

## Summary Notes Of Fans' Forum Thursday 1 August 2019

Lawrence Levy (LL) Co-Owner and Ian Allinson (IA) Team Manager and Head of Commercial Development attended to listen to fans' views and answer questions. Around 60 fans attended.

LL opened the Forum. He began by updating on a number of developments.

Youth Development – The Club was attempting to build an infrastructure to develop an academy capable of joining the National League Academy Scheme.

New Stadium – The proposed Noke Lane development had been rejected by the Council as it is on green belt land. However, the Council planners have said that if the community benefit of a new stadium and accompanying development exceeded the community benefit lost on any green belt site used for that development, the Council would be minded to grant planning permission. This provision was to be included in Local Plan. Discussions were continuing with potential land owners on a number of sites.

Community – LL stressed the gains made with the healthy living programme, prostate cancer awareness and fund raising, youth mental health and the Club's disability section. Phil Coates was increasingly working with community groups, including plans to visit primary schools with players and free ticketing.

Watford Partnership - 15 under 23 games will be played at Clarence Park this season. There are strong hopes of closer links with the Premier League club.

Ticketing – LL set out the owners' rationale for the rise in ticket prices for the new season. He stated the desire to go to on-line ticketing and the incentive of the £16.50 adult admission for tickets purchased electronically by 12 Noon on Saturday home match days compared with £18.00 for cash at the gate. He then mentioned the ongoing subsidy provided by the owners each season. This amounted to around £100k last season. The rise in admission prices was one strategy being employed to reduce this and help the long term sustainability of the Club. Ticket prices had not been raised for 4 years. LL admitted that the notification of the changes could have been handled better. He had met fans' representatives and moderated the proposals as a result. The forum was one means being used to help explain the rationale. LL also highlighted the new Membership Scheme.

LL then opened the meeting to fans' questions. These were almost exclusively directed at the rise in ticket prices and other options to raise revenue. Although the meeting recognised the significant financial contribution made by the owners over a number of years the new ticket pricing was widely condemned. The main points made by questioners were: -

- The increases will not generate more gate revenue but less, as crowds will fall.
- Other match day income will fall, as fans will have less cash to spend in the bar etc.
- Many fans do not make a decision until after 12 Noon to attend a match. £18 will be a huge disincentive.
- The prices are not value for money compared with other comparable forms of entertainment.
- Volunteers are quitting in protest, when we need more people.
- We will have the most expensive prices in the National League South.
- Away fans are already planning not to come to St. Albans.
- Similarly, some home supporters will only go to away matches.
- Not all fans have access to the technology to buy tickets in advance.

One of the last contributions on pricing asked LL, given the opposition and the mood of the meeting, to reconsider the increase and set a maximum of £16.50 for adults on the gate. LL appeared unwilling to change direction and continued to use the justifications for the increase he had made earlier in the meeting.

Fans also pointed out that other income sources were not being fully exploited. These included use of the bar, player sponsorship and encouraging new Board members to provide investment. LL reminded the meeting about IA's new role in attracting new income and sponsorship.

The section of the meeting that LL led lasted over 90 minutes. IA therefore had limited time to deal with team matters. He was pleased with the current squad and had left it a little larger than usual, to help manage the number of games over the next 6 weeks. He set out the situation with players who have left since last season. He also outlined the difficulties in signing quality new players due to the number of agents and players' pay demands. Nonetheless his new signings had impressed in pre-season. He hoped the partnership with Watford would be positive and perhaps yield some loan deals later in the season. IA knew there were a number of strong teams in the League and he expected Dorking Wanderers and Eastbourne Borough to emerge as difficult opponents.

The meeting finished at 9:45pm