



Minutes

Title of Meeting:	MK Dons Supporters' Board – Meeting 09	
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 12 th December 2023 at 6.30pm – 9.10pm	
Attendees :		
Name	Attended	Organisation
Mike Williamson (MW)	PT	Head Coach at MK Dons
Robbie Dennafoord (RD)	A	Media Assistant at MK Dons FC
Simon Crampton (SC)	A	Performance Director at MK Dons FC
John Cove (JC)	A	Director, MK Dons / Chairman, MK Dons SET
Jim Mann (JM)	A	Supporters' Board - Chair
John Brockwell (JB)	A	Supporters' Board - Secretary
John Samuel (JS)	A	Supporters' Board (MKDSA)
Bailey Bedborough (BB)	A	Supporters' Board
David Wright (DW)	A	Supporters' Board
Carol Head (CH)	A	Supporters' Board
Tom Gidley (TG)	A	Supporters' Board
Antony Yates (AY)	A	Supporters' Board
Tina Kenny (TK)	A	Supporters' Board
Ciaran Flanagan (CF)	A	Supporters' Board (MKDSA)
Apologies:		
<p>Pete Winkelman (PW) - Chairman at MK Dons FC Maralyn Smith (MS) – Chief Executive MK Dons SET</p>		

1	Guest – Mike Williamson	
A	<p>JC introduced MW to the SB.</p>	
B	<p>MW thanked the SB for the opportunity to meet with them and commented that he had been made extremely welcome by everyone connected to the club. If he can he's more than happy to oblige with any requests for support and interaction with the supporters. His main aim is to push the club up the league. He opened the meeting up to questions from the SB members.</p> <p>JM – “What was the mood of the players when you arrived?” MW responded that it's always a difficult one when a new manager arrives at a club. There's always some apprehension and uncertainty. We have a good squad but it's also a big squad. Players will have been bought in for one manager's style and now they will have to adapted to a different managers style. The boys have been fantastic and have responded incredibly well. They need direction, no footballer ever does not what to win or care about winning, emotionally it comes out in different ways You need to channel that enthusiasm in the right way and get to know the individual personalities of the squad. The energy is good but there is still so much more learning that the players and coaching staff need to do.</p> <p>CH – “Have the players bought into the new playing style?” MW – 100%. It will take time to fully adapt. I have a way of wanting to play but depending on how the opposition is setup you have to find solutions to it. Asking them to identify the puzzle and find the solutions during a match is not easy.</p> <p>BB – “There's been a detachment of the Manager from the fans. What are your thoughts on getting that back?” MW – The players really need to show supporters that they are giving there very best. They need to give you guys something to shout about, it's not a one way relationship. I want the players to give you something to get excited about. I want them to run their socks off for you.</p> <p>DW – “What's your biggest challenges between now and the end of the season?” MW – The training surface due to the amount of rain that we are having. Having a big squad and trying to keep everyone happy. It's not easy for the lads that aren't playing. It's something that we'll need to address in January. There will be players that want to leave to get more game time. At the moment the style of play is quite far off what we want to see as coaches.</p> <p>TK – “What is your assessment of the timescales you'll need to get to where you want to get to?”</p>	



MW - It's hard to put a time on it, I know fans will want to hear projections of where we want to be and when. We all want to get out of this League but we need to focus on each match and not get ahead of ourselves. January is an important month with outgoing and incomings, If we get that right we'll have a positive foundation for the future. Whatever happens this season is a huge part of the foundations for next season. Players will be attracted to our style of play and the ground, it's an incredible place to come. I've always been an admirer from afar. Word of mouth is the best recruitment tool.

TK – “It felt to me at the beginning of the season that we had a real emotional reaction to last season. Have you ever considered a psychologist to assist the players?”

MW – I've worked with many psychologists over the years. Ultimately if you want to change the world you change the way that you look at it. I just want the boys to be as present as they possibly can and simplify. It's clearing the fog and not over complicating things. When you are present you are not living in the past. Focus on the process and results will come. If we just focus on results we can forget the process and not achieve what we want.

CH – “We now seem to dig in if we go behind or if things aren't going as well as we'd hope. What's changed?”

MW – It is hard. I've been in teams where the fans have been accusing players of not caring and it wasn't the case. The problem is if you are really low on confidence and you go behind. You make one decision and it goes wrong then you make another one, it's so deflating. It's up to the senior players and coaches to pick the lads up. Supporters want to win and the players want to win but emotions can follow the scoreboard.

JM – “I'd agree with CH. The Salford penalty decision galvanised our players whereas in the past they would have crumbled.”

MW – We dust ourselves down and channel the frustration in the second half. If we allow a bad decision to negatively affect us we beat ourselves. We go out there and give it everything, if we then get beat that's fine. If we are just annoyed and lose focus it doesn't help with our cause.

We do clip together a video of good points from the previous game and play them in the changing room before a match. This reaffirms what they are doing well and focusses their minds on it.

	<p>JS – “The last few games that we’ve played Gilby’s been pushed up a bit. He seems to be better coming from deep. Is there a reason for this?”</p> <p>MW – When I look at squad and team selection there are positions that take certain qualities. We play we two number 4’s, some call these 6’s and two number 10’s. We look for certain qualities for those positions. I like to have my best players on the pitch. We keep an eye on the distance they cover.</p> <p>TK – “What’s your general approach to substitutions?”</p> <p>MW – We’ll earmark a few players who we think will come on and impact the game. Every game is different. At times I feel a change might be required but looking at the chemistry on the pitch I don’t want to disrupt that. When we are in a game ad are pushing a change can have a negative effect.</p> <p>TG – “How do you keep those that aren’t in the starting 11 motivated?”</p> <p>MW – It’s the hardest part. Professionals want to start every game. I don’t normally like to carry a big squad. I like a core of 15 to 16 players who should be playing every week with the rest of a 22 to 23 man squad made up of younger players who we want to develop.. To answer the question you have to give them a real clear understanding of where they need to get to and simplify it. Communication, attitude and hard work are key.</p> <p>MW left the meeting.</p>	
2	Standing Items	
A	All members confirmed that they had no Conflicts of Interest related to matters being discussed. Apologies were received from PW and MS. CF was welcomed to the Supporters’ Board (SB) as the new MKDSA representative.	N/A
B	Minutes of Meeting held on 13 th September 2023 were unanimously approved.	N/A
3	Matters Arising	
A	SB Chair Interview (3B – 13/9/23) JM and JC agreed to arrange the filming of the interview. Discussions at this meeting could assist with the framing of the interview.	JC/JM
B	Seat Oiling (3F – 13/9/23) JC confirmed that the oil residue was too deeply ingrained to remove.	N/A



C	<p>Programmes (7A – 12/7/23)</p> <p>CH has informed the supporter of the increased pagination and a detailed response based on the discussions in the meeting that took place on 12th July 2023.</p> <p>JC advised that there will be one programme that will cover the Colchester and Crawley matches over the Xmas period.</p>	N/A
D	<p>Sports Ground Safety Authority (SGSA) Consultation (4B – 13/9/23)</p> <p>JC thanked the SB for the helpful feedback received which was utilized by the club as part of its response to the SGSA.</p> <p>(Post meeting note: SGSA have now published their recommendations to the Government which include many of the points made as part of the clubs feedback – especially charging basis.)</p>	N/A
E	<p>MK Dons SET (9A – 13/9/23)</p> <p>JC acknowledged that there hasn't been as much publicity of their activities recently. This is due to recent staff turnover and Maralyn Smith being hospitalized for a while. She's now back and publicity of the work that the SET are undertaking will be a focus of attention.</p> <p>Fan Engagement Officer – JC advised that this role has still not been filled and the role is still being advertised. Applications that have been received so far are not up to the standard required for the role.</p> <p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) – JC informed the SB that there have been around 760 responses to the clubs EDI survey with 98% of supporters responding identified themselves as White. MK schools nonwhite pupils are recorded as 35% of the classroom. It is evident that the club have work to do in the community to bring greater diversity to our supporter base, working within the community to improve this will be a major focus of the new Fan Engagement Officer when they are appointed.</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>
4	Club Points for Discussion	
A	<p>SKY Broadcast rights season commencing August 2024</p> <p>The new deal will mean that there will be 4 times the current number of matches in the Championship, L1 & L2 that are broadcast. Due to this scheduling of matches will at times differ from the current Tuesday/Saturday timeslots. The new deal will increase the revenue paid to clubs and increase the exposure for club sponsors.</p>	

	<p>It will also potentially have impacts on the Hotel's operation and the Arena. As these have bookings 18 months to 2 years in advance the club are looking at contingency planning if a fixture clash occurs. Various options were discussed but trying to pre-guess situations that have never previously arisen it proved difficult to come up with hard and fast solutions. Communication with supporters will be key when the full impact is known.</p> <p>The fixture changes could affect the Away Travel arrangements. MKDSA to discuss the potential issues with the coach provider.</p>	<p>JS/CF</p>
B	<p>Season Ticket Pricing</p> <p>The club intend to follow a consultation route with supporters on next seasons ticket prices. The paper will be sent to the SB first before wider consultation along with the proposed timelines.</p> <p>JC confirmed that Blue Badge parking charges would be included in the consultation if the club propose amending these.</p>	<p>JC</p> <p>N/A</p>
C	<p>Plans for Woughton</p> <p>Currently one of three facilities that the SET manage. Considerable work has taken place over the years to upgrade pitches at this site but the facility now needs to be completely upgraded.</p> <p>A working group will be set up in the SET early next year to work up plans to enable a total of three all weather pitches (1 of them 4G) and to replace the current building and changing rooms with a better suited and up to date building. Grants have already been received to upgrade the floodlights to LED. Invitation will be extended to interested SB members to join the working group when this is being setup.</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>JC</p>
5	MKDSA ITEMS	
A	<p>Blue Badge Parking</p> <p>Issues highlighted that non Blue badge holders are occupying Blue badge space as a result of lack of stewarding of the parking area. JC advised that recruitment of car stewards to alleviate this issue is taking place.</p> <p>AY also reported issues with Blue Badge holders who have been allocated wide bay space due to their specific disability requirements finding that the bays have already been occupied by Blue Badge holders who do not require a wide bay. If these bays are already occupied then the supporter, despite already paying for their parking space, cannot attend the match.</p> <p>A means to identify those allocated a wide bay will need to be provided. Requested that stewards are put in place to police this.</p>	<p>JC</p>



B	<p>Cup Car Park charges</p> <p>Paying for a cup ticket and parking @ £8 per match does not encourage supporters to come to a midweek cup game that can be watched online for £10.</p> <p>JC advised parking that all cup games has reverted to the “by hour” system which costs £1 per hour.</p>	N/A
6	Dons Action	
A	<p>Event for supporters aged 16 to 25 year olds</p> <p>A paper prepared by Dons Action regarding engagement of supporters in the 16 to 25 year old bracket was presented to the SB.</p> <p>JC committed to hold an event for 16 to 25 year old supporters in the New Year. Dons Action will be consulted regarding content and tone potentially alongside MK1 Podcast representatives. TG and BB will support this from the SB as the under 25 SB representatives.</p> <p>TG commented that less formal video content is needed for this age group as getting to know players and their personalities was the major interest. The lack of TikTok content was raised by AY and RD confirmed that he’d produced these earlier in his career at the Dons but due to workload these have taken a back seat. JC advised that the club are currently advertising for a Digital Marketing Executive to improve the use of social media.</p> <p>JC advised that Joe Thompson will take up the post of Media Manager on 3rd February and it’s probable that he will drive this.</p>	JC/RD
7	Items raised by Supporters	
A	<p>Club Red Stewarding</p> <p>DW pointed out that it has been noted by supporters’ with Club Red season tickets that due to the withdrawal of ticket checks when entering Club Red from the concourse an increasing number of supporters are taking advantage and occupying seats in Club Red. They are also utilising the ballroom and attending the Man of the Match presentation and other parts of the higher cost Club Red “package”.</p> <p>Stewarding arrangements to be reviewed.</p>	JC

B	<p>Castore</p> <p>CH noted the increased number of complaints regarding Castore online.</p> <p>SC informed Castore are suffering from growing pains due to their rapid expansion. They have added experienced members of staff to bolster the team and we have a good relationship with our Sales Manager. The quality issues experienced are getting fewer. If an item bought online is faulty the Club Shop are more than happy to assist and if the item is stocked in the shop can exchange it.</p> <p>The 3rd kit, blue shirt, has out sold the white home shirt and more stock is on its way.</p>	
C	<p>Flags</p> <p>BB raised a concern from a supporter who had been told to put away his Irish flag at the last home game by a steward.</p> <p>JC confirmed that it was an error on behalf of the steward and this issue has been noted by the team.</p>	N/A
D	<p>Rearranged Matches</p> <p>TK asked why rearranged matches seem to be always arranged for a Tuesday when we do have some Saturday's that are free.</p> <p>SC advised that the clubs preference would -usually be to utilise the Saturday but this depends on the other teams availability (FA Cup etc) and needs to be agreed with the EFL.</p>	N/A

8	Supporters' Board Survey	
A	At present only 6 completed surveys returned from the 16 sent. Can everyone please complete these as the feedback so far has been enlightening but without additional responses isn't really fully representative of current and ex members views.	JB to resend survey link
9	MK Dons Supporters' Board Vacancy	
A	<p>Alex Jovic has decided to step down from the SB with immediate effect. The SB are sorry to see him depart and thank him for his time and valuable input over the last year.</p> <p>In line with the Terms of Reference (3i) the SB unanimously agreed to advertise for the position in January.</p>	N/A
B	<p>The advert along with the updated Job Description will be put onto the clubs website and advertised on social media in January.</p> <p>Advert for a new "General Admission" member and revised Job Description to be drafted by JB and approved by JM/JC</p>	RD JB
C	<p>Volunteers for the interviewing panel, as per section 3d of the SB Terms of Reference, were:</p> <p>SB (2): BB, CH, AY & JM. MKDSA (1): TBA Club (2): TBA</p>	JM to select JS/CF JC



10	Any Other Business	
A	EFL EDI video CH queried why the EFL video has not been shown on our social media, website or screens. This seems to have dropped through the cracks when the previous Media Manager left and will be actioned by RD. AY has copies and will assist RD if he cannot find those that were sent to the club.	RD
B	MK Dons SET presentation in Lewington's CF asked why the SET presentation wasn't being shown on a screen in Lewington's as per the request in the last meeting (9A – 13/9/23).	JC
C	Carol singing CF invited the SB to join in the carol singing outside Gate 7 on Saturday @ 12:30.	ALL
D	Retail Units BB asked about the two units being built in the car park near Gate 5. JC informed that one was for Taco Bell and the other is a Costa.	N/A
11	DATE FOR NEXT MEETING	
	Thursday 15th February 6:30pm	JC to book room
12	AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING	
	JB to work on the agenda and circulate with all Board members ahead of the next meeting.	JB to write agenda