

Members Meeting Q&A - 25/10/24

Note: More than 250 members read our email invitation to the meeting this evening and obviously not all were able to attend and / or willing to ask questions in a public forum, hence everyone was given the opportunity to submit questions in advance and, if desired, anonymously. For info -50 members attended the meeting in person.

The notes below include submitted questions and those asked on the evening. The committee would like to thank members for their interest, candour and a healthy discussion.

Q: Is it true the committee refused to provide the first team with training footballs?

A: No. Unfortunately last seasons training balls went missing and are presumed to be being kicked about in Shaftesbury (joking). Fortunately Danny brought some with him to get started. Requests for a variety of football related items were received during committee transition in July. The committee asked for them to be prioritised to help manage initial cash flow challenges. Additional footballs were subsequently purchased. At no point have any of our teams had to train without footballs.

Q: It appears we are bringing in less money from sponsors as there are fewer banners around the pitch. Is there a problem attracting sponsors?

A: The lack of banners around the pitch is not an indicator that we are struggling to attract sponsors. Banners were removed in the off season to enable maintenance of the perimeter rails which were in poor condition and one of the failings in our FA ground inspection. The banners were also in poor condition and it was decided to replace them all as sponsors renew. This is being done in batches of 10 to reduce production costs. The first 10 are on order at the time of the members meeting. Furthermore, sponsors had not been contacted for renewal prior to the new committee being formed in July so the team led by Marc & Hannah have been playing catch-up. At time of members meeting 18 sponsors (14 returning, 4 new) have signed up totalling £8.7k.

Q: Why don't the committee attend games?

A: Most committee members attend home games. They may not sit in the stand because they are generally deployed around the ground as stewards and hospitality staff. Away games are more of a challenge as all bar one of the committee members have full time jobs and families. It should also be noted that Mark (and other committee members) attend and volunteer at most of the u18 and Dev home games more of which are now being held at Grigg Lane.

Q: Does the committee have a credible financial plan? It seems the only thing they have done to address the financial situation is to reduce beer prices.

A: We believe this is evident in this evenings update and handouts, but we are happy to elaborate if there are further questions?

Discussion followed and several points were clarified, those of note included:

- The committee are building up a fund (from sponsorship receipts) to pay for the primary upfront costs of Brockstock next year which we anticipate will prevent taking on debt to stage the event, de-risk and maximise profits. The fund currently stands at ~£6.5k.
- It was confirmed that Brockstock is insured for bad weather but noted that this only covers sunk costs, not loss of revenue.
- Re StAustell it was explained that the primary challenge with the contract was it compelling us to purchase all products (bar Korev & Tribute) at list price. The renegotiated contract allows us to purchase all products at current promotional prices resulting in ~£10k annual savings at current volumes. The new pumps and front of bar refurb are being funded by Heineken

because we will be stocking several of their products (purchased through StAustell). Finally, it was noted that StAustell have been good partners throughout this process, they wish to retain our business and the committee believe we can move forward with them, the loan issue essentially being resolved.

Q: Why have you increased the Solent Soul entry price from £5 to £8?

A: Solent Soul set their own prices based on the amount they wish to collect. We understand they look for a minimum of £200 per night. We provide the clubhouse to SS free of charge and advertise their events. They keep 100% of the entry money. The club hopes bar takings are sufficient to cover our costs and make a modest profit. It is true that the practice of subsidising SS with cash from bar takings if attendance was low is considered unsustainable and was ceased in August. We continue to honour our agreement with SS who have agreed to fulfil dates until the end of the year after which SS will decide if they wish to continue in 2025.

After some discussion the committee agreed with the questioner that raising entry prices is a curious approach to addressing low attendance numbers.

Q: In the two times the chairman has addressed the members (AGM & SGM) he has positioned football as a drain on resources? If the chairman cares about the club perhaps he should consider both the football & social elements with equal importance?

A: Mark is passionate about both football and the club. It is self evident that all aspects (social & football) are inextricably linked. Please refer to the football section of our update confirming all football funding and plans inherited from the prior committee are being honoured this season while the committee are necessarily focused on turning around "the business". It should also be noted that there is far more to football at BFC than first team games and the committee (all of whom live locally) are passionate about the health and future of the club as a whole. This is evidenced in deeper engagement with u18 and Dev football as mentioned above. Steps are also being taken to forge closer ties with the youth section as Jerry Hill (Youth Chair) joins the main club committee and Dave Wareham (Club Sec) joins the youth committee. Mark is also passionate about ladies football and was disappointed to learn that the opportunity to establish a ladies team at BFC was missed by the prior committee (incidentally they went to Hythe & Dibden where they are thriving). Establishing a ladies team remains one of our ambitions.

Q: I understand the club is struggling to attract player sponsors. Is the committee aware of this and what steps are being taken to replace these funds?

A: This an interesting question in so much as the majority of player sponsors typically have direct relationships to current players (ie, family or friends). With a change of manager there is always higher than usual turnover of players and, therefore, player sponsors as has been the case here at Brock this season. Bottom line the challenge is primarily managing through a period of change as opposed to lack of willing sponsors. Matt continues to expertly manage player sponsorship and can call on help from the committee when needed. It should also be noted that generous sponsorships have been received to purchase new kits for our u18 and Dev teams.

During discussion Matt confirmed that player sponsorship was currently about 20% down on last year and there are 6 remaining home games requiring sponsors. Both of which we are resolved to address.

Q: (Paraphrasing a few questions on this topic) Recent first team results have been poor. Would the committee please provide their perspective on this and their expectations for the remainder of the season?

A: Mark - Obviously after a bright start to the season recent results have been disappointing but we must not lose sight of the fact that we are going through a period of change. Replacing a

manager of 11 years service was inevitably going to be difficult. Our league position is not horrible and there is plenty of time left in the season so we need to hold our nerve and support Danny & Matt. Mark also reiterated the point that our £27k football budget set at the end of last season has been honoured and there have been no change in plans for football going into this season. While clearly not the highest budget in the league, and less than the £45k spent last season, £27k is far from the lowest and sufficient for the team to be competitive. The perspective of the committee remains staying in the Wessex Premier league this season while navigating our tricky financial situation would be a respectable result. If all goes well we will be in a much better position going into next season, 2056/26.

A: Matt (who should be congratulated for his eloquent and heartfelt contribution) - There can be no hiding from the results which are what they are, however, there are reasons to be optimistic for the remainder of the season. Agreed with Mark that change of manager and player turnover is always disruptive. Reminded us that Pat struggled in his early seasons at Brock and pointed out Shaftesbury currently sit bottom of the league above. Highlighted our long injury list (14 first team players out) which has severely disrupted the team and slowed the "bedding in" process for Danny. Pleased that some have now returned with several key players close to fitness. Cautioned us the the next couple of weeks will be tough due to quality of opponents, but after that, with returning players and a more settled team, confident we can push on. Observed that teams finishing position at this level does broadly reflect their budget but that there are always teams (at both ends of the table) that buck the trend. Noted that £27k puts us 12th-14th in the Wessex Prem budget list and that there is no reason to believe we cannot be competitive and deliver on committee expectations this season. Offered the perspective that Pat was due to retire after 10 seasons but after nearly being relegated wanted to go out on a high and stayed for an 11th season. Acknowledged that running up a playing spend of £45k in pursuit of the playoffs was probably a little excessive in retrospect (although not Matt's decision the author would like to point out).

During discussions on football it was generally agreed that we would like to see more of Danny and the players in the clubhouse after games and accepted that this is a 2-way street and it is incumbent on us all to promote more engagement with the team.