded, collection made by members for Isla Caton that was banked by the Committee and then paid to the charity by the Committee.

### **Accounts 2023**

In favour 77

Not 5

Abstentions 20

There were no donations for charity, but the expenditure shows £1017. This related mainly to a Bobby Moore Fund FC football match and the trophy will continue to be used. The funding covered the pitch hire, trophy and referee as sponsorship.

The club was also approached by Hammers Utd who needed assistance with funding the erection of the WHU crest on the old SC building. They also requested support for funding a blue plaque at John Lyall's old school.

Small amount spent on flowers for a funeral for a previous member's funeral.

Chair asked for questions – none received.

The balance sheet has items that relate to third party loans. The Committee was required to sign an NDA with Orbit Live (OL). OL approached the Supporters' Club (SC) to ask if it was interested in continuing to use the facilities for 2022/2023. OL insisted on an NDA before any discussions continued. The agreement was signed and is still live and limits the detail that can be shared,

With the season approaching, the Committee was aware the SC would not have a venue unless it agreed terms with OL. Prior to the 2022/2023 season the bar operated on a minimum basis and OL requested an upfront payment instead as a gesture of goodwill by the SC to ensure costs were met and improvements could be made to the venue for members. OL was then required to repay the funds less additional costs that they had incurred where agreed. Legal advice was sought by the Committee.

The Committee was aware of the potential risk of the funds not being repaid but were aware of OL being backed by reputable partners and thought the terms being offered were a opportunity for the SC. OL was also hoping to secure the long-term lease, and this also went in favour of the SC.

The Committee also estimated that should, as a worst-case scenario, none of the money be repaid then this would still be comparable to the hire cost for a venue for the season if the previous approach of a minimum spend had been used.

For the 2023/2024 season, OL wanted an increased upfront payment that was not repayable. Improvements to the facilities by OL had not always been what had been expected by the Committee and towards the end of the season the standard of service had deteriorated based on feedback from members. As a result of this the Committee chose to refuse the offer, as it would have resulted in a much higher membership fee than the Committee believed most members would have been prepared to pay. The Committee tried to negotiate, but no alternative terms were offered by OL. The Committee also knew that OL was not guaranteed to retain the lease that ended on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2023 as it was known that there were other interested parties. The Committee considered this as a significant risk as the SC could be in a position where money for a full season had been paid but OL may no longer be trading. Whilst it was not being suggested that OL may not repay a proportion of the upfront payment, it was a risk that the Committee was not prepared to take. Therefore, the Committee chose not to proceed but were unable to communicate this decision in detail due to the existing NDA with OL.

	<p>OL then created its own membership scheme but subsequently, failed to secure the lease.</p> <p>The NDA is still live, OL has now applied to be struck off Companies House but is still a live entity. The Committee is therefore still conscious of what it can say at this time.</p> <p>Chair said he was happy to speak individually to anyone that has questions.</p> <p>Question – Sean Whetstone (SW) £59,000 remained outstanding at 31<sup>st</sup> Aug 2023. Is this amount still outstanding.</p> <p>Chair - All of the upfront payment was repaid less additional expenses agreed. The balance sheet for the accounting year that has just finished confirms the repayment and will be shared with members once the accounts have been finalized.</p> <p>Before being struck off – OL has repaid the SC?</p> <p>Yes – Chair categorically stated all funds repaid.</p> <p>SW The SC is not there for loans. Could the constitution be amended to include loans for members vote?</p> <p>Chair – agreed that this could be added in the future. It was a situation that the Committee was uncomfortable with but took the decision in order to keep the venue for the SC. If we had the choice again the Committee would not sign the NDA but the best intentions for the SC was always the focus.</p> <p>SW Acknowledged hindsight is a wonderful thing but appreciated the funds had been repaid,</p>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <p><b>Castle St</b></p> <p>Venue is rented out on a 10-year lease with an annual rent of £72,000 pa that is paid quarterly and is split 50/50 with LBN. This was a requirement of LBN to change the use of the building to allow other activities to take place there. UK Fitness Ltd are currently using the facility and the SC receives £36k rent pa (subject to corp tax).</p> <p>The balance sheet shows significant figures. The SC has tried to find out where the money to LBN should be paid to but has not received a response. The funds are ringfenced in the SC's accounts until this has been clarified.</p> <p>The accounts also include tax due to HMRC and the SC's accountants are trying to address this. It has been notified to HMRC but they have been slow in advising the SC of how to pay the monies due. The club house is a great asset that generates funds for the SC.</p>

### **Current match day bar**

A lot of work has been invested into the current arrangement with UCL for the current matchday bar. The venue has multiple stakeholders who are wary of letting the venue to the SC and confidence needs to be built. The Committee has been building a relationship with UCL since before COVID.

Members have asked if we could have leased The Last Drop (Orbit Live) or the new Gordon Ramsey building as our own venue. The venues are way too expensive and would need to be run as a full-time venue.

Limited capacity at present but we are building relationship with real potential to expand. UCL see the partnership with the SC helps meet the requirements of their lease in relation to community group use like the SC. Extensive relationship building has been happening with the venue being well received with excellent feedback but there is more work for the Committee to do with UCL to fine tune the match day experience. Additional floors available, but this will not be a quick process as we need to build confidence. This is the best opportunity since leaving Castle Street and the Committee is working hard to develop the arrangements.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor there is a large student canteen that might be available. This could be used for pre-match breakfast and Sunday roast etc.

There is a further arear that also might be available to the SC too.

Income from the SC events is a drop in the ocean to UCL but they are willing to help the SC and see future potential.

Nigel Kahn (NK) – What is happening about a permanent home. There is a good relationship with UCL but we could be left high and dry. Is there a long-term lease. This looks like another rented place with no permanent home?

Chair – we are trying to obtain a long-term use agreement with UCL. The SC would like this in place and so does UCL. What that looks like is not known yet.

Nigel – what protection is there for change in circumstances with UCL and relationship.

Chair – the focus is on UCL being comfortable with the SC. Permanent venue would take considerable investment and the Committee is open to ideas from members. The Committee has not been able to find anything suitable and within price range. The arrangement with UCL plus the funds from Castle St means that the Committee may be able to take the leap in time but venues on or near the Olympic Park are very limited and expensive.

Paul Christmas (PC) – Ideally, we would like to partner with WHU. The Committee has in the past had members of the WHU Board on the Committee. The original clubhouse was built with a loan from the WHU. In an ideal world we could obtain a site on loan and repay if this was possible. WHU had requested that we complete certain actions to develop the SC but there has been no further involvement. The Committee would like a permanent place.

NK – Separately at this time it is doubtful that WHU would support the idea with the SC involvement with Hammers Utd. The less we deal with WHU the better.

PC – The SC is a separate entity to Hammers Utd.

	<p>Chair – The Committee has approached LLDC for venues or a small piece of land that we can build a clubhouse on. LLDC stated over the coming years all land is earmarked. Nothing to stop the SC from knocking on the door again. LLDC is due to be disbanded. The Committee could choose to pursue again. The SC also asked for space in the stadium as there is a lot of unused space that could be worked in partnership with the stadium but received a categoric no to space within the stadium. The idea of our own place has never been dismissed; suggestions would be welcome. A clubhouse on the OP would be the dream and to be able to display some of the memorabilia the SC has retained from the old venue.</p> <p>NK – We need to look off the OP, close but not on OP.</p> <p>Chair – Location is key and makes a difference to the number of members we could attract.</p> <p>NK – The success of the SC was due to the locality of Castle St.</p> <p><b>Fan Advisory Board (FAB)</b></p> <p>PC thanked AR for his input into the SC Committee and his work has been of the highest standard. PC also thanked the remainder of the Committee.</p> <p>ISC was the most recent iteration of the SAB. The PL has brought in a new fan engagement standard, the FAB, and this is the way forward for all PL teams. The SC was invited onto the ISC some years ago and PC was the representative. 20 FAB's should exist within the PL. WHU have actually been a bit of a trailblazer with this by having regular meetings which other Premier League clubs haven't. Lots of discussion with the club re T&amp;Cs and confidentiality, but the club did not use the ISC as they should have done (pricing and concessions).</p> <p>A meeting was held last Wednesday, Cat Smith who is Head of Supporter Services at WHU, and 13 representatives from fan groups are now included. Concessions and ticketing prices were the main discussion. Minutes of the meeting will be circulated soon. On behalf of the SC we have asked for opinions and the Committee (PC) would like members opinion and views for submission to the club. PC has relayed the negativity concerning the pricing and concessions on behalf of members.</p> <p>The SC was invited to join the FAB, 87% voted in favor and for PC to be the representative. PC stated he is happy to continue and to represent members and is looking forward to engaging with members on match days to gather views and questions.</p> <p>SW - Published ToR state club elections must be held every 12 months including demographics. How as the SC been able to abide this if the current constitution states 3 years.</p> <p>PC - This may require amendment to the SC constitution. This maybe should have been addressed earlier but can be investigated.</p> <p>Chair – members can decide going forward if the SC should remain as members of the FAB, this will be assessed going forward.</p> <p>PC - Personal thoughts on membership to the FAB is that it is too big and is unsure if the SC should be included with fair representation with lower group participation.</p>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Election of officers</b></p> <p>Chair – Andy Read up for re-election after his 3-year term expired and was re-elected unopposed.</p>

	<p>Committee has been relatively small in recent years but there is now a need to expand and build.</p> <p>Assistant Secretary – Marion Boswell put herself forward and was elected unopposed.</p> <p>Membership Secretary – John Le Franc put himself forward and was elected unopposed.</p> <p>Secretary and Treasurer remain in post for a further year when their terms will expire in 2025.</p> <p>Proposed Vice Chair – Paul Christmas and Sean Whetstone</p> <p>PC 77 SW 21 Abstained 4</p> <p>The above numbers for these minutes include 2 additional votes received after meeting had commenced.</p> <p>General Committee Member – Nigel Kahn and Christine Bull</p> <p>CB 71 NK 27 Abstained 4</p> <p>Chair welcomed the new members to the Committee and thanked SW and NK for putting themselves forward for the roles. Also thanked members for their votes.</p>
<b>9</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>No other business.</p> <p>Chair stated the AGM is not the only time to raise issues with the Committee, please feel free to contact Committee members via email/match days etc.</p>
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Meeting close 20:30pm</b></p> <p>Chair thanked all the members for turning up and their contribution this evening had been welcome and appreciated. The Committee will continue to work to keep the SC alive.</p> <p>Tina Nye (TN) – said thank you to the Committee for the hard work and continued efforts.</p> <p><b>Meeting Closed</b></p>