



## ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Despite all the odds, the National League South is now underway. How the season will pan out and the situation regarding fans attending games is another matter. Our first complete home match was the FA Cup tie v Hitchin Town and like a number of supporters I elected to watch the game via live streaming. This proved to be a hugely frustrating experience, with the second half of the game just not being viewable. I raised this with Lawrence Levy and have had 2 lengthy phone conversations with him since on the matter.

Lawrence told me a dry run of the system on the Friday before the game went ok but that a number of technical problems were experienced on the day. To be fair, we were not the only club to have had the same problems. An apology has been issued to all season ticket holders but I am not sure if this went to all subscribers to the viewing. At the time of writing, I understand that a lot of work is being done to resolve the problems for the next match.

The remainder of the report gives details of a meeting held with officials of the Football Club

Notes of meeting held with Lawrence Levy and Leigh Page on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020

In attendance -

Ian Rogers [IR]

Barry Hilliard [BH]

Lee Wood [LW] SBYS

Sophie Brookes [SB] SBYS

Lawrence Levy [LL]

Leigh Page [LP]

The meeting opened with an exchange of expectations between both supporter groups and the club.

IR outlined why the Trust had been formed in 2009 and its role to represent views of supporters and act as the 'conscience' of the club in its decision making on all matters relating to supporters.

The Trust had provided financial support to the Football Club for the last 4 seasons, by funding the pitch works at the end of season. [IR explained that over the last 20 years, the former Supporters Club and now the Trust had donated in excess of £100k to the club.]

LW said that SBYS had organised the Boost the Budget scheme, run a market stall selling club merchandise, refurbished the Saints Bar and supported the club at council meetings regarding the new ground proposals. In addition, it had also forged links with local charitable groups.

LW challenged the club over lack of consultation with supporters, citing the introduction of the new club badge as an example. LL said that it was not the club's intention to exclude supporter groups and that, in the current climate, this was even more critical. He went on to give examples of this.

LL said the new badge had initially been the idea of SACFC Youth section and that a select number of supporters had been involved in the consultation process. He did, however, accept that it was an error of judgement not to include representatives from the 2 organisations in this. The cost of producing the previous badge on shirts was prohibitive and the players found it uncomfortable to wear.

It was accepted that the new design did find favour with a number of supporters. It was, however, easier to produce digitally on the shirts and other club items. Discussion took place on the new kit and the 4 year deal with Hummel. Sales to non SACFC supporters had seen a marked increase on sales from previous seasons.

IR asked what were the arrangements for refunds on season tickets for the previous season, as there had seemed to be some confusion. LP said anyone who did not want to renew their season ticket could ask for a refund.

Discussion then took place on arrangements for the coming season. There had been no decision made on ground capacity yet, as this hinged on the HM Government decision on elite sport. LP did say that it was the club's intention to allow away fans and that matches would be all ticket. To allow for non on line sales, a club box office would be open on selected days.

IR asked if the club would be providing video footage of away games, if fans were not allowed [4 National League South clubs have declared they will not allow away fans]. LP said it is the club's intention to provide coverage of all games.

IR raised the issue of fundraising at matches with the raffle and Golden Goal as the Trust do not have electronic means for sales. LP said all other sales at the ground were to be cashless and raised a doubt on any cash transactions being permitted .

Both supporter groups asked what the club expects of them for the immediate season. LL reiterated that volunteers and fund raising were critical right now.

IR said that the Player of the Month sponsorship may suit any smaller local business. He added that a set of portable floodlights that the Trust had funded previously were still at Oaklands College and could be used or sold on. LP will deal with this item.

LL then outlined the clubs plans for a football academy to be led by Dean Austin. This will not have an educational side with it as yet, due to the pandemic but this will be on board for the 20/21 season. It is the objective of the academy to provide a pathway from youth football to the senior side for local players.

The meeting ended with an agreement to hold a further meeting before the start of the coming season.

Ian Rogers  
Chair  
Saints City Trust

